My Remembers

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We were taught the Bible at home. Just about every day or night we had time to study the scripture with Mother. My dad did not read. We had to read and learn certain scripture of the Bible and one thing for sure, Bessie Lee would be still during this period. We never sit down at the table one by one. We sit down and eat together and not before prayer and thank God for the food. And we did not go to bed before we said our prayer. We were taught them from the time we could talk. Our first prayer:

My Lord lay me down to sleep  
If I die before I wake  
I pray to the Lord my soul to take  
Bless Momma and Daddy  
Bless Ruth and Bessie Lee  
Bless Every Body  
Amen

Going to church has all way been the back bone support for the Black people. Meeting people at church, having fun at church. Most all the farm community would be there at church on Sundays and Wednesdays. And above all Black folk felt better going to church after chopping cotton all week.

Every time the church door open we were there: Sunday School, Church, and Pray Meeting every Wednesday night and any other function. Wednesday night pray meeting was said to be like a car. You have to stop and fill up the car with gas every once in a while. So on Wednesday night you go to pray meeting. You pray, sing, and fill up on the Holy Spirit so it will last until Sunday. There were a lot of Wednesday that men could not be there due to ther work schedule, especial during harvest time.
The thing I remember about church as a kid growing up, my mother were teaching me Bible. She also taught Sunday School. I remember once the devotional part of Sunday School was over, kid and adult broke down in age groups and moved off to one corner or the other with ther teacher for this Sunday lesson. About forty-five minutes later we reassemble for dismissal.

Kid learn how to read in Sunday School. There were even grown peoples learn to read out of ther Bibles at Sunday School and pray meeting. There were Sunday School every Sunday morning. There were church just about all day, and sometime even on the Sunday night, especial on Church Anniversary and Home Coming and closing out a Revival.

There were only one Baptisement a year, no matter how many join church. We would go to church this Sunday. After church you would go home, get your food, and head out to Doctor Dyes for dinner by the creek. Dinner on the ground were all way great. There were all way plenty of food—chickin, red bean, black peas, green bean with potatoes, potato salad, greens, dressing and gravy, and plenty of cake, pies, cookies, and hand made ice cream.

After dinner we had service and line up for the dip in the water. While the preacher dip you, the women would line the banks singing song. After all the baptising, kid would play, people would sit around and talk until some one would say, Well, I guess I better get home and feed and milk that white man cows.

I better go too, I got to chop that old woman some wood for next week if I want something to eat. This is what a husband would say.

I'll see you Wednesday at pray meeting if the Lord is willing and the creek don't rise. And on this note parent start gathering up kid and all say, Good by. See you later.
There were only one Baptism a year, no matter how many join the church. After church you would go home, get your food, and head out to Doctor Dyes for dinner by the creek.

The only preacher I remember real well was a woman, Sister Riddle, in her long black robe (sometime white robe on special occasion) and big white hankchief threwed over her shoulder for wiping sweat. Whin I was young going to church, Sister Riddle favorite songs before she started to preach was “I’m Going to Lay Down My Burden” and “Down By the Riverside.”

I love good singing and I love to sing with male chorus and choirs. I can’t sing but I try to. It nothing like sitting back and hearing an old Negro spiritual or an old sister or deacon lead a old 100 hymn. (A old 100 hymn was from slave times—deeply felt and with a spiritual feeling, such as “Guide Me O Thou
Some time now day or night I can hear my mother singing. She use to sing all the time around the house, especial whin she was tired or worried about something. Song like “Just a Closer Walk With Thee,” “Jesus Keep Me Near the Cross,” “I’m Going to Lay Down My Burden,” and “Down By the Riverside.” I like the song “If I Could Hear My Mother Pray Again,” “I Love the Lord, He Hear My Cry,” “I Will Trust in the Lord,” “Mothers Bow,” and “Precious Lord.”

Churches these days have gotten away from most of the old spiritual singing. Choirs with all type of musical instruments has dominated the singing. Some drowns out words. Don’t get me wrong. The music is fine. The singing is good. But it is also good to hear some of the old Negro spiritual songs occupella, singing without music, every once in a while. You hear a lot of talk these days that preacher don’t preach like they use to, and song not sung like they use to. Yet and still you get out of it what you put in. If you don’t take the spirit to church with you, you sure can’t get it out of the church whin you get there. In other words you build on what you take. You don’t give nothing, you don’t get nothing.

Sister Riddle baptise me whin I was about seven year old. About ten of us kid were baptise down on White Rock Creek on Doctor Dye place in a picnick place. Sunday School would last at least two hour. Then Mr. Bud Thorton would get up and talk a hour. Whin I was younger I all way thought he was a preacher. People would be driving by Preston Road and stop by. They would be white or black, and they would be from all most anywhere in the states. Of course, back then everybody would try to find a church to go to on Sunday, even whin traveling.

Some of the thing I can remember and never understood were that the men would dress up and go to church and stand
around outside talking, and most would never come in church unless there were quartets singing. There use to be several quartets get together and sing against each other. Some would call it a contest. There were four of us boys about fourteen to sixteen year old and we had a quartet name the Rising Star Jr. The boys were me, Sonny and Willard Harris, and Henry Arnold. The older quartet were call the Rising Star Sr. Every where the older men would sing, we would too.

At the special service and revival the church was all way full. Most all the white folk that live out on the country would come to listen from time to time: the Haggards, the Pearsons, the Shepherds. Also other church from Rock Hill, Pilot Point, Frisco, and White Rock would participate with song groups and preaching. It would last all week to about twelve at night and all day Sunday.

Whin the preacher preach, you got to bear the preacher up and support that preacher. The fire ought to come from the altar. If the preacher build a fire in the pulpit, it reflect to the people in the pews and they respond. If he stir up no fire then he don't get no response from no body. They sit up like a calf looking at a new gate. A poor preacher if he had a stack of railroad ties with gasolene poured on still couldn't build a fire.

Of course some time the preacher get fired up and go on and on and on. Then some sister start humming and the people start singing till they sing that preacher down.

In pray meeting an old deacon or sister could get on their knees and pray all night. Some one might get happy and start shouting while prayer was going on. Some of these sisters or brothers could preach the gospel on their knees, yet you had to let them preach it out. If they was on ther knees too long, somebody started a singing to sing them up. You sing a preacher down from the pulpit, but you sing a deacon or a sister up from ther knees if they was on them too long.
If you would ask me my favorite verse I would tell you the 23 Psalm and the 133 Psalm. My young spiritual guiding and inspiration was my mother and my Preacher Sister Riddle. In later year and even today I go to my Uncle A. J. Stimpson for guiding and spiritual inspiration. I also stop by Mama Lettie Drake’s and talk Bible. She is a great Bible student and very inspirational. I go fishing a lot and stay with my sister Ruth in East Texas. She has been a teacher in Sunday School and Church and is a great Bible teacher. She and I talk Bible every night on one subject or another.

And I pray to the Master Upstairs. I try to keep a telephone in my bosum and a hot line to Heaven. Bessie Lee, the rough and tough as boot leather younger sister, now work as a evangelist. Where she use to have to be watch around the clock, she now has some one else to watch over her. God In Heaven. We pray the Lord will annoint us all with his spirit.