

A Cleaning Woman's Epiphany

"Epiphany" is an interesting word: If capitalized, it refers to Jan. 6 being observed as a church festival in commemoration of the coming of the Magi as the first manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles.

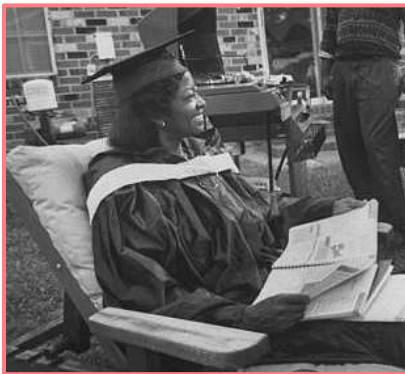
But the word may also refer to a usually sudden manifestation or perception of the essential nature or meaning of something, according to *Merriam-Webster*. Such epiphanies may be life-changing. Here is an example:

An African-American woman named Bessie Pender one day admitted to herself that she was "sick and tired of being sick and tired," and she began to cry. And pray. That's when Bessie Pender's life began to change.

Bessie experienced the moment of truth as she was cleaning out a classroom in a Norfolk, Virginia, public school. For the previous 10 years, she had worked at this same job. Although it wasn't fulfilling, custodial work helped pay the bills for Bessie and her husband, Ben.

Bessie and Ben had married young and had started a family by the time Bessie was 18. All those years that she had been a stay-at-home mom, Bessie had yearned to go to college and become a teacher, but the time and money required to get a degree were luxuries the Penders just couldn't spare. So, Bessie had gotten a job as a custodian.

After 10 years of frustration, however, she couldn't face the boredom anymore. So one night, in the middle of a dirty classroom, Bessie had her tearful talk with God.



Not long afterward, Bessie signed up for her first college classes at Old Dominion University. For seven years, she struggled to balance her job, her new classes, and her family. At one point, she had to juggle all this while also mourning the untimely loss of her younger sister, who died of kidney failure.

Her father's health worsened considerably during those seven years, too. But Bessie kept pushing herself in spite of the pressures all around her to give up.

Eventually, Bessie's persistence paid off. Bessie Pender became a 5th grade teacher in the Norfolk Public School system, where she once mopped floors and scrubbed desks. In one recent year, she was even voted Teacher of the Year.

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Maybe you are sick and tired of being sick and tired. Perhaps you are in need of an epiphany in your own life. You're in the right place to turn your life over to God and to ask His guidance. Are you doing what He created you to do? Is He leading you to continue your professional development? Or do you need His help to make a new start?

Have a talk with God. He has plans for you.

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future (Jeremiah 29:11 NIV).

– Beecher Hunter

