

HIGH TIMES

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Wit's back to school night! Aren't ell you excited? Ready or not...it's on! But here's a word of encouragement to those that still have kids in grade school or off to college. Now is certainly not the time to let up or give in. The days are evil and the culture is as aggressively after our kid's future as we are to see them fulfill their divine purpose in life.

In light of this fact, the best and most effective thing we can do for them is to pray for them every day! Sounds kind of basic but truth be told, the idea often gets lost in the hustle of life! It's not a novel idea or a last resort. If we're thinking straight, prayer would always be our first resort. Someone once said that "Satan trembles when

he sees the weakest Christian on his knees." Therefore, let me suggest that after the ones that are still home have gone to sleep, go to their bedsides, get on your knees and pray for your kids. Those that are away in college pray without ceasing!

What should you pray about? I think Luke 2:52 makes for a good place to draw some specifics. It says "And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and favor with God and men." The four areas mentioned are all areas that we'd love to see our kids grow in. The first area is wisdom; they need it along with the knowledge that's taught. As important as knowledge is they need

biblical wisdom to help them navigate through the fog of decisions they will face that are not in black and white. They need the ability to apply knowledge to practical issues of life.

The Psalmist says "The fear of



the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good under-

standing have all those who love His commandments" (Psalms 1:10).

Then pray for them to do the very best that they can in school and develop intellectu-

- 9th Anniversary Celebration—October 8, 2006
- Bishop Thomas in Revival—Blue Ridge Baptist—Roanoke, VA October 9-13
- Fall Flea Market/Yard Sale, October 14
- Bishop Thomas at Mt. Hattin Baptist, October 20
- Bishop Thomas at Macedonia Baptist, Washington, DC November 7-9

HIP HOP AND GOD—BACKSTAGE WITH KURTIS BLOW

For those who weren't there, here is a backstage view before, after, and during the evening. First of all I have to confess: I had never heard of Kurtis Blow, and I knew nothing about hip hop. I thought maybe God was confused when he set me up to bring Kurtis to Highview.

I was teaching a computer class at

a government agency, and I made a connection with a particularly lively student in the front row, Michelle Smith-Maiden aka "Noodles." I learned that she is a radio host and asked her about publicity for the forthcoming book Bishop Thomas and I are writing. She said she would be happy to interview us on air. I then crossed paths with her a few times over the next couple months, and she told me she

wanted to bring Kurtis Blow down from New York to speak at a church here. She asked me if I could set it up at my church.

I thought there must be something wrong with this deal. Why would a big star come all the way down from New York for the tiny fee our small church could give him? I considered several possibilities, and I

PUT THIS IN THEIR BACKPACK (FROM PAGE 1)

ally and academically, but more important that they will grow to know God intimately and know what He calls right and wrong. Pray for their health and safety to reach their full potential in life; "Increase in stature", which refers to their physical growth. Then pray for God's favor on their life, so that they will always be sensitive to the Lord, that knowing and walking with God is a priority in their life and their greatest desire. They need to know that they have a place in the plan of God and not be so concerned about their place on "My Space" (if you don't know what my space is you need to check it out). They need to know that that greatness in life is determined by

the willingness to serve the Lord with all their heart; and in doing so they will find their identity and validation in Him not in conformity. And then finally not only for favor with God but favor with men. It's rough out there to be different as a Christian adult, even the more for a young person. That takes a righteous stand. Pray for them that God would give them courage to stand, but also that they will learn how to get along with others, and find friends without compromising their values. Pray even now that the right companions will find their way into your kid's life. Pray that the relationships forged will help them make decisions even about their future husbands and wives. And while

you're at it put a word of encouragement in their backpack everyday. They'll smile when they read it and appreciate that we parents can do more than fuss! While you pray for them, I'll be praying for you. May this year be the best year yet for you and your Children!



Treat a child as though he already is the person he's capable of becoming.
—HAIM GINOTT

THE SNEEZE

This happened at a small high school in Maryland recently...

They walked in tandem, each of the 92 students filing into the already crowded auditorium. With rich maroon gowns flowing and the traditional caps, they looked almost as grown up as they felt.

Dads swallowed hard behind broad smiles, and Moms freely brushed away tears.

This class would not pray during the commencements--not by choice, but because of a recent court ruling prohibiting it.

The principal and several

students were careful to stay within the guidelines allowed by the ruling. They gave inspirational and challenging speeches, but no one mentioned divine guidance and none asked for blessings on the graduates or their families.

The speeches were nice, but they were routine.....until the final speech received a standing ovation.

A solitary student walked proudly to the microphone. He stood still and silent for just a moment, and then, it happened. All 92 students, every single one of them, suddenly SNEEZED!!!!

The student on stage simply

looked at the audience and said, " GOD BLESS YOU, each and every one of you!" And he walked off stage...

The audience exploded into applause. The graduating class found a unique way to invoke God's blessing on their future with or without the court's approval.

Grace or Disgrace: Recognize the Patterns

[Exodus 33:13](#) (21 Century King James translation)

Now therefore, I pray Thee, if I have found grace in Thy sight, show me now Thy way that I may know Thee, that I may find grace in Thy sight; and consider that this nation is Thy people."

We must ask God to help us to realize when we are living our lives in grace or disgrace.

Bishop shared with us on last Sunday the importance of recognizing patterns in our life--both positive and negative. When we ask God to show us ourselves, He is faithful to honor that request. While most of us rarely review and then recognize destructive patterns in our own lives, we are quick to see them in others.

I have over the course of this last year had the opportunity to take a look at my patterns, and to determine whether it brings grace or disgrace to the name of Jesus. What I have found is that when I take the time to consider my ways and my response to others, I then recognize the need to change a pattern in me.

For me, the pattern correction was how I responded to the behaviors of my husband. God's grace has given me the ability to realize I am not responsible for him. He is responsible for himself and his relationship with God. Staying committed and focused on the changes and improvements God is working in me helps me not to disgrace God, but remain honorable in my actions.

Ask God --"Lord help me to be graceful not disgraceful."

HIP HOP AND GOD (FROM PAGE 1)

figured the most likely was that he wanted us for practice. I figured that just because one is a music star doesn't mean one is good at public speaking. Blow is still in ministry school, so maybe he wanted a small, "safe" audience in a distant city to try out one of his first sermons. I knew that he is involved in The Hip Hop Church in New York, but he is not the pastor. So maybe he has a very limited role there—an AME church with rules and roles, no doubt. I thought about a charming line from the famous motivational speaker Les Brown, "When I started out, I spoke at kindergartens... They gave me confidence.. We LIKE you Mr. Brown."

As I made arrangements for Kurtis, (whose real name is Kurtis Walker) to come down, my misgivings increased. Speaking with him on the phone and by email it was difficult to get the arrangements nailed down. On the day he was to arrive, his plan changed three times: Andy and I were to pick him up at National, then Dulles, then, no, he would drive down. And he got a late enough start to make it doubtful he could arrive on time for the 7:30 program.

At 5:30 I met Noodles and her family at a Pizza Hut near the church. Noodles was to be the MC, and I was to introduce her. I learned that she had a wide background in the arts: not only radio and record promoting for all the big labels (even I recognized the name "Def Jam"), but also performing with the group Main Source and then acting, talent scouting, writing for Rap Sheet Magazine, designing a fashion line, etc. etc. She is pas-

sionate about the original hip hop culture: before it turned to money, sex, and violence, it was a celebration of black culture and a way to bring the community together, she said. She serves as a consultant to aspiring talent, and she has founded The Urban Agency to promote constructive development of the arts. When she told me that Urban Agency was funding Blow's expenses for this trip, I assumed she had a grant. But it turns out she is funding Urban Agency from her own pocket.

I led her, her sweet husband Joe, and their three daughters to the church and introduced them to Bishop Thomas in his office. They talked there for over an hour about empowering the black community while we waited for Kurtis, who took a wrong turn on the Washington beltway. Excitement filled the halls of the church as young people ran around and practiced their parts for the evening. Minister Miner had arranged several acts by the youth to precede Blow's talk. She also invited a Christian rap group from the Hampton area, First Movement, and they arrived dressed the part enough to make me a little nervous. TALL young men they are. As it turned out, they saved the day beautifully by serving as an indefinite warm-up act until Kurtis arrived. They rapped for Jesus and called for young people to come upstage one-by-one to sing, dance, or tell their testimony. I could barely understand a word they said while singing, but I caught an occasional phrase to let me know it was uplifting content.

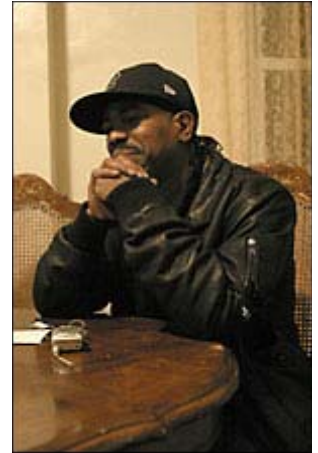
When Kurtis arrived, we started

and I introduced Noodles by saying that my role in bringing the evening together was an example of how God works in mysterious ways. He surrounds us with opportunities at every moment. Those opportunities are always there, waiting for us to notice them and take advantage of them. I did a mini -rap: "The ways of God are so mysterious To think on it makes me delirious."

Noodles then told her own testimony about how bad management early in her performing career put her in debt and led to a suicide attempt. A visit to a church started her recovery and her interest in protecting others from the same fate. She told young people interested in arts careers to be sure they learn the business side.

Finally it was time for Kurtis at 9:15. From the first moment, he was phenomenal. Noodles had told me he would not sing. "For that you'd be paying big bucks," she said. But right off he went into a version of his biggest hit, "the Breaks" that substituted some spiritual words and got everybody involved as he moved up and down the aisle. Unlike the younger people who preceded him, I could understand every word. In fact, his speech and diction all evening were high-end polished but also completely natural and genuine. He called up all the young people and told them education is the key to their futures. Then together they sang another of his big songs.

Finally he started his talk with a scripture reading about the blind man calling out to Jesus for heal-



He called up all the young people and told them education is the key to their futures.

"Excitement filled the halls of the church as young people ran around and practiced their parts for the evening"

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PROVIDING WORLD-CLASS MINISTRY DESERVING OF AN AWESOME GOD

HIP-HOP AND GOD (FROM PAGE 3)

ing, and hence, his title – "Holla acha boy." He told how Hip Hop culture started as an antidote to oppression and misery in the slums of New York, comparing it to release from oppression in Egypt. And then he told his personal story of times God had spoken to him and saved his life. He was riveting throughout. He finished with a beautiful altar call, taking off his baseball cap to reveal himself as just a man, slight of build, large of heart. Then he encouraged the kids to come back up and do their liveliest number – which turned into another round of individuals doing moments of dance center stage—"Go Crystal, Go Crystal, Go Crystal." Kurtis did a break dance.

Afterwards, everyone swarmed him with their cell phones poised, and he posed for pictures

with each of them. Several people asked him to listen to their demo tapes. Noodles got much the same attention, with people asking about her arts coaching.

Then at 11:00 we went to a late dinner at a Silver Diner: Kurtis, Andy and me, and Noodles and family. I ordered a chocolate malt, and almost everyone followed suit. Kurtis ordered a BLT with extra mayo. He and Noodles talked a lot of music shop talk that I mostly didn't follow. Kurtis bemoaned that many radio stations are dropping hip-hop, and that today's hip-hop is a Sodom and Gomorrah for youth. He said he ants not only to finish seminary, but to get a PhD as well so he can use his full talents to the benefit of God. He studied communications in college, he said, thinking it would make him a good DJ. But now he

realizes God wanted him to have those skills for ministry.

Noodles mentioned other rappers-turned-ministers. "I have theological differences with them," is all Kurtis said to summarize his feelings about one who uses profanity in his sermons and another who is a prosperity preacher. And that is the point that impressed me most. There was no hint of judgment in his voice, just a simple standing in his truth. Like our beloved Bishop Thomas, Kurtis has that inner calm of someone with both confidence and humility. When I asked if we can sell the videotape we made of the evening, he said, "I'd like to at least see it first," which I took to mean that he was more concerned about its quality than about getting a cut of the money. I learned from

It is a command of God that all true believers become involved in the work of the ministry and evangelism. Therefore:

OUR MISSION IS:

- † TO GLORIFY GOD
- † TO EQUIP SAINTS
- † TO MAINTAIN HOLINESS
- † TO EVANGELIZE

It is important that every believer makes a conscious decision to follow Christ in loving obedience.

Noodles that much of the difficulty in making arrangements was his attempt to save her money.

So as you can probably tell, I came home a complete fan of his budding ministry, and with a very, very big smile on my face. But after all that hip-hop music, the piece that gently haunted me the next day was Brooke singing, "It is to you I give the glory, It is to you I give the praise..."

Thank you, Jesus.
Teri