

THE TRUE WORSHIP MAGAZINE

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The Newfoundland Foundation, Inc.

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PRESENTS

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**Key Speaker:
Dr. Mfon Cyrus-David, MBBS,
MS.,
Sugar Land, TX.**

**Also Speaking:
Dr. Faith Atai, MD.
Sugar Land, TX.**

Love is demanding, yet truly fulfilling. Come and discover, rekindle or enhance the love in your marriage.

Be Intimate

If ever there has been a time that intimacy between people has been challenged, it is now, because of the COVID-19 pandemic. I have forgotten what it feels like to hug a friend, hang out, laugh and share some chicken wings. Don't you long for those days to return; the days that one felt loved, and cherished; free to tease, and play tricks on friends; the days to cry a little, laugh a little, let the heart break a little? What happened to those days? That marriage as a whole has taken beating is a no brainer. However, it is much worse with the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic, in that the threat to one's life, the job changes and the attendant economic implications, the loss of friends and family members, and even just being cooped up in the house, all work to make one's life uncomfortable at the least, or at the worst, unbearable. It would not be out of the question that there are some married couples who have found out that they have more time with each other than they are ready for. Thus, they need to learn how to be intimate again. To be intimate is to have a very close association, contact, or familiarity. If ever there is a relationship that is founded on intimacy, it is marriage. I envisage a married couple who are totally naked, yet are wrapped up in an exclusive blanket that shuts out the outsiders, yet leaves them in complete contact with each other's world. In Genesis 2:24, it is stated as such, *"And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed."* I term it bare-naked intimacy, and the experts call it sincere intimacy. This is when the hearts are exposed honestly, openly and lovingly to each other, for this

is when love is sincere.

When God, the Creator of marriage put it together, it was such that we would find companionship through the thick and thin of life, procreate and raise godly children, develop each other such that we would be fulfilled in life, and also offer Him true worship from pure hearts. Intimacy, sincere intimacy is the conduit through which all these laudable objectives happen. A review of the events at the Garden of Eden can shade some light on the source, function, value of, and the consequences of the loss of sincere intimacy (see Genesis 2:15-17 below)

Genesis 2:15-17 (NKJV)

¹⁵ Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.

¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, **"Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat;**

¹⁷ **but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."**

In the time of sincere intimacy, they had God as the senior partner, each other, the wonderful garden with everything that one could wish for, and the free rein to enjoy it. Yet, they also had the tree of good and evil, and this they were to stay away from. This is the classic example of how sincere intimacy works. One has all that one can and should have, but also what one cannot or should not have. God provided for them, empowered them to relate with Him, each other and their environment, sincerely; and motivated by His love and Spirit, they lived in perfect harmony.

However, this was not to last for long for someone came calling, and when he was done, sin was in the house, sincerity went out of the door, and paradise was lost forever.

In Genesis 3:16-19, the indignant Creator, addressed the transgressions as follows.

Genesis 3:16-19 (NKJV)

¹⁶ To the woman He said: **"I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; our desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."**

¹⁷ Then to Adam He said, **"Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': 'Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life."**

¹⁸ Both **thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field."**

¹⁹ **In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; For dust you are, and to dust you shall return."**

Before the fall, she could have had her babies painlessly, now, she had to bear them in anguish. What does anguish do? It isolates one, and places him or her in a lonely place, further aggravating the loss of intimacy. For when one feels alone, one becomes self-absorbed, and emotionally distant. Sin (i.e. wrongdoing) was and still is the enemy of closeness. It was to get worse, in that before the fall, she was an equal partner (i.e. comparable [see Genesis 2:18]), now she had been



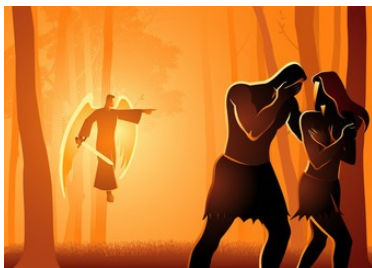
The Garden of Eden, paradise on earth.

"This is the classic example of how sincere intimacy works. One has all that one can and should have, but also what one cannot or should not have."



Sin, the enemy of intimacy.

Be Intimate



The death of sincere intimacy.

“Sin tears through relationships, and where it dominates, sincere intimacy is eroded, and eventually, it dies.”



When the heart is far away.

subjugated to live for her husband, and in very horrible cases, she would become his slave. Similarly, prior to the fall, he did not have to toil to sow or harvest crops, as there existed the abundance of luscious fruits in the garden. Now, he had to perform hard manual labor, in order to generate food for his family—he too felt lonely. The once superior person, who ruled over the world, and had the animals at his beck and call, had to fight off the wild beasts, pull the thorns out of his palms and fingers, while wincing in pain; and then return home to try to communicate his frustrations to another, who had enough problems of her own. With two people living in separate worlds, sincere and loving intimacy became difficult to achieve. No wonder that after a hard day’s work, one makes it back home to unwittingly start a fight. In Galatians 5:19-21, the Apostle Paul narrates the symptoms and signs of sinful living as follows.

Galatians 5:19-21 (NKJV)
¹⁹ Now the **works of the flesh are evident**, which are: *adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness,*
²⁰ *idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies,*
²¹ *envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

Sin tears through relationships, and where it dominates, sincere intimacy is eroded, and eventually, it dies. Thus, the loss of sincere intimacy with God, led to the loss of the delegated dominion

authority over the earth; the loss of the power to get things done, which was further aggravated by the rising rebellion of creation against man; as God’s grace faded, the husband-wife relationship got worse and worse, and the distance between them increased to such a point that they now had to cover up, thus excluding each other; until as often seen today, they have walls of enmity.

Every marriage needs God’s grace. This is more so because, sin is in the heart, and Jesus Christ is the only true cure for the sinful heart—the seat of sincere intimacy. Thus, it is not a wonder that when Christ died to set us free from the curse of sin and death, His work was directed at our hearts, and did so much more than just reconcile us to God, but also fostered the health of our relationships with each other (see Ephesians 2:14-18 below).

Ephesians 2:14-18 (NKJV)
¹⁴ *For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation,*
¹⁵ *having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace,*
¹⁶ *and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.*
¹⁷ *And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near.*
¹⁸ *For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.*

Sin brought divisiveness, in

that it separated us from God, our life source. This sad situation, was further aggravated by the law, which exposed our sinfulness, and created a huge wall of separation between us—be it the Jews and gentiles, those who were far away or nearer to God, or the offender and the offended. As such, Jesus Christ came to reconcile us to God by His shed blood, thus wiping away the curse of sin once and for all; and as such, giving the repentant purity of heart; He also removed the wall of dissension between the warring groups, including spouses, by fostering the bond of unity through the Holy Spirit. He is our peace! Thus, with pure hearts, sincere intimacy becomes attainable; for without godly fear, no one can be sincerely intimate. In that in the absence of sincerity, one either conveys outright lies, tell partial lies by generating a false impression, or avoids the engagement all together. And if the issue must be confronted, one becomes subversive as was the case between Rebekah and Isaac over the blessing of Jacob (see Genesis 25 & 27).

Genesis 25:22-26 (NKJV)
²² *But the children struggled together within her; and she said, "If all is well, why am I like this?" So, she went to inquire of the LORD.*
²³ *And the LORD said to her: "Two nations are in your womb, two peoples shall be separated from your body; One people shall be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger."*
²⁴ *So when her days were fulfilled for her to give birth, indeed there were twins in her womb.*
²⁵ *And the first came out red. He was like a hairy garment all over; so, they called his name Esau.*

Be Intimate

²⁶ *Afterward his brother came out, and his hand took hold of Esau's heel; so, his name was called Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them.*

According to the passage above, Rebekah knew that although Esau as the natural firstborn and by tradition, would be the person to carry on the covenant between God and Abraham, he was not the spiritual firstborn, but Jacob was. Typically, one would expect that as a husband and wife, they would have had a thoughtful discussion about her convictions, and the prophecy that she received on the matter. But this did not take place, for there was no sincere intimacy. Instead, she took a subversive path, coached her preferred son to steal the birthright (see Genesis 25:29-34), and finally, set him up to pose as Esau (his brother), in order to close the deal (Genesis 27:18-29). It seemed to have worked out, "but was it the most effective way?" For, she lost Jacob for life, as they never saw each other again; Esau hated his brother, and it took years and God's blessings to heal the wound between them; Jacob suffered lack, was abused by Laban, and only the blessing caused him to prevail in life at the later end. One cannot help but wonder what happened to Rebekah's relationship with Isaac. Such relationships are characterized by emotional alienation, where the spouses' feelings are hardly known or shared; the leading of parallel lives, where the spouses have separate visions and plans, and execute these without conferring with or deferring to each other; apathy, where indifference towards each other reigns; and these often end up in lengthy separations, divorce or even homicides.

The good news is that in 1 John 1:6-7, it is stated that sincere intimacy is a mandate from God Himself.

1 John 1:6-7(NIV)

If we claim that we experience a shared life with him and continue to stumble around in the dark, we're obviously lying through our teeth—we're not living what we claim. But if we walk in the light, God himself being the light, we also experience a shared life with one another, as the sacrificed blood of Jesus, God's Son, purges all our sin.

We are exhorted to become one with Him, and out of the abundance of the life that He imparts to us, we would now enjoy the closeness with one another—sincere intimacy. It gets even better, in that since sin is the enemy of closeness to both God and our fellow man, while walking in a partnership with the Holy Spirit, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us of our sins, and as such we retain the ability to enjoy wholesome relationships. Thus, the passage of scripture above summates spiritual intimacy for us as born-again Christians. Intimacy can also be psychological, in that in all of us is the yearning to know and be known by someone we cherish. In Songs of Solomon 1:7, the beloved calls out this yearning as follows.

Song of Songs 1:7 (NKJV)
⁷ *(TO HER BELOVED) Tell me, O you whom I love, where you feed your flock, where you make it rest at noon. For why should I be as one who veils herself by the flocks of your companions?*

She expressed the in-depth

need to be let into his world, what he was going through, and to also know hers. These would sooth her soul, boost her sense of security and self-esteem. It is like a woman who is stranded by the side of the road, with a dead cell phone, but knows fully well, that although she is in a bad situation, her loving husband, will soon check up on her. In her heart she thinks, "I am loved, I am special, and soon, my beloved will come for me." Intimacy can also be physically expressed by sexual and non-sexual engagements. So important is intimacy to us, that God, the Creator built in very sensitive nerve endings that transmit touch, and create such sweetness and sense of wholeness. Scientists have found out that when we are touched, perhaps hugged, the hormone called oxytocin is released, which soothes and comforts us. "Oh, the bane of social distancing!" However, there are also fiscal and material aspects of intimacy, where we share our assets and liabilities (see James 2:14-16).

In James 2:14-16 (NKJV)

¹⁴ *What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?*
¹⁵ *If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food,*
¹⁶ *and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?*

It is pertinent to remember that while there is a husband and wife relationship, we are first and foremost, coheirs of the grace of God; and as such should be treated with love and consideration. Thus, it is



Sincere intimacy starts with knowing God.

“While walking in a partnership with the Holy Spirit, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us of our sins, and as such we retain the ability to enjoy wholesome relationships.”



Every relationship needs some crucial and timely conversations.

Be Intimate

our respective duties as husbands and wives are to identify the needs, the reasonable wants and desires, and endeavor to meet them. This is living by faith through one's works. Let it suffice that one cannot be "one flesh", yet nourishes and cherishes only his or her body (Ephesians 5:28-29). Thus, one can give thoughtful gifts, or lend a helping hand on a daily basis. These are all aspects of being intimate.

Central to our ability to be intimate is the capacity to communicate effectively, as it is the vehicle of intimacy. This is the process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior. Wrapped around this process, which could be verbal or non-verbal is emotional intelligence. No matter what one wants to convey, to be able to do so effectively, one must know and master one's emotions and those of the intended recipients. This attribute is emotional intelligence. Proverbs 16:32 states,

Proverbs 16:32 (NKJV)
³² *He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.*

The capacity to control one's self (i.e. to manage one's emotions effectively) is superior to all that it would take to besiege and capture a fortified city. As was stated earlier, this boils down to the state of the heart, for out of the fullness of the heart, we engage our world (see Matthew 12:34). We thank God that Jesus Christ had provided us with His life, and as we walk with the Holy Spirit, we can overcome our impulses and

tame our tongues; thus, we are able to speak the words that are like apples of gold in a setting of silver (Proverbs 25:11); words that are fitly spoken--empathic, culturally competent, and full of love.

If sincere intimacy is just conveying what is in one's heart, without regard for who gets hurt, then we have misunderstood the concept. Being intimate has to convey love, and not hatred, because it is the conveyance of the shared life that we have with God. Thus, we must endeavor to know Him, and nurture our relationship with Him into a mature partnership. Then, we will be truly able to relate with our spouses lovingly. Love strong.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Mfon Cyrus-David is preacher and teacher of God's word.



A warm hug is like medicine to the sorrowful heart.

“No matter what one wants to convey, to be able to do so effectively, one must know and master one's emotions and those of the intended recipients.”

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The hopelessness of stealth poverty.

“He failed to place adequate value on his relationship with his father, who dearly loved him, and was the source of his wealth...”



“I rule the world!”

Stealth Poverty

The fact that money is important, cannot be understated, both for it uses as a medium of exchange, a measure of value, wealth, and accomplishments; and because of the devastations that its misuse or misemphasis can bring. This fact is alluded to in the scripture (see Ecclesiastes 10:19; 7:12).

Ecclesiastes 10:19 (NKJV)
¹⁹ A feast is made for laughter, and wine makes merry; But money answers everything.

Ecclesiastes 7:12 (NKJV)
¹² For wisdom is a defense as money is a defense, But the excellence of knowledge is that wisdom gives life to those who have it.

Money can and has been used to solve almost any problem that man has encountered, and indeed, it is a defense to those who have it. However, the wisdom that begins with godly fear, that brings in the divine, and unleashes that power of the risen Lord, brings life, not just in this world, but in eternity. These, money cannot buy! Thus, this article is the first of a series on how a Christian should approach acquiring and managing wealth.

Typically, when we make deductions about a person's wealth, such deductions are usually on the bases of outward observations of the person's attributes, such as their house, car, business holdings, etc. While the outward observations do provide some information about the state of a person's estate, these deductions are often very wrong especially in a culture such as ours, where we like to keep up appearances.

Financial poverty is defined

as the state of one who lacks a usual or socially acceptable amount of money or material possessions. However, beneath the visible status of a person's wealth is another sinister malady--the poverty of the mind or what I term stealth poverty. The word stealth means that our mental RADAR does not easily detect it. It resides in our subconscious, a subtle state of the mind, where one feels either helpless or powerless because one is materially poor, or feels very dependent on wealth as the definition of success and fulfillment in life. It is a pattern of thinking, where the rich person sees himself or herself as omnipotent because he or she is rich, while the poor feels hopeless because he or she is poor. In either case, material possessions define their wellbeing.

In Luke 15:12-24, a look at the proverbial prodigal son can demonstrate how erroneous this kind of thinking is.

Luke 15:12-24
11 Jesus continued: “There was a man who had two sons. 12 The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So, he divided his property between them. 13 “Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. 14 After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. 16 He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. 17 “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s

hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! 18 I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’ 20 So he got up and went to his father. “But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. 21 “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ 22 “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23 Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. 24 For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So, they began to celebrate.

The prodigal son was materially wealthy at the time of his departure from his father's house. He was still materially wealthy when he was living a riotous life probably with intense drinking, womanizing and partying. He became materially poor when his resources were spent, the party crowd left, and hunger set in. This is what one would have seen by observing him outwardly. However, assessing his state of mind would have revealed a very different picture. While he was outwardly rich, he was actually mentally very poor because his actions showed that he thought that all he needed was money. He failed to place adequate value on his relationship with his father, who dearly loved him, and was the source of his

Stealth Poverty

wealth, and as such disregarded his family; he neither appreciated the temporal nature of material wealth nor did he know how to manage it. He had his priorities totally mixed up. His was a classic case of stealth poverty.

When his wealth was spent, he had a rude awakening as the blind folds of mental poverty fell off his eyes, and his true state was revealed. This state had been there all along, but was camouflaged by material possessions. In his impoverished state, he remembered his heritage, his loving father, and his responsibilities to his family, and decided to return home. This time he went home not as an arrogant son with a sense of entitlement to the family estate, but as a humbled hired servant. This was the genesis of his true wealth, as stealth poverty was exposed and eliminated. Our young man had grown wise and was heading back home to make things right. Yet, if one saw him in that state, one would have described him as poor and wretched. However, was he? He soon saw his father, who ran to him, embraced him, forgave him, and reinstated him into the family. His father gave him a garment, indicative of a new life style; a ring, indicative of his identity (and this was not money); and slaughtered a fattened calf for a great feast, indicative of God's abundance (including material things). His status had changed for the best as he now had a "head on his shoulder," and a direction for his life. He had eliminated stealth poverty, and regained true and lasting wealth.

The big question confronts us, and that is, "What is life?" The best person to answer that question is the Creator Him-

self, and in Matthew 16:26, Jesus Christ stated, "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" And, again in Luke 12:15 (NKJV),¹⁵ "And He said to them, 'Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.'" If gaining the whole world in exchange for one's eternal soul is a bad deal in life, and if one's life does not consist of material abundance, then, what is a good deal? The answer is in Colossians 1:17 (NKJV)¹⁷ "And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist." A good deal is having the essence of one's existence, the One in whom all things consist—Jesus Christ. It makes a lot of sense in that if in Him all things consist, then having Him gets us to all that we could ever wish for. Better yet, in a properly prioritized manner, which leaves us whole. This is what the senior brother of the prodigal son found out (see below)

Luke 15:25-32

25 "Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. 27 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.' 28 "The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So, his father went out and pleaded with him. 29 But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with

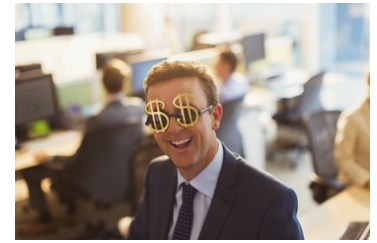
my friends. 30 But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!' 31 "My son," the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. 32 But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'"

He stayed with the father, and they built their wealth together, but he did not know that he was a co-owner, and that what belonged to his father was also his. Thus, because he forgot to ask, he stayed deprived. God did not call us to chase after money or material wealth, nor to define ourselves by its availability; instead, we are to follow hard after Him, and as we grow up in Him, know our place in His purpose, thus becoming one with Him; then, He will make available to us, all that we would need to be successful. In Psalm 37:23-26, King David alluded to this fact.

Psalm 37:23-26 (NKJV)

²³ The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, and He delights in his way. ²⁴ Though he falls, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the LORD upholds him with His hand. ²⁵ I have been young, and now am old; Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread. ²⁶ He is ever merciful, and lends; And his descendants are blessed.

Frankly, on this gospel trail, chasing after money instead of true worship, is as contradictory as one can imagine, as one becomes completely out of sync with how the Creator works. See Deuteronomy 8:2-3, 11, 15-16.



Prodigal and cool about it.

"A good deal is having the essence of one's existence, the One in whom all things consist—Jesus Christ."



The faithful put their trust in God.



The trip through the wilderness, was to know Who is important—God.

“If we remember that He has the power of foreknowledge, and can help us to navigate the terrains ahead, then, wisdom would dictate that we should follow Him.”

Stealth Poverty

Deuteronomy 8:2-3 (NKJV)

² *And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.*

³ *So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.*

Deuteronomy 8:11, 15-16 (NKJV)

¹¹ *"Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today,*

¹⁵ *who led you through that great and terrible wilderness, in which were fiery serpents*

and scorpions and thirsty land where there was no water; who brought water for you out of the flinty rock; who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do you good in the end--

God's priority is to transform us into competent partners, who can truly walk with Him. Thus, He tends to lead us away from the dependence on material things towards discovering the wealth of the Spirit, the wealth of knowing Him in His essence. In the wilderness of trials and tribulations, we are confronted by our humanity, and our great need for Him. Beaten down, and on our knees, we then learn to look up, and cry out for help. Then, he releases His comfort, and we are revived to resume our upward journey. The result is resilience, forthrightness, and spiritual

maturity. Therefore, chasing after worldly things makes us look like rebellious toddlers, and if we persist, we end up as dwarfs, and do not grow into mature sons and daughters of God. Not to worry, He had said it, and it has been proven over time that the cattle on a thousand hills belong to Him, and would be ours, as we align with Him in this Father-Son/Daughter relationship. If we remember that He has the power of foreknowledge, and can help us to navigate the terrains ahead, then, wisdom would dictate that we should follow Him, and we shall surely arrive at His abundant life, and as such go over the wall.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Mfon Cyrus-David is preacher and teacher of God's word.

OUR MESSAGE IS THAT GOD IS SOVEREIGN, WE SHOULD WORSHIP HIM; HIS LOVE IS UNFAILING, WE SHOULD TRUST HIM; GET READY FOR HIS IS COMING BACK.



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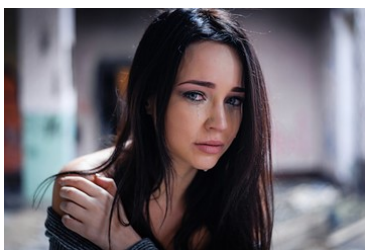
King Solomon's Folly

Do not miss these!



We live in a cruel world.

“Thus, the loss of her husband was a sentence to poverty, mistreatments, and eventually untimely death.”



The hurting really do hurt.

The Hurting: When It Seems that No One Understands.

There is pain in this world. It came with sin, as sin brought with it the distance from God, the loss of His grace, hardships and adversities. Managing the pains and hurts of life effectively, is a vital life skill, and as such can determine one's quality of life, and eventually, longevity. The story of Tamar, Judah's daughter-in-law is a particularly informative one (see Genesis 38:6-11 [NKJV]).

The Story of Tamar, Judah's Daughter-in-Law

Genesis 38:6-11 (NKJV)

⁶ Then Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, and her name was Tamar.

⁷ But Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD killed him.

⁸ And Judah said to Onan, "Go in to your brother's wife and marry her, and raise up an heir to your brother."

⁹ But Onan knew that the heir would not be his; and it came to pass, when he went in to his brother's wife, that he emitted on the ground, lest he should give an heir to his brother.

¹⁰ And the thing which he did displeased the LORD; therefore, He killed him also.

¹¹ Then Judah said to Tamar his daughter-in-law, "Remain a widow in your father's house till my son Shelah is grown." For he said, "Lest he also die like his brothers." And Tamar went and dwelt in her father's house.

In order for one to fully understand the gravity of her demise, one has to travel back in time to the premedieval period (2000-2500 B.C.). For this was, to state the least, a very difficult period in the lives of women, because they were disenfranchised through subjugation and slavery. In

those days, a woman got her emancipation largely through her beauty, and by having children, especially sons. *I dare to pause here to state that Jesus Christ is the best thing that has ever happened to women.* Thus, the loss of her husband was a sentence to poverty, mistreatments, and eventually, untimely death. As would be expected, they did not mind going to bed with her, but ensured that her offspring would not grow up to compete with theirs. They used and discarded her, and as such broke the covenants that they had with her. This was sacrilegious, for which they paid for with their lives.

Many a woman, having been mistreated turns to a patriarch or a judge for justice, and is given the runaround. This was a very lonely woman, who had no one, and was left to face a harsh and cold world. Knowing fully well that his other son was of age, he stated categorically, "Remain a widow in your father's house till my son is grown." This meant essentially, that she was done with his family, and banished to a life of penury. She must have thought, "Desperate times call for desperate measures; they had done their numbers on me, but my turn had come." She knew them, and what they liked, so she set Judah up, in order to get justice (see Genesis 38:16-18 [NKJV]).

Genesis 38:16-18 (NKJV)

¹⁶ Then he turned to her by the way, and said, "Please let me come in to you"; for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. So, she said, "What will you give me, that you may come in to me?"

¹⁷ And he said, "I will send a young goat from the flock." So, she said, "Will you give me a pledge till you send it?"

¹⁸ Then he said, "What pledge shall I give you?" So, she said, "Your signet and cord, and your staff that is in your hand." Then he gave them to her, and went in to her, and she conceived by him.

Judah (i.e. her father-in-law), having just lost his wife was in despair and needed comfort. This was Tamar's opportunity, for she posed as a prostitute, waited for him, and he fell for it. What is very interesting here are the articles that she took from him—his signet, cord, and staff. When people are chronically abused, often, in their bid to get justice, they tend to choose the subversive path. For this, she was well gamed, in that she went for his life. His signet depicts his identify (i.e. his mark), and this is directly related to his integrity. It stated categorically, that he was the one that she had the tryst with. The cord is what holds one's garments together, much like a belt does in modern attires. Taking his cord, meant that his garments were loose, and his nakedness would show, and as such he would be publicly disgraced. The staff gives support to an elderly and frail man. Thus, without the staff, support in life wanes, the fall risk increases, and injuries and death would likely follow. Thus, she went for his life, and she had it, for this is what disenfranchisement and abuse breed. She got pregnant, could ascertain the father of her child, and also got him to provide for her and her unborn baby. This was how she chose to respond to her pain, yet, there is a more excellent way. Before one embarks on reviewing her choice of actions, one should first understand her pain.

The Hurting: When It Seems that No One Understands.

Understanding Her Pain

When a woman loses a husband, it is considered a major object loss. However, add to this, the fear of penury, the abuse and rejection by her support team that had vowed to cater to her needs, and it becomes much worse. And, as if these were not enough, she, as a grown woman, was to be sent back to your father's house, where she would no longer fit in. Her problems were exacerbated, and with numerous psychological, physical and spiritual complications, as follows. Psychologically, her husband's death must have caused her to go through the phases of grief reaction, such as denial and isolation, where one tends to operate in disbelief that the loss has actually taken place, and also gets into a self-absorbed mode, and away from the other people; as time passes, it becomes impossible to shake off the reality, and anger sets in, as one thinks, "This cannot be happening to me." Then, bargaining comes with hoping against hope, and wishing that things would be reversed, and everything would be normal again. However, the definitive nature of the event gradually leads one to a depressed state, and then, one accepts one's fate, and thinks, "I have really lost him." Physically, there are psychosomatic features (i.e. feelings and related psychological events, which show up with physical symptoms), and these include tightness in the chest, choking, shortness of breath, abdominal distress, and decreased muscle power, to name a few. In very severe cases, people become ill and may be diagnosed with heart attacks, irregular heartbeats, etc. However, bad as some of these conditions are, particularly perturbing is when an

object loss drives someone into the darkness, spiritual darkness. Here one's heart becomes very bitter and vengeful, as one allows transient grief reactions to become near permanent attributes, which are focused on this world, some individuals or God. The resulting hardened heart becomes very obstinate and debased, as one becomes ready to do almost anything to achieve one's objective. In Tamar's case, by the time life had finished with her, a modest woman, had lost the *roof over her head*, been abused by her husband brothers, left to hang out and dry up. No wonder, sitting on the side of the road, and beckoning to a passerby for a tryst, was no longer a big deal. In Hebrews 12:14-15, the Apostle Paul speaks of falling short of God's grace, and being taken up by the root of bitterness that causes not just more problems, but ends up hurting many (see Hebrews 12:14-15 below).

Hebrews 12:14-15 (NKJV)

¹⁴ *Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord;*

¹⁵ *looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;*

Instead, he exhorts us to *pursue*, which means to follow in other to catch up with. To catch up with what? Peace and holiness, which are vital for us to retain and fulfill our divine destiny. In other words, we are not to allow the events of this world to dictate to us how we should behave, but to seek God's help in a timely fashion, so that we are not overwhelmed by our hu-

manity, and resort to strife and godlessness. Instead of conforming to this world, we should work with God to be transformed (see Romans 12:1-2).

The Trajectories of Life's Trials and Temptations

Romans 12:1-2 (NKJV)

¹ *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.*

² *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

Life hits, and often it hits very hard, and as such, change is inevitable. However, it is not that life has its challenges, but it is the carnage that is left behind, and how one manages it that truly matters. The God who knows and loves us, wants us to trust Him even in the midst of our trials and temptations, by aligning with His priorities—being living and holy sacrifices, which constitute true worship. He is saying to us, "No matter what happens to you, walk with me." In order to be transformed, one must determine in his or her heart, that one wants God and His kingdom, and not this world. Once that decision has been made, the process can then be set in motions as follows.

Identify your feelings: Accept that it happened to you, and that this is how you feel about it. For example, one can say or think, "I was raped, and feel so terrible about it, so debased, and bitter." Or, one can think, "I've lost him, and he will never return to me.



The bitterness of conformity.

“The resulting hardened heart becomes very obstinate and debased, as one becomes ready to do almost anything to achieve one's objective.”



Worldly conformity debases.

The Hurting: When It Seems that No One Understands.

Dying and leaving her with three children was not being responsible. Thus, I decided to live, and embarked on seeking God through prayers with fasting. One glorious night, in the midst of my travail, I saw myself in a river, inside a small basin paddling rigorously, as it was being pulled by the current towards the huge turbines of a nearby dam. Yet, I paddled even harder, and gained traction. Soon, I was at the shore, fully dressed in my suit, and strode off to be who I was meant to be. I had to determine in my heart, to live and not die. I took ownership of my feelings, and determined that dying was not being heroic, but living was. I came out of that darkness, and by the power of God defied my circumstances; others stopped in and helped me, and gradually, the storms abated. "Live, and do not die!"

*There Is A Balm in Gilead,
There Is A Physician*

Trials and difficulties tend to foster that sense of isolation, abandonment, or worthlessness, which may escalate to hopeless and suicidal contemplations. This is why one must be armed with the insights that are needed to know that it is okay to grieve, but not to accept that one is worthless or hopeless (see Jeremiah 8:21-22 below).

Jeremiah 8:21-22 (NKJV)
²¹ *For the hurt of the daughter of my people I am hurt. I am mourning; Astonishment has taken hold of me.*
²² *Is there no balm in Gilead, Is there no physician there? Why then is there no recovery for the health of the daughter of my people?*

When there is no healing, grief becomes protracted and

the trajectory negative. However, there is help in God. As a matter of fact, the Almighty God defines Himself by His commitment and ability to heal our wounds (see Isaiah 61:1-3 [NKJV]).

Isaiah 61:1-3 (NKJV)
¹ *"The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, Because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;*
² *To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn,*
³ *To console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; That they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified."*

When no one understands, God does, and this is why He set up the shop to address our challenges. He sends His word, which informs us of His love and purpose; delineates the boundaries between right and wrong in all circumstances; builds faith within us; gives us hope; and tells us what is ours, regardless of our circumstances. In other words, He helps us to identify what is right and wrong about our thoughts and attitudes, and then enables us to align with His purpose, and as such to prevail. The Holy Spirit is the Healer, and our pain and hurt are the substrates for His reaction of love, which then generate His outputs (see the equation below).

PAIN/HURT + THE HOLY SPIRIT + FAITH → HEAL-

ING + PRAISE + FORGETFULNESS

Often, traumatic events are so severe that one becomes redefined by these, and remains bound to such both psychologically and spiritually. The good news is that our God came to set the captives free, and one of the ways that one knows that he or she is truly free is that one *forgets* the pain. To forget is not to be amnesic (i.e. the loss of one's memory), but as a renowned minister put it, it is to remember the event(s) without pain or bitterness. Then, one can truly say, "Manasseh" meaning, "God hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house." (Genesis 41:51). Through His vengeance, He vanquishes our enemies, and through His benevolence He replenishes our lives with His beauty--the oil of joy, and garment of praise, which is the praise of the redeemed, the praise of the true worshippers. Stay pure and strong.

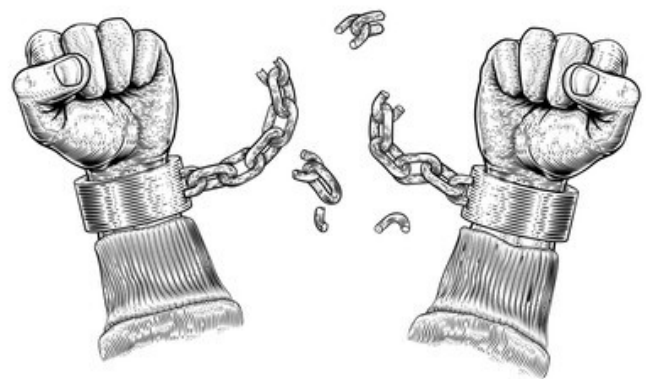
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Mfon Cyrus-David is preacher and teacher of God's word.



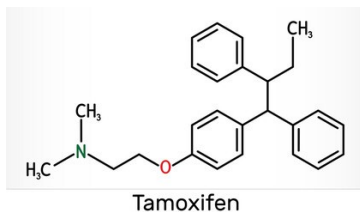
Think wholesome thoughts.

"This is why one must be armed with the insights that are needed to know that it is okay to grieve, but not to accept that one is worthless or hopeless."



Deliverance from the past is when one remembers it without pain or bitterness.

Breast Cancer: Primary Chemoprevention Therapies.



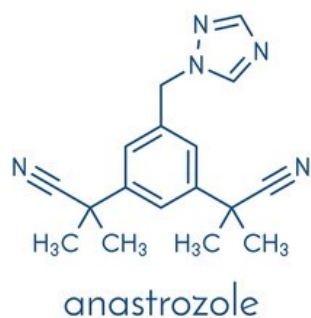
Tamoxifen

“That SERMs (i.e. tamoxifen and raloxifene) are effective for reducing the risk of hormone-sensitive breast cancer is incontrovertible.”

Introduction

According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, chemoprevention is the use of a drug or a therapeutic biologic product, in order to reduce the risk of developing cancer. This may be primary (i.e. in a person who is at increased or high-risk), or secondary (i.e. in a person who already had cancer, to prevent a second or new cancer). The agents that have been approved for use today for chemoprevention therapies, were already in use for the treatment of breast cancers. As such the use of a drug like tamoxifen on healthy women who just had increased risk of developing breast cancer was a novel idea, and a cause for concern, as it has significant side effects. Be this as it may, it was and is still an exciting one.

This is because these selective estrogen receptor modulators (SERMs), work variably, to either inhibit or stimulate estrogen receptors (ER) on various organs. Thus, tamoxifen inhibits the receptors in the breast, but stimulates these in the endometrium (i.e. inside the uterus). Meanwhile, raloxifene inhibits the ERs in the breast, but does not stimulate these in the endometrium. It is going to be very interesting to see how these effects line up with the respective effectiveness of these agents, their side effects, and their risk and benefits for a prospective user. Meanwhile, the other group of drugs called the aromatase inhibitors or inactivators (AIs), work by inhibiting or inactivating aromatase, the enzyme that is used to produce estrogen outside the ovaries (i.e. its primary source). Thus, these drugs (i.e. exemestane [an inhibitor], anastrozole, and letrozole [the inactivators]) attenuate the effects of estrogen in the pa-



anastrozole

tient, and also provide a profile of effectiveness and unwanted effects that are consistent with their mechanisms of action. The major challenge today with this mode of prevention of breast cancer is that many potentially eligible women are unaware of their existence, and even some of their physicians are not conversant with these too. Thus, it is my hope that a forum such as this, would serve to further propagate the dissemination of this mode of prevention, as they have been proven to be effective and safe for the recommended groups of patients. Furthermore, in order to better understand this mode of prevention, the review some of the functions of estrogen is pertinent.

Some of How Estrogen Works

Estrogen influences many functions in a woman's body, but I will focus on just a few of these that are pertinent to the topic. Estrogen influences the development of the female reproductive system, in that it stimulates the development and maturation of the uterus, the endometrium, the fallopian tubes and the ovaries. It also fosters the maintenance of the bone strength, by balancing the process of laying down with resorbing of the calcium and other elements. Beside the other effects of estrogen on the liver, it stimulates the production of clotting factors, thus increasing their amounts in the bloodstream. In addition, it also influences the activity of the sympathetic central nervous system (i.e. the part that prepares someone for emergencies), and fosters a calming effect and sense of well-being. Thus, it becomes clear that antagonizing or enhancing its effects, as the SERMs do, or limiting its availability

as the AIs do, would generate corresponding effects or side effects, as shown in the table below (see Table 1).

The Agents for Breast Cancer Chemoprevention Therapies.

That SERMs (i.e. tamoxifen and raloxifene) are effective for reducing the risk of hormone-sensitive breast cancer is incontrovertible. This is because after many properly designed clinical trials involving thousands of women from various countries, who had various risk categories (i.e. low, normal and increased) for breast cancer, these agents were found to reduce the risk of developing invasive disease by 30%-50% after 5 years of treatment. Furthermore, this benefit persisted for at least 16 years, but these were not found to prevent eventual death from this disease. Thus, SERMs could postpone being diagnosed with the disease for that long, which would mean being healthy for a reasonably long time. For raloxifene, after several years of assessments, it was found that the overall reduction of the risk of invasive breast cancer was 66%, and for ER positive disease, 76%. A comparison of tamoxifen with raloxifene showed that, in terms of effectiveness, the two drugs were similar; but in terms of side effects, the women who received tamoxifen had higher risks of uterine cancers, clotting-related events, and cataracts, but similar risks for heart attacks, strokes and fractures. Thus, tamoxifen is not as safe as raloxifene, and especially so, for women who are postmenopausal, as these are at higher risk of developing clots, and fractures. In addition, while the women who received tamoxifen complained more frequently of

Breast Cancer: Primary Chemoprevention Therapies

Table 1. The Mechanisms of Action, the Effects and Side Effects of the Medicine Approved for Breast Cancer Chemoprevention Therapies.

The Medicines	Mechanisms of Actions	The Desired Effects	Major Adverse Effects
Tamoxifen	Inhibits or stimulates estrogen receptors.	Reduces ER+ve breast cancer risk in high-risk pre- and postmenopausal women; maintains bone density.	Hot flashes; venous thromboembolic events (i.e. blood clots in the legs and lungs); increase risk of endometrial cancer, and cataract surgeries.
Raloxifene	Inhibits or stimulates estrogen receptors.	Reduces the risk of ER+ve breast cancer in postmenopausal women; reduce the risks of all types of fractures (i.e. vertebral and non-vertebral).	Hot flashes; blood clots; but no increased risk of endometrial (i.e. uterine) cancer.
Exemestane	Inhibits the enzyme aromatase found outside the ovaries.	Reduces the risk of invasive hormone-sensitive breast cancer in women at increased risk; reduces risk of recurrent, metastatic, or new breast cancers.	Hot flashes, fatigue, joint and muscle pains, reduced mineral bone density, and increased risk of fractures.
Anastrozole	Inactivate the enzyme aromatase found outside the ovaries.	Reduces the risk of invasive hormone-sensitive breast cancer in women at increased risk; reduces risk of recurrent, metastatic, or new breast cancers.	Hot flashes, fatigue, joint and muscle pains, reduced mineral bone density, and increased risk of fractures.
Letrozole		Reduces the risk of invasive hormone-sensitive breast cancer in women at increased risk; reduces risk of recurrent, metastatic, or new breast cancers.	Hot flashes, fatigue, joint and muscle pains, decreased mineral bone density, and increased risk of fractures.

Abbreviations: ER, Estrogen receptors.

hot flashes, problems with controlling their bladder, gynecologic problems, and leg cramps, those who received raloxifene were more likely to complain of having pain during sexual intercourse, problems with their muscles and bones. In view of the safety profiles of these agents, tamoxifen works best for premenopausal women who are at increased risk, while raloxifene works best for their postmenopausal counterparts. With respect to the AIs, for primary breast cancer chemoprevention therapies in postmenopausal women, exemestane was found to reduce the risk of invasive disease by 65%, and anastrozole by 53%. Meanwhile, since these agents reduce the level of circulating estrogen, their side effects include fatigue, joint pain, muscle pain, reduced bone minerals, and as such increased rate of fractures. Other named side effects include carpal tunnel syndrome, joint stiffness, pain in the hand and

foot, hypertension, and hot flashes. However, as with raloxifene, these do not increase the risk of endometrial cancer.

The Eligibility for Breast Cancer Chemoprevention.

In view of the severity of breast cancer, the need to reduce one’s risk of developing it, the presence of efficacious therapies that can help in this vane, and unfortunately, their significant side effects, it becomes necessary for a woman to engage the health care system including her physician, in order to access and utilize the resources that would foster informed decision making. The following are the pertinent steps to accessing and using the primary breast cancer chemoprevention therapies.

Personal Risk Assessment:

The objective here is thorough history taking, clinical examination, laboratory and radiological assessments (i.e.

including genotyping) in order to determine a woman’s risk profile or status (i.e. average-, increased-/high-risk). The history taking would be done to identify the known risk factors for breast cancer, especially the presence of familial risk factors that would be suggestive of a carrier status for the breast cancer susceptibility genes (BRCA I and BRCA II), and genetic syndromes; for sporadic breast cancer risk, identified known risk factors would be keyed into the computerized models such as the Breast Cancer Risk Assessment Tool by Gail et al, which would generate risk scores for 5 years and a lifetime. Other important features of the history taking and medical record review, would be to identify factors that would determine one’s life expectancy, and potential relative or absolute contraindications for the proposed therapies. Other tests that would be needed would be in this vein, and

“In view of the safety profiles of these agents, tamoxifen works best for premenopausal women who are at increased risk, while raloxifene works best for their postmenopausal counterparts.”

Breast Cancer: Primary Chemoprevention Therapies.

“This process would call for one’s physician to help to one understand one’s personal risks and the seriousness of breast cancer; the preventive services other than chemoprevention therapies, including the risks, benefits, the alternatives and the uncertainties.”

would include breast cancer screening, a gynecologic assessment for women with an intact uterus, and bone density assessment.

Risk/Benefit Assessment and Counseling: having generated a comprehensive risk profile, which would include one’s breast cancer risk, and one’s health attributes, the next objective would be to work together with one’s physician to determine the best course of action. This process would call for one’s physician to help to one understand one’s personal risks and the seriousness of breast cancer; the preventive services other than chemoprevention therapies, including the risks, benefits, the alternatives and the uncertainties. Furthermore, now empowered by this information, one would weigh one’s values regarding the risks and benefits of the therapies versus one’s breast cancer risk, and then make a decision. These would include abstinence, where one does not receive the therapies, but would continue to have one’s normal preventive regimen; Otherwise, one would choose to receive the therapy.

Post-Therapy Surveillance: It is expected that upon the receipt of one’s therapy, one would still continue to be

monitored by one’s physician; maintain routine age-appropriate screening for breast cancer, and gynecologic screening for women with intact uteri; have ophthalmologic examinations to assess for cataracts and other vision-related issues, and have one’s bone density monitored, if on AIs.

Points to Ponder.

It is pertinent to take the following into consideration.

- ⇒ Being on or having completed chemoprevention therapy does not preclude having appropriate screening for breast cancer. Furthermore, it does not mean that one cannot still be diagnosed with breast cancer, as there are other less common subtypes (i.e. ER-negative, etc.).
- ⇒ The side effects tend to cease after the therapies end, but the risk reducing effects, while not indefinite, have been reported to last for at least 16 years.
- ⇒ Women who have a history of clotting-related problems such as deep vein thrombosis, pulmonary embolism (i.e. clots

in the lungs), cerebrovascular accidents (strokes) or prolonged immobilization should not have SERMs.

- ⇒ On the other hand, postmenopausal women who are eligible for treatment for osteoporosis, may benefit from raloxifene, as it is effective against osteoporosis, and also reduces one’s breast cancer risk.
- ⇒ A prior hysterectomy is a plus for women who are eligible for tamoxifen therapy.

The most important issue is to work with your physician to identify the course of action for you based on your breast cancer risk status and values with regards to preventing the disease, your risks/benefits index, in view of your health profile; and to follow through diligently, for it is preventable.

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Dr. Mfon Cyrus-David is a Consultant Specialist in Clinical Cancer Prevention, Medical Affairs and Medical Informatics.

A Simplified Decision-Making Process Concerning Accessing and Using Breast Cancer Chemoprevention Therapies.

Initial Status about Chemoprevention Therapies	Research & Consultations Phase	Decision Making Phase
Fears & Doubts	Personal research, personal breast cancer risk assessment, and risk/benefits assessment and counseling.	Yes
Barriers or Concerns		No
Enthusiasm and Cues		Pending (i.e. deferred)
Your domain	Shared domain (You, your support team, & your care providers and the payers)	



The Newfoundland Foundation



“...For such a time as this.”

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK: This month's edition has articles from the four arms of our ministry, namely:

The Marriage and Family Ministry - **Love Strong.**

The Christian Life Ministry - **Over the Wall.**

The Young Adults/Singles and Campus-Focused Ministry - **Pure and Strong.**

The Clinical Cancer Prevention program - **It's Preventable!**

These are designed to inform, motivate and revive our spirits, as we continue on our walk with the Holy Spirit.

ABOUT THE NEWFOUNDLAND FOUNDATION, INC.: Our mission is to live our lives and to carry out His commands in such a way that would demonstrate God's sovereignty through His interventions in the lives of individuals or nations; His unfailing love through the salvation of souls, and the meeting of various needs, and to prepare our world for His return by building the body of Christ unto maturity.

CONTACT INFORMATION: For further information, visit www.newfoundlandfi.org, or send an email to miscd@newfoundlandfi.org.

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