

When Darkness Consumed and Challenged AR Bernard

In March of 2020, COVID struck Dr. A.R. Bernard, senior and founding pastor of Christian Cultural Center in Brooklyn, New York. With the preexisting condition of asthma, Dr. Bernard understood the virus could be deadly for him.

“I went into the hospital, and I was there for a week. I had full blown COVID with symptoms that were not even in the news yet. It was there that I experienced a theme of darkness for three days, and I looked into the abyss. It was my surrender and my abandonment to God’s providence,” he says, “that gave me peace with whatever outcome He decided.”

Yet the theme of darkness continued to challenge him. “The Holy Spirit brought to me the text in John that speaks of Jesus being the light that shined into the darkness, and the darkness couldn’t comprehend it and couldn’t overcome it. It couldn’t absorb it, it couldn’t ally it. I started thinking about that, and in that moment, light penetrated into the darkness in the hospital room.

“The providence of God gave me peace, but the Word of God, as light, gave me strength,” he continues. “What gives you peace doesn’t always give you strength, but that word gave me strength. By the end of that week, I was leaving the hospital. I went home and was in quarantine, but I was glad to be alive.

“Something shifted in terms of my relationship with God,” he says of the experience. “It took me to a much deeper level of humbling before God. And it opened a space of spiritual understanding that my congregation, those I interact with, my family and I am personally benefiting from.”

Relationships, he continues, are one of the stewardship responsibilities God gives to us, just like our time, talent

and treasures.

“People occupy spaces close to us for one of two reasons,” he explains, “because they have the level of maturity necessary to occupy that space or they are in that space for purpose—and that purpose could be for a moment, a season, a reason or a lifetime. So, discernment is critical when you’re managing relationships.

“And no matter who I’ve dealt with, in whatever sphere or context, people struggle most with relationships—their relationship with God, themselves and other people,” he says. “So, I’ve learned over time some very important lessons about managing that network for life called relationships.”

Dr. Bernard has a set of values that guides his decision-making process and helps him make decisions quickly and confidently. “When any of those values are in violation, I have to decide whether I continue in that relationship for a greater good, or whether I have to remove myself from that relationship because that relationship may put me in a position where I have to compromise those values.”

To hear Doug Stringer’s interview with Dr. Bernard in its entirety, listen to *A Word in Season with Doug Stringer and Friends* on the Charisma Podcast Network. {eoa}