

Good Afternoon Reverend Cannon Rayside, distinguished ladies of the ECW! My name is Iyabo Fadaïro and I must say it is a pleasure to be here before you today. If one sits down and truly thinks about it, our walk in Christ is not an easy one. Can we all agree that every now and then we need some spiritual guidance? Whether we are trying to get through the workday, hoping you get the best grades at the end of a term, trying to fight through an illness, or raising a family; we know that we can call on God to help us in our hour of need. However, we also know that the good Lord doesn't come down himself to answer our prayers. He sends His people to help. Today, by the end our time together, I would have shared with you the story of how I earned my pearls of wisdom.

A few years back, just before my twenty-fifth birthday, my parents asked me what I wanted as a gift. I knew I wanted a gift that reflected my transition from being a young girl to being a young woman. In the days leading up to my birthday, I asked myself, "Where do you see yourself in 5, 10, or 20 years?". Immediately, women of distinction came to mind such as Eleanor Roosevelt, Gloria Steinem (leader of the feminist movement), Angela Davis. These women were able to achieve their personal goals while making time for public service. I knew that I wanted to become an attorney who would become the first minority female chief

justice to sit on the Supreme Court. You can imagine my disappointment when a certain Latina had beaten me to the punch! I also knew I wanted to give back to my community in some capacity. I figured that any woman of distinction, whether she was 25 or 85 definitely has at least one item that commands respect and recognition upon site. After many days of deep thought and reflection, I finally figured out what I wanted for my birthday. I wanted a pearl necklace.

One could only imagine my delight at finally receiving my pearl set. However, reflecting back on that time period. I realized that I was a fool. I was a fool for not recognizing that I was already given a pearl necklace that already commanded those things I wanted. I already had my pearls of wisdom.

I think it's only fair to take time out to try to define what exactly pearls of wisdom are. I'm sure if we went around the room with this question, we would get at least 60 different answers. In the interest of time, I'll just share my definition with you. The definition of pearls of wisdom is as follows: Pearls of wisdom are unique to each individual. They can consist of experiences lived by the individual as well as the people surrounding that individual at various points during life. I'll repeat it for those of you who are taking notes. Pearls of wisdom are unique to each individual. They can consist of experiences lived by the individual as well as the people surrounding that individual at various points during life.

WOW. Some of you look like I did on my first day of contracts class when my Professor asked me to explain to the class whether a contractor would be able to sue a home owner for Reliance damages after starting work. Don't worry I know the answer to this question and it is safe to say that at the end of my speech my definition will be a little clearer to understand.

Let me share some examples with you of what my pearls of wisdom consist of. My pearls of wisdom consist of several types of pearls.

The first type of pearl is **Family pearls**. Family pearls are pearls that are passed down from generation to generation; that inform us of our history, encourages stepping out on faith and inspire hope during times of trial. I have to tell you, my cup runneth over with family pearls. If one really thinks about it, there are two classes of pearls under this classification. There are **Ancient pearls** and **Modern Pearls**. An example of an **Ancient** pearl can be found in Genesis 17:15-17. For those who are not familiar with this text, it is the story of Abraham and Sarah. Here, God promised Abraham that he would give a child to him and his wife. Abraham understandably had doubts about this promise since he was one hundred years old and his wife was ninety. Despite their doubts, Abraham and Sarah maintained their faith and were rewarded according.

An example of a **Modern Pearl** is the story of my paternal grandparents. My grandparents were from the old country. If anyone has family from the old country, it is universally understood that when two people get married; the next step is for them to start having babies. My grandparents were challenged in this area. For eight years they tried to start a family and had no success. Things had gotten so bad they my grandfather's family had started to encourage him to start looking for a second wife so that he can have children. Do you know what he told them? He said, "I married her before God as my only wife. I cannot take a second wife because there is nothing wrong with the first one." Shortly after this exchange, you will never guess what happened. My grandmother became pregnant with my father. God is good ladies and gentleman. How good do you ask? He is so good that my grandparents were blessed with two more children.

I like to think that this pearl is a two for one special. These pearls have taught me two lessons. The first is be careful what you ask for because you just might get it, (Lol). The second lesson is that there is no task too great for God. We know that it should be medically impossible for a couple in their 90's and 100's to conceive. The story of my grandfather's faith while facing great pressure from his family is testimony to God's grace. Through God all things are possible.

The next types of pearl on my pearls of wisdom are **Personal pearls**.

Personal pearls are those that determine character. They tell the world who we are

through good times and bad. They are the people in your time of weakness that stand beside you to hold you up or defend you. Some of you in the audience know that 2013 was not very nice to me or my family. The year started with the death of my grandfather. These type of loses are never easy for any family. But a year later, it has become a little easier to understand and accept that his passing was necessary for the growth of the family. This understanding could have only been reached with the help of our Church family. However, in the middle of trying to embrace this new transition, I was given by far the scariest news of my life. Unbeknown to me, I had developed end stage renal failure and if immediate action was not taken, I would not live to see the end of the month. I knew that there would be a battle but I had no idea that it would be a war. If it weren't for my family and church family teaching me how pray for my life and encouraging me to talk to my God even when things seemed bad, I don't know where I would be today. After twelve procedures, two blood transfusions, and a drug induced coma I stand here before you today as a living testimony to Gods will. I thank God that he intervened and I am still here. Life is definitely a lot easier to endure with personal pearls.

The final type of pearl that I would like to share with you is the **Lost Pearl**.

Ladies, I think we can all agree that the worst thing that can happen to our favorite set of pearls is when the necklace brakes and the pearls go everywhere. Even though you search everywhere for every pearl, some of them get away from us and

our necklace is never the same. Just this past January, I lost one of my favorite pearls. She was the kind of pearl that comes along once in a life time. It's funny, I never thought I would see the day when she would not be amongst us, celebrating with her St. Johns family. What I loved most about this pearl is that she had this unconditional love, especially for children. She did not have any children of her own, but I think it's safe to say that every child who crossed her path was met with a warm hug and a smile. She was a great example of not just talking about being a Christian but living it. Here within her St. John's community, she taught Sunday school, assisted with Vacation Bible School and still found time to be a Girl Scout leader. However, it wasn't until she came to visit me during my health scare that I learned that she was a nurse by profession. I thank God every day for our health care ministry here at St. Johns. The information and visits to the hospital that they provide are so beneficial to us all. You have no idea the joy that her visits gave to me. On days when I was too tired to eat, she would feed me. On occasion we would watch the Wendy Williams show and Family feud to pass the time. I just wish I had the chance to repay her kindness.

During this time of Lent, we are reminded that the world was given one of the greatest personal pearls of them all. This pearl was cultured to perfection by God and shined brighter than any other. This pearl showed us through several acts documented in the Bible what is expected of us on a daily basis. I understand these

expectations to include thanking God for another day of life, showing our neighbors love and understanding that we would expect in return and maintaining faith even in our darkest hour. If we find ourselves unable to fulfill these duties, we are expected to turn to our pearls of wisdom to give us perspective.

In closing, would like to say everyone has pearls in their life. Some of them are bigger than others. Some of them are older than others. I want everyone here to make me a promise that today. You will take the time to let your living pearls know how much you value them. Thank them for the lessons they taught you. Take time to remember often the pearls that were lost. But most importantly, display your pearls of wisdom every day in the decisions you make and the steps that you take. Have a great afternoon.