

Ambassadors Fellowship, Inc (AFI) African American Missionary Devotional

Rev Virgil Lee Amos, Founder of Ambassadors Fellowship Inc (AFI)

Running to Win



Scripture Readings: Philippians 3:12-14, 1 Cor 9:24-27, Heb 12:1&2

Everyone who knows Rev. Amos knows that it takes an awful lot - certainly more than sickness, back pain, or stiffness, even exhaustion - to slow him down. If encouraged to rest, he'll likely laugh and say God has work for him to do. He's too busy running his race.

Virgil's race began in Oakland, California. Born in 1942, the second of five children, he began working on his family farm at a young age, milking cows and driving tractors by seven years of age and managing his own finances, while still a child. He accepted Jesus as Savior at age ten and began passionately sharing the gospel by high school. Being compelled to proclaim the gospel, Virgil gave up his first dream - to become an engineer and make a good income. Instead, he attended Moody Bible College where God gave him a new vision: a burden for missions.

God sent him first to Mexico in 1962, the same year that he married Martha Williams, and his missions race began in earnest. Together, Virgil and Martha ministered throughout Europe, then India. In the early 1960s, they ministered as part of Operation Mobilization (OM).

In 1965 during a mission trip in Spain, Rev. Amos led a team of missionaries who had become discouraged in their work. Each day they sold gospel books for ministry, using the proceeds to cover their daily expenses. If they didn't sell books, they didn't eat. When food was low, morale was low, making the team even more susceptible to attacks of discouragement. But Virgil was not deterred by discouraged missionaries. A master goal setter with a mission, Virgil inspired his team to achieve those goals. They set the goal to eat three meals a day, they developed a strategy, they prayed and encouraged each other, and they won: the whole team was able to eat, ministered, and were encouraged!

In 1967, Virgil's family began to grow. Norma & Lou Ellen were born as he did missions work. He followed the Lord to Iran, where his family served for eight years. Next was a return to the States, where Virgil finished his education at Biola University and Talbot Seminary.

In 1982, God brought all of Virgil's experiences - as a missionary and as an African American man - together with a clear understanding of his life's work: the founding of Ambassadors Fellowship (AFI). AFI is one of a very few African American sending missions' agencies, bringing to foreign missions and unreached people the awareness of the modern and traditional Black church in the US. God used Virgil as a pioneer in seeing the need to raise up missionaries from ALL nations to spread the gospel. Over the course of his leadership, Virgil took pastors from Africa, Asia, and Mexico to places like South Korea and Bogota, Columbia to expose them to the work God was doing in the world and show them that that work went beyond Westerners. Over nearly 40 years of leading AFI, Virgil was instrumental in sending long-term missionaries to work in over 20 nations from Afghanistan to Uganda.

From 1982 to 2019, Virgil traveled the world, busily articulating AFI's vision of making disciples in all nations and then calling people to surrender to Jesus. Despite his passion for ministry, Virgil experienced setbacks, disappointments, and failures. But he sees them all as part of the Christian journey, which is why one of Rev. Amos's favorite verses is Philippians 3:12-14. He says the Scripture taught him that people (even himself) could always find fault with what he did or did not do. But he needed to forget both the good and bad of the past and live in the present with the grace of God, trusting God to do His will regardless of the challenge. Because of Virgil's single-minded focus to see the gospel of Jesus proclaimed throughout the nations, he made great sacrifices of his time and resources. He lived very simply so he could invest every dollar into ministry. He poured out his energy and time, ministering day and night to anyone in need of discipleship, counsel, or direction.

His heart is making disciple-makers. His vision is an army of radical missionaries living by faith. How is he known? Throughout parts of the world, Rev. Amos is known as a church planter, missionary, teacher, disciple-maker, and evangelist; but to many outside of his formal roles, he is known as Daddy. Rev. Amos is never too busy running his race to be a spiritual father and taking on the role of being a father to the fatherless. He has poured his vision into his spiritual children throughout the nations, willing them to run their race to win and to go farther for Jesus than he has gone. At 78 years old, Virgil is still single-minded about raising up disciple-makers to go to the unreached nations, and he will continue on until he goes Home!

What things (successes & failures, blessings & burdens) from your past are you holding on to that are weighing you down from running today? If you were running to win the spiritual prize and not just "make it into heaven," what would change in your life today? What are your goals and expectations of God? Are they great, befitting a great God? How will you accomplish them today?

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