

Ambassadors Fellowship, Inc (AFI) African American Missionary Devotional

Rev Joseph C Jeter, Sr (July 5, 1931 to August 25, 2019)

God's Way of Faith

Scripture Readings: Hebrews 11:1-6, Proverbs 3:5&6



Joseph Jeter was a man of faith and action. He felt called to the mission field, and he would use his own way, which he named “God’s way of Faith.” Mrs. Louise Ben Johnson recounts her memory of when Rev. Jeter was called on a mission’s trip. The only problem: no money. He went to the airport with his luggage, passport, and faith. He stood in the airport and yelled out, “Does anybody believe in Jesus?” Some people affirmed that they did, so he said, “Good, because I need to go to such and such a place to preach the gospel for Jesus, and I don’t have any money.” Those believers gave him money, and he immediately purchased a ticket and went on the mission’s trip. Upon his return, he founded an African American mission sending agency, and he named it, “Have Christ Will Travel Ministries.” The name expressed the simple, radical requirements Jeter had for missionaries.

Thomas Watkins, a writer for *African-American Experience in World Mission*, quotes Jeter, “We went without deputation or anything like that. My approach has always been to trust God. God’s got the money, and when we’ve needed it, we’ve just asked Him for some more.” Rev. Jeter’s whole life proved the faithfulness of God and the blessings of simple trust. He grew up in the ghetto of North Philadelphia and was saved at 17 years of age, while attending a traditional black Baptist church. He was called to preach the Gospel in 1960, and 18 months later, was the pastor of a small storefront church in north Philly. At the same time, he took night classes at Philadelphia College of the Bible. However, Jeter’s knowledge of missions was non-existent. Why? Jeter says, describing his early years of missions exposure, “You have to understand that blacks knew nothing about missions.... There were officers in the churches who had never heard of missionaries. One of my shared burdens was that no white mission’s organization would take black missionaries. I couldn’t even talk to a white missionary in my own

home. I think we're still seeing the fallout today from those days." Despite the barriers that church and mission's racism put in front of black missionaries, the call of God compelled Jeter to overcome them. He was discipled by African American missionaries like Miss Viola Reddish, Ernest Wilson, and Rev. Montrose Waite.

Jeter's first mission trip was to Uganda in 1965. After founding Have Christ Will Travel Ministries (HCWTM), Jeter served, established works, and sent black missionaries to live in places like Haiti, India, Nova Scotia, Liberia, and Nigeria. What enabled this patriarch of African American missions to live out his whole life in radical faith? Rev. Jeter attributes it to prayer, the primary factor of most importance in his ministry. He said about his prayer life, "Prayer anchors me to the Master and to His purpose, whether it be establishing and maintaining a work in Africa, building a church in America, teaching a Bible club in India, or caring for my family's needs. A leader must know His Master's will without a doubt, or his efforts will be empowered only by his own ability and charisma. This works very well for some people some of the time. But more than one ministry has come to a crisis of funds, spirituality, or impact because of prayerlessness on the part of the leaders, the board, or the supporters." Jeter's favorite verse was Proverbs 3:5 & 6, and he lived out this verse. He prayed, and he trusted even when God's ways did not make much sense. God would always provide in incredible ways, which Jeter called, "living daily miracles." He applied this process of prayer, trust, and faith to all areas of his life, not just mission work.

"When it came time for the Jeters' oldest daughter to go to college, they sent her off to Carver Bible School with \$72 and a letter stating that when God gave them the money for tuition, they would send it. Shortly afterward, an Episcopal pastor called Jeter and said that his church had just voted to pay his daughter's tuition every other semester. Such began a legacy of God's provision that has resulted in all five of Jeter's children graduating from college."

Joseph Jeter did not walk the life of faith alone; he was married to Catherine E. Jeter for 67 years. Missionary Catherine Jeter continues serving the Lord as a founding Board Member and Director of Short-term Missions at Have Christ Will Travel Ministries. She has been an integral part of the ministry since its inception.

If trusting God were a crime, would an impartial jury be able to find enough evidence from your life to convict you? After you pray do you move in faith with the expectation that God will answer, like Jeter did going to the airport with no ticket? Could prayerlessness in your life be causing another missionary or mission to be ineffective?

Thomas Watkins, "Joseph Jeter," *African American Experience in World Mission: A Call Beyond Community*, ed. Vaughn Walston and Robert Stevens, (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2009), pp. 61-64.

For More Info See:

Dr. Joseph Jeter. *The Unknown Soldiers: Black Missionaries of the 20th Century*. West Conshohocken, PA: Infinity Publishing, 2004.