

ASCENSION FELLOWSHIP CHURCH:

I AM  
BLACK  
HISTORY

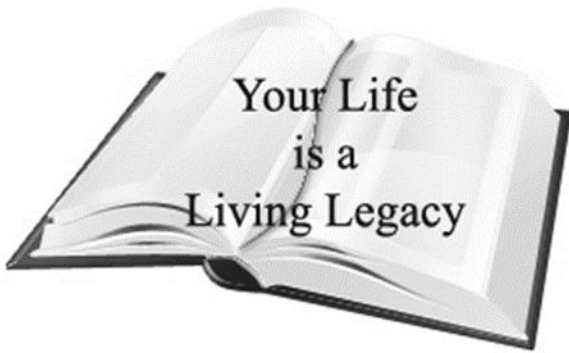


## AFC: Black History Is Local

Black History Month has been nationally observed since 1976 and focuses attention on our contributions both historical and currently. There is recognition of figures, such as, Dr Martin Luther King, President Barack and Michelle Obama; LeBron and Savannah James; Oprah Winfrey and others who made a difference and whose activism changed the course of political outcomes, increased educational opportunities or improved our socio-economic situations.

At Ascension Fellowship Church our focus in 2023 will be upon "the Hidden Figures:" our families, neighbors, religious leaders, and our communities whose influences shaped us into the people we are today.

Outlined below are summaries of life lessons learned, which you live by, pass on to your family and share with friends and neighbors:



**Ancestor:** Beulah Edwards; Grandmother; Carthage MS

**Descendants:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Gen. Mary Jones; 3<sup>rd</sup> Gen. Kim Ashwood/ Siblings; 4<sup>th</sup> Gen. Nicole Ashwood; 5<sup>th</sup> Gen Douglas Enoch Jr

**Life Lessons:** My grandmother who only had a third-grade education stressed that her children, including my mother and her three siblings, take advantage of every educational opportunity. She insisted that we respect our elders, and abide by household rules (“be home before dark” or there would be painful consequences). My grandmother, by her example, taught us never to put up with any “mess” nor suffer through domestic abuse. She stepped out on faith, left her husband with only the clothes on her back and four children to start a new life for herself. My mother was emboldened by her example to leave Mississippi and relocate to Milwaukee with me and my siblings. My grandmother taught us to work for what we needed and save for what we wanted. Even when I reached adulthood my grandmother spoke her mind to me and my siblings about being right with the Lord.

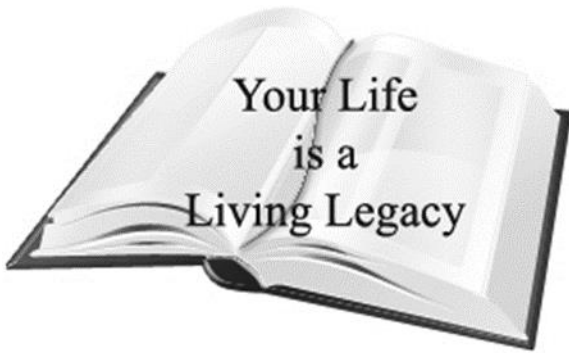
**Legacy:** We are descendants of a strong Black woman who taught us to be strong and not settle for less than the best. We inherited a strong work ethic and a commitment to provide our best effort as though we were working for the Lord. The same values have been passed on from Beulah Edwards to Mary Jones, my mother to myself to Nicole, her great granddaughter, and Douglas Enoch Jr, her great great—grandson. You can start over again—trust yourself and trust the Lord to order your steps. Now as an adult, mother and grandmother that I truly appreciate and the lessons passed on to me by my grandmother and mother.

**Ancestor:** “B.C.” Smith; Uncle; Jackson TN

**Descendants:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Gen. Robert Henning/Siblings; 3<sup>rd</sup> Gen. Robert III, Patrick, Tanoisha; 4<sup>th</sup> Gen. Braylon Henning

**Life Lessons:** Uncle “B.C.” was my role model for taking on adult responsibilities while yet a teen-ager. He took me to church; taught me about Christian living and invested time in teaching me the value of hard work (he worked fulltime plus parttime jobs). He was a family man with Christian family values and encouraged me as the oldest son to look after my siblings. He often said that if you want to have anything you have to work for it because no one is going to give you anything. Just as Uncle “BC” spent time with me, I am an active part of my children and grandchildren lives.

**Legacy:** Like my Uncle” B.C” I worked fulltime plus parttime jobs. I taught my children to remember Christ in all that they do and to work hard for what you want. I am proud that my son Patrick spends quality time with his son, Breland, teaching him life lessons just like Uncle “B.C.” did with me.



**Ancestor:** Burgess Thornton; Grandmother; Cleophas Thornton; Grandfather; Wisconsin

**Descendants:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Gen. Parents; ; **Alexis Hardin 3<sup>rd</sup> Gen 4<sup>th</sup>**

**Life Lessons:** Stressed being responsible for behavior, keeping household neat and clean; good behavior was acknowledged but failure to follow rules would result in discipline. Remember what the Bible teaches and let that guide your life.

**Legacy:** Instilled in me a desire to learn more about what Scripture teaches and apply it to my everyday life.

**Ancestor:** Pastor Joe Maxwell

**Descendants:** Parents 1<sup>st</sup> Gen, **Wallace Wheeler 2<sup>nd</sup> Gen**

**Life Lessons:** No one is perfect so don't be quick to judge. Mother brought me up church (COGIC) and stressed avoiding sinful behavior. She emphasized that no matter what I am going through "God has me" and God is not finished with me yet. Pastor Joe Maxwell (Chicago) taught me and other men how to carry ourselves as Christian men. He taught that all things are possible through prayer.

**Legacy:** Remember the faith of my mother and apply Christian teachings in my life's decisions

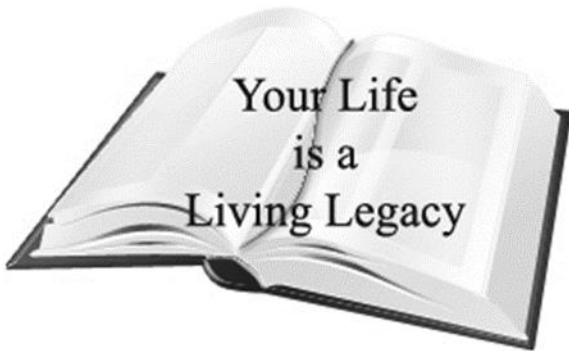
**Ancestor:** Melonda Brown, Grandmother, Mound Bayou, MS

**Descendants:** Parents 2<sup>nd</sup> Gen; **Minnie Harmon 3<sup>rd</sup> Gen; Ken, Gerald, Kevin 3<sup>rd</sup> Gen; Marshala, Lean, Cameron, Ayden; 4<sup>th</sup> Gen; Great-grandchildren**

**Life Lessons:** Respect for elders was a given in our household. When my grandmother was unable to care for herself, my oldest sister provided a home for her. Family unity trumped everything, for example, my mother raised my nephews as part of our family. My daddy set the tone for our household—"Me and my family serve the Lord," (Joshua 24: 15) church attendance was never an option.

My parents taught us that if we kept God first, everything would work out. My grandmother repeatedly said "Read the Bible and the Bible will speak to you about your life. We regularly attended church, tithing was emphasized and even though we were poor, we always gave what we could to the church. Our parents expected us to do our best in terms of achieving higher education and displaying a strong work ethic.

**Legacy:** Learned to make love for the Lord my priority, followed by family unity and then committed worship. These are faith and life lessons that I passed on to my children, taught to my great-grandchildren and great grandchildren. I taught my family to be patient with the Lord's timing and that things work out for those who faith remains in the faith



**Ancestor:** Aunt Sally Smith, Macon GA

**Descendant:** Donna Henning 2<sup>rd</sup> Gen.; Patrick Henning 3<sup>th</sup> Gen; Breylon Henning 4<sup>th</sup> Gen

**Life Lessons:** My Aunt Sally was an active missionary in the AME church and she was someone that I emulated by becoming a missionary and a YPD (Young People and Children's Division) leader. She taught me to have faith in God, respect for others, be humble and to be thankful for what you have. Family is important, especially in times of need.

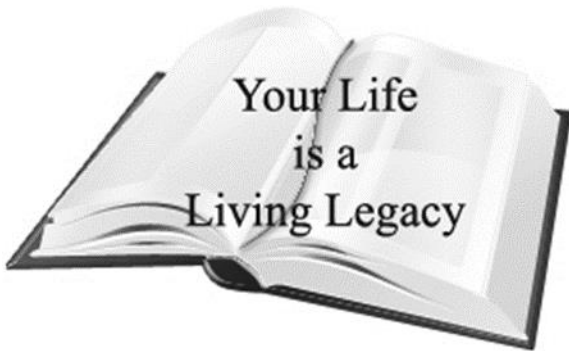
**Legacy:** Applying her example in my life, my demeanor is humble, seek problem solve without and avoid replying in anger. I helped raise two of my nieces because they needed me. My nieces and nephews know that they can count on me. Life lesson that I pass on to them is that family matters above all.

**Ancestor:** Maddie "MaDear" Pugh and Paper Smith, Grandparents, Brundidge, ALABAMA

**Descendant:** Laureen Smith, Mother 2nd Gen; Robert Smith/Siblings 3rd Gen; Robert Jr, Jacob, Ezekiel, Azariah, Marshawn 4th Gen

**Life Lessons:** My grandmother taught us to believe in the Lord's promises, remain faithful and treat others like we wanted to be treated. These lessons were repeated to us by our mother. It was important to them that we were brought up in church so that we learn what God expected of us. She set the example of regularly praying and being positive about what the Lord will do for us. My grandparents raised me until age 5 but that was enough time for them to instill life lessons about the Lord and the living in a sinful world. I was taught to respect others, respect women, don't let others belittle you or play you for a fool. There is no truer friend than Jesus and you will always need Jesus' promises to guide through life's challenges.

**Legacy:** I teach my children to do the right thing; think before act and remember to include Jesus' teaching to guide your decisions.



**Ancestor:** John Wesley and Carolyn Sykes, Grenada, MS

**Descendants:** Carolyn Fullove 2<sup>nd</sup> Gen; **Jimmy Fullove 3<sup>rd</sup> Gen; Josiah, Noah, Micai, and Jimmie Fullove Jr, 4<sup>th</sup> Gen**

**Life Lessons:** I was raised by my uncles who set the example of working hard and working for what you want. My mother emphasized attending Church, be a person of your word, be dependable, humble and not rush to judge others because you don't know their situation. Do good and things will happen for your good.

**Legacy:** I teach my sons to do the right thing and learn to do what Jesus teaches about life

**Ancestor:** Sylvania and Cora Hughes; Parkman, Arkansas

**Descendants:** Lisa Russell and Siblings 2<sup>nd</sup> Gen; Betty Brown and Ray Butler 3<sup>rd</sup> Gen; 7 Grandchildren 4<sup>th</sup> Gen and 10 Great--grandchildren

**Life Lessons:** We grew up on a farm and learned to be self-reliant, taking care of each other. When the crops were harvested in the fall, we gathered as a family to thank God for His blessings. This re-union tradition has continued over a hundred and twenty years. We are a church-going God—loving family who learned to count our blessings and trust God to bring us through the tough times

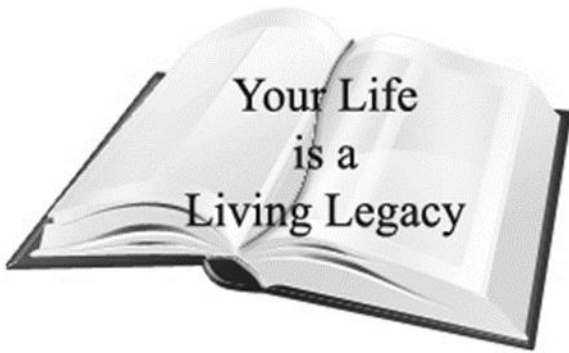
**Legacy:** I taught my children to pray and spend time in church learning why they should accept the Lord as their Savior. I also make sure my grandchildren and great grandchildren know about prayer's power, the Bible and living as a Christian should.

**Ancestor:** Lula Plears, Grandmother; Lorie Plears, Mother, / Donna Henning/ Debra Plears , Aunts; Macon GA

**Descendants:** **Chandra Plears, 3rd Gen; Elijah Plears 4th Gen;**

**Life Lessons:** Family values are centered on what the Bible teaches. Family is a connectional relationship and family helps each other as they can. My aunts were of invaluable assistance helping me raise my son, Elijah as a single mother. They maintained a positive attitude which they got from my grandmother that things will work out for the good. This is faith in Christ lesson which was passed down through the generations. My grandmother set the standard having welcoming heart and open home for children in the family in times of need.

**Legacy:** I am invested in assuring that my young nieces and nephews learn about Jesus at an early age which is why I am part of the Protégé Youth ministry. I am paying forward to these young ones the blessings and compassion that my family extended to me.



**Ancestor:** Julia May, Aunt; Millie Singleton, Grandmother; Whitecastle, LA

**Descendant:** **Delores Singleton, Mother 2<sup>nd</sup> Gen; Pauline Brown, 3<sup>rd</sup> Gen; Lynn Adams, 4<sup>th</sup> Gen**

**Life Lessons:** My grandmother regularly attended church which meant I went to church. She taught me to count my blessings, learn how to get along with others and be faithful with church attendance Her favorite Bible reading was Psalm 23 which I also enjoy. My aunt taught me that life is what you make it and to pray for others as you pray for yourself.

**Legacy:** I have learned to patiently trust in the Lord's promises that my way would be made clear. I also learned to count my blessings; I could have more but the Lord has taken care of me all these years. I pass this wisdom on to my son so that he learns to trust in the Lord.

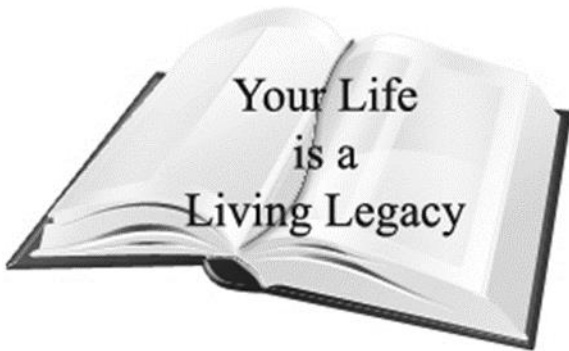
**Ancestor:** Eddie Williams, Grandfather; Susie Lewis, mother; Louisiana

**Descendant:** Eddie Williams, 1<sup>st</sup> Gen; Susie Lewis, 2<sup>nd</sup> Gen; **Louis Smith 3<sup>rd</sup> Gen;** 4 sons/3 daughters, 4<sup>th</sup> Gen; Numerous Grandchildren, 5<sup>th</sup> Gen; Great-grandchildren,

**Life Lessons:** My grandfather taught me the value of working for what you wanted. When he saw me cutting lawns with a push mower, he bought me a gas—powered mower so that I could cut more lawns and earn more money. We set up a payment schedule so that I repaid him for the mower. He emphasized a strong work ethic. His favorite saying was "Don't let the sun beat you up in the morning." He also taught me to earn the trust of others by being a man of my word.

My mother lead me to understanding the importance of having a relationship with the Lord. It was the men of the church who held me accountable for my behavior by calling me out when I misbehaved.

**Legacy:** Be involved in your children's life sooner than later; remember its neve too late to share life lessons . Learn from me that it is better to the Lord right now rather than later.



**Ancestor:** Parents—Ivory and Myrtle Griffin; Bobby Lewis, Aunt; Mississippi;

**Descendants:** Ivory and Myrtle Griffin, 1<sup>st</sup> Gen; **Joe Griffin/Siblings, 2<sup>nd</sup> Gen; Sons/Daughters 3<sup>rd</sup> Gen; Grandchildren 4<sup>th</sup> Gen;**

**Life Lessons:** My parents instilled in me a strong work ethic: Work for what you want! My mother taught me to learn from bad experiences and not let anyone “flip me” into making the same mistakes again. My aunt taught me not to get caught up in other peoples’ messes, let them work it out. It was an older man (Tyrone Burk) who counseled me that I was not like those people who were convincing me to follow a path of bad behavior which could lead to bad consequences for me. I am so grateful to him that he cared enough about to point out that I needed to think about my life’s path.

**Legacy:** For my children and grandchildren, work for you want and if you are unable to afford it decide if you really need it and save for it. Value the blessings you already have. Don’t make other peoples’ problems your problems. You have time for everyone and everything else, spend time getting to know the Lord as your personal Savior.

**Ancestor:** Jeanette Perry, Mother

**Descendants:** Jeanette Perry 1<sup>st</sup> Gen; **Desiree Soltau 2<sup>nd</sup> Gen; Eight Children 3<sup>rd</sup> Gen; 30 Grandchildren 4<sup>th</sup> Gen; 1 Great-grandchild 5<sup>th</sup> Gen**

**Life Lessons:** My mother was my greatest influence upon me. She taught me to stand my ground, don’t be a victim and be honest. She valued living a Christian life above all else. Her favorite scripture was a portion of Joshua 24: 15 “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

**Legacy:** For my children and grandchildren, I have taught them to live a Christian life; stand your ground and be honest with me no matter what you are going through.

**Ancestor:** Willie Bynum, Greenville Ms

**Descendants:** Willie Bynum 1<sup>st</sup> Gen; **Andre Bynum 2<sup>nd</sup> Gen; Aaron/Corey Bynum 3<sup>rd</sup> Gen; Grandchildren 4<sup>th</sup> Gen**

**Life Lessons:** My father was always a part of my life. I was blessed to live in a two-parent household, never having to worry about food on the table or a roof over my head. By his example of persistence, it is not how many times you get knocked down—stay on course and don’t quit. He showed me how to be a loving father and grandfather. Later in life I learned to appreciate and value what it meant that my father was always there for me.

**Legacy:** I want my children and grandchildren to understand what it means to enjoy God’s grace. I am always there for them just as my father was for me



**Ancestor:** John Spence Sr. Father; John Spence Jr, Older Brother; Corinth MS

**Descendants:** **Marvin Spence/Siblings 2<sup>nd</sup> Gen; Latisha, Marisha and Jasmine, 3<sup>rd</sup> Gen; Grandchildren 4<sup>th</sup> Gen**

**Life Lessons:** Many people have shaped me into the person I am today. I learned to navigate through life based on the lessons taught to me by my father and older brother. They impressed upon me the discipline of working for what you need, saving for what you want and focus on my goals. My father valued education so much that we had a library in or home. He stressed that I "be my own man" or to borrow a Shakespearian phrase: "To thy own self be true."

Two ministers, Reverend Ackland and Johnson, were invaluable mentors in discipling me to be the Lord's Servant and Shepherd of His Churches. One of the lasting leadership lessons is to observe, listen, pray then speak.

**Legacy:** I taught my daughters and I am teaching my grandchildren to be your authentic self, neither conforming to the world's standard nor compromising your principles.

**Ancestor:** Diane Martin, Sister; Alberta Love, Compassionate Neighbor; Milwaukee WI

**Descendants:** **Zenobia Spence 2<sup>nd</sup> Gen; Latisha, Marisha, and Jasmine 3<sup>rd</sup> Gen; Grandchildren 4<sup>th</sup> Gen**

**Life Lessons:** My sister, Diane, only a few years older than me, took on the role of mother for me and my siblings. I am forever grateful to the Lord that she was blessed with discernment and insight to guide us through life's challenges. It is a neighbor, Alberta Love, who lived across the street, that demonstrated agape love for me and my sisters. She shared her children's clothes which they had outgrown and gave them to us privately. Never once did she proclaim to others how she helped us with food and clothing. One of her many encouraging messages to me was "don't let anything keep you down." I wanted to be a mother just like Alberta Love which is why I have such compassion for children who are unable to provide for themselves.

**Legacy:** Material possessions are not the thing to live for; those things will never bring you joy. I am teaching my daughters and grandchildren to find joy in being a blessing to others who struggle daily to meet living needs.

**Ancestor:** Carrie Strode, Grandmother; Levert and Erma Strode, Parents

**Descendants:** **Richard Strode/Siblings (Vincent & Marvin) 3<sup>rd</sup> Gen; 20+Grandchildren 4<sup>th</sup> Gen; Great-grandchildren**

**Life Lessons:** My father was a hard—working blue—collar laborer who only missed work two times in 33 years of employment. This hard worker ethic is an attribute I also share. Although my father never went to church, he could put things into perspective regarding not letting people hurt your feelings: "They talked about Jesus Christ; are you better than him?" My mother was the "Church Girl," according to my uncles and she demanded we attend church, sing in the choir and as I got older teach Sunday School. You know the saying in Proverbs 22: 6 "Train up a child in the way he should go... applied to me and my siblings.

I lift up my grandmother who was always there to help our family out with loans which were rarely repaid; brought me first bakery made birthday and gifted me with my first bicycle. Her support was done privately and I never knew how she helped us until after her death.

**Legacy:** We have been given the grace in this life to be a blessing to others and never forget where the Lord has brought us from. I resist judging others, help others as I can and teach my children to apply 1 Corinthians 13: 4-7 in their life decisions. It is not always easy but pray about it and you will see the right choices.

## SOUL FOOD:

“Success is to be measured not as much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which one has overcome while trying to succeed.”—Booker T Washington

“Change will not come if we wait for some other person, or if wait for some other time. We are the ones we have been waiting for. We are the change we seek.”—Barack Obama

“Never be limited by other people’s limited imaginations.”—Dr. Mae Jemison

“One of the hardest things in life to learn are which bridges to cross and which bridges to burn.”—Oprah Winfrey

“It was when I realized I needed to stop trying to be somebody else and be myself, I actually started to own, accept and love what I had.”—Tracee Ellis Ross

“At the end of the day, it’s not about what you have or even what you’ve accomplished. It’s about who you have lifted up, who you have made better. It’s about what you have given back.”—Denzel Washington

“Your story is what you have, what you will always have. It is something to own.”—Michelle Obama

“If you have no confidence in self, you are twice defeated in the race of life.”—Marcus Garvey

“Change is made of choice, and choices are made of character.”—Amanda Gorman

“The Lord is my heritage and the wine of my cup; you are the supporter of my right.”—Psalm 16: 5

“We will not keep them from our children; we will tell the next generation about the Lord’s power and his great deeds and the wonderful things He has done.”—Psalms 78:4

“I could have no greater joy than to hear that my children are following the truth.”—3 John 1:4

“So continue encouraging each other and building each other up, just like you are doing already.”—1 Thessalonians 5: 11