

uplifting

HOW TO BECOME A BETTER YOU



• GOSPEL

At first 25-year-old Dyma Honore thought she had the perfect marriage. She married her best friend from high school and for a while they shared a happy loving relationship. When Honore learned that her husband was cheating, things changed. They started fighting, and the days of matrimonial bliss ended.

Honore prayed that God would fix her marriage. But when things didn't get better, she began to wonder why her prayers weren't being answered.

"I was praying, waiting for Him to show me signs, waiting for Him to come to me," she remembers. "I thought if He loved me so much, why wouldn't He give my marriage to me?" Honore couldn't understand why her marriage was failing, though she continued to pray for change.

Rev. Donald Lee of All Faith's Christian Center & Word of Faith Ministries in Baton Rouge, La. says he hears stories like Honore's all the time. He says that people often ask God for prayers but fail to do their part in the process.

"It won't do you any good to pray and say looking for a job, but right after you say

that dynamite prayer, you're laying in bed, watching *Gunsmoke* and *Petey Pablo* videos," says Rev. Lee.

Faith and prayer play a prominent role in the African-American community. A study by the Barna Group found that 92 percent of blacks pray at least once a week. For a people who have faced oppression and discrimination for hundreds of years, the idea of salvation through prayer has been, and remains a constant.

Rev. Jeff Baugham, program director for the African American Self-Help Foundation, says faith is important, but self-empowerment must not be forgotten. "Faith and work are inextricably connected," he says. "If you say you have faith, but you're not doing something to change the situation you're in, then you really don't have faith."

Honore eventually realized it would take more than faith to save her marriage—she needed action.

"I wasn't putting in [any] effort. I thought if God wants my marriage to be saved, my husband would walk in and say, 'I'm sorry, we should get some marriage counseling,'" says Honore. "I was, like, 'Lord, change my hus-

band,' but I was forgetting about me. You have to put forth effort and you have to have faith, but you have to do something."

LaQuenda Henson of Fort Worth, Texas can relate. She remembers a time when she asked God to keep her out of a bad situation but did not do her part to follow through. After dating a guy for a short time she knew she did not want to take the relationship to the "next level." So when he invited her over to watch a movie at midnight, she prayed to resist the temptation but went anyway. The next day she was repenting about her actions the previous night.

Henson realized that while she knew her Scriptures, she had to learn how to apply them to daily life. "I read it, I knew it, but you have to apply it. There's a role you have to play," she says.

Striving to live by the Bible passage in James 2:14-26 that says, "faith without works is dead," should be a motivator in our everyday lives rather than a solution, according to Rev. Baugham. "If we can't get what we feel we need, faith should motivate us to find new strategies," he surmises.

Honore is now working on repairing her marriage but acknowledges that it was her actions combined with faith that made the difference. "I had to change my ways—my attitude was nasty," she says. "I had to change."