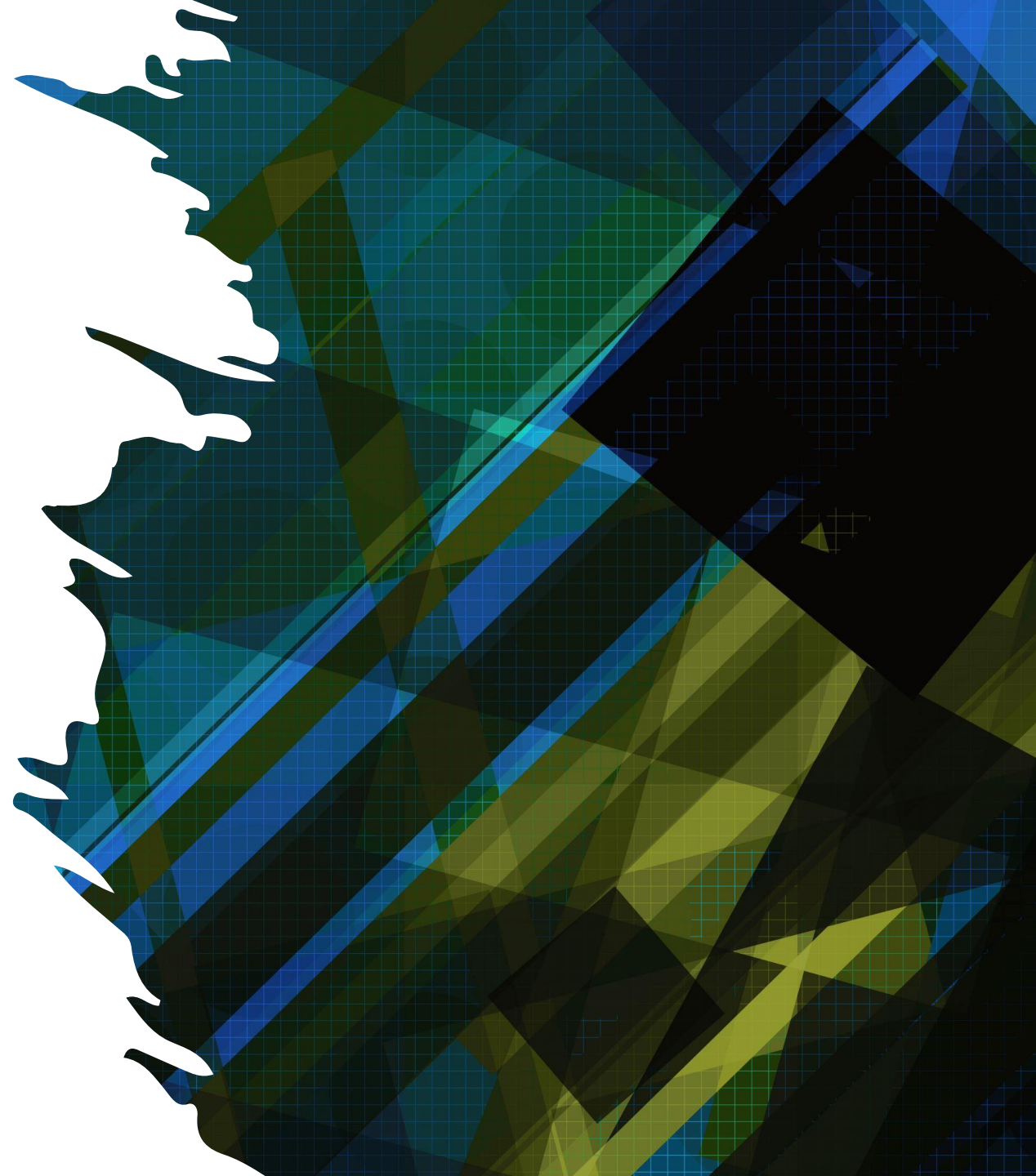


***Using spirituality
to cope with
COVID-19: the
experiences of
African
American breast
cancer survivors***

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Background

- African Americans are nearly 4X as likely to die from covid
- Higher prevalence of co-morbid conditions (diabetes, heart disease, asthma) among breast cancer patients increase risk of severe illness and dying from COVID
- African Americans with breast cancer among those immunocompromised

Background

- African American women with breast cancer
 - Second highest incidence rates
 - Highest mortality rates
 - Higher risk of contracting and dying from COVID

Background

- African Americans generally rely on their spirituality and participation in religious activities to cope
- Church attendance limited to mitigate of risk of contracting COVID

Purpose

- An exploration of the use of spirituality during COVID
- The benefits derived from this coping strategy during this pandemic

Methods

- Qualitative Descriptive Design
- Purposive sampling
- Open-ended and semi-structured interviews
- Qual content analysis
- Quan descriptive analysis

Methods

- Participants
 - 18 African American women breast cancer survivors
 - Average age 58
 - Stage 2 breast cancer (50%)
 - Not married (61%)
 - College educated (44%)
 - Employed full time (56%)
 - Resident of rural areas (67%)

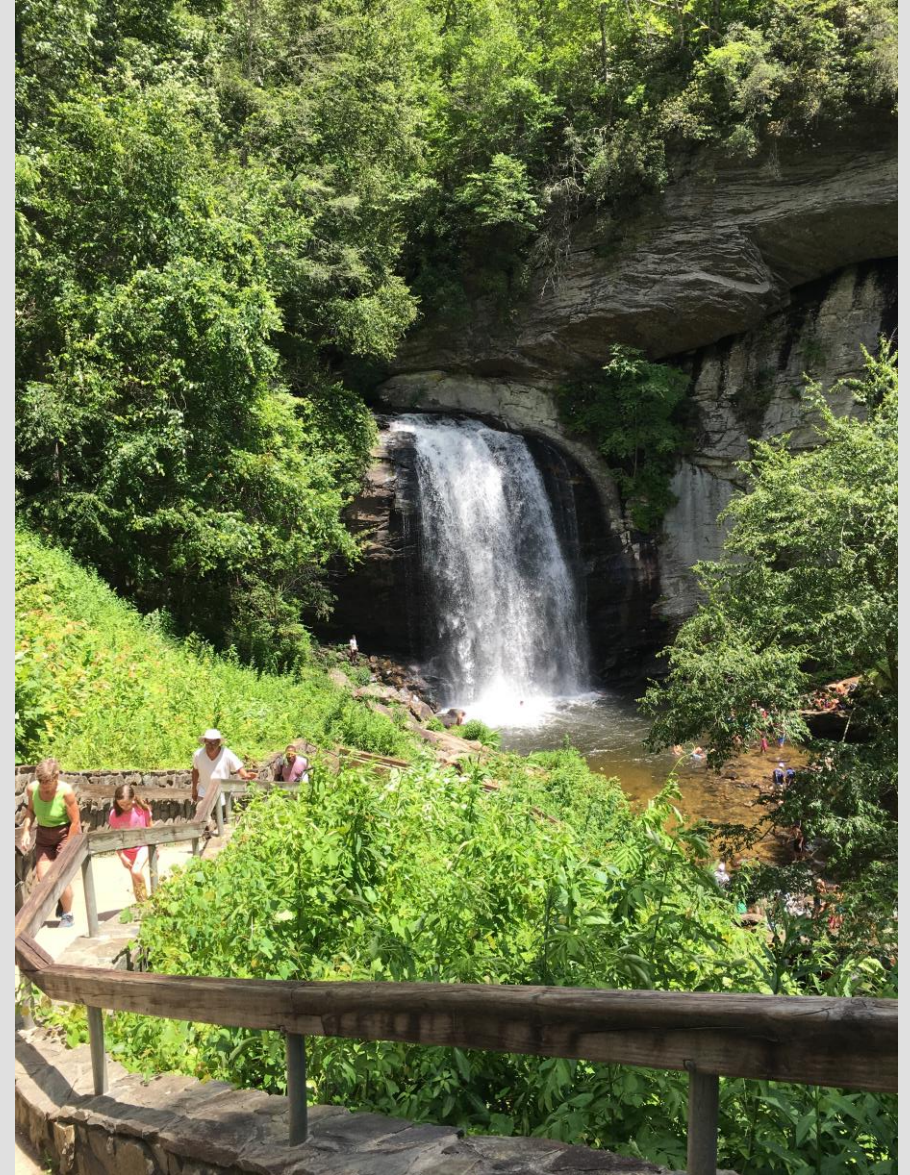
Findings

Four Themes emerged

1. Increased engagement in non-church religious activities
2. Reliance on God when fearful
3. Finding joy and courage through hymns and scripture
4. Finding meaning through spirituality

Increased engagement in non-church religious activities

- Prayer is more prevalent in my life now because of COVID than it had been before. I think I just find myself just thanking the Lord throughout the day just for being able to have a job.
- Even though I'm working remotely, downstairs I have, posted on my desk, I have a scripture here; I have a scripture... you know, I have all around me. I listen to gospel music most of the time during the day. I have my devotion every morning.



Increased engagement in non-church religious activities

- But we actually do a lot over the phone. But I've been watching other - I'm on Facebook so I have friends that are ministers so I've been watching their Facebook live.
- So like I told my friend yesterday I've been in church all day because everybody came on at different times. And even if they didn't come on at different times they're still on there so you can be able to go back and listen to them.



Reliance on God when fearful, feeling isolated

- I just had a moment to where it's almost like fear tried to grip my heart. But I had to go inside and rely on what I knew to be true concerning the word of God. . .
- He's able to comfort you. He can protect you because his word says it and you become a believer in him. You become a believer in what he said.
- And that's my protection right there. That's the whole of who I am as a child of God.



Finding joy and courage from listening to gospel music and scripture.

- My main and probably only Bible verse that I read constantly and still to this day is 2Timothy 1:7. That God hasn't given you the spirit of fear that's how I got through those fearful, fearful, times where I just knew over and over again that, you know. . . .
- For God has not given us the spirit of fear but of power and of love and of sound mind. . . . that's the main one I hold close to my heart. When I'm fearful. When I'm scared. When I'm worried. When I'm a little anxious about anything. When I'm doubting something.

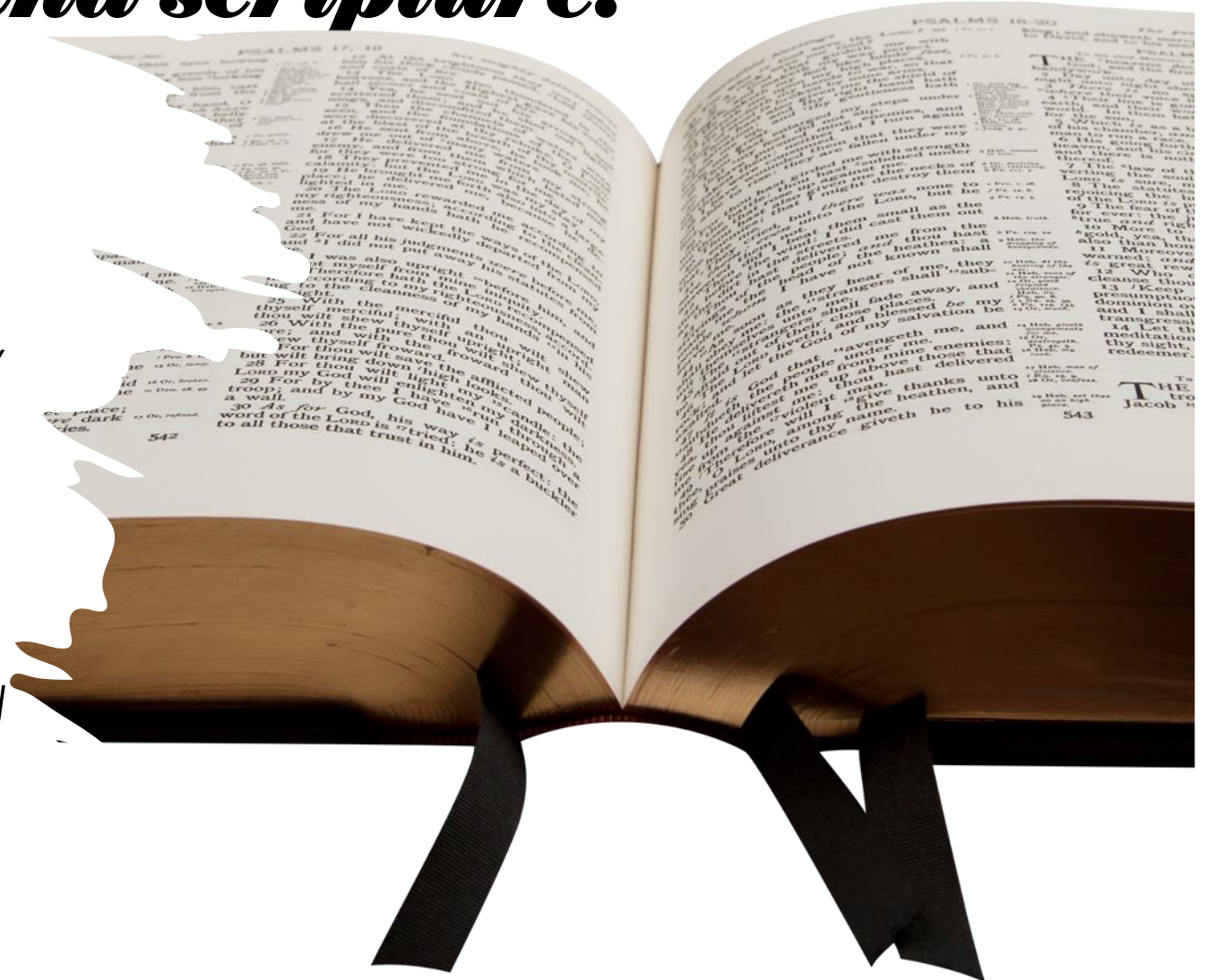


Finding joy and courage from listening to gospel music and scripture.

But I know that what I relied on as far as faith and prayer but I relied on Isaiah 4 verse 10 which was the one that got me through.

And I was listening to this song that my sister sings. It's called Faith Is. Because the song says faith is my hope in you. Faith is my trust in you and it also says I'm an overcomer. And that's how I see myself.

I'm more than a conqueror and I'm an overcomer. And so whenever I feel a little down I'll go to that song and then I'll go to that scripture.



A photograph of a person walking away on a dirt path in a forest. The path is covered in fallen leaves and branches. The forest is dense with green trees and foliage. A large, white, torn-edge shaped overlay is centered on the image, containing text. The person is wearing a blue and white striped shirt and blue jeans.

Finding meaning through spirituality.

- God gave us this time off to do self-reflection. Look inside ourselves and see if we know where we're at, you know?
- And coming out of this how we're going to be better. What are you going to do differently?

Finding meaning through spirituality.

I think biblical you know
you're bringing up the
plagues. Thinking back in
that time, thinking about
Noah and the ark.

How when the flood came
he and his family they had to
go in and stay until it was
time to come out so relating
it to that.



Conclusions

- Religious practices adapted
- Recall of Biblical text as reminders that “this too shall pass”
- Spirituality related to a self-reflection, how can this situation improve who I am, how I can do better

Questions

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