**Living a Scientist’s Life**  
James L. Sherley

Though there are millions of persons in America and the world trained in the sciences, being a scientist remains an exclusive profession. Many who want to become a member are not invited or are rejected when they apply; and the excluded are disproportionately women and people of color. Scientists are unique, and some might even say special, members of society. As a group and as individual professionals, scientists evoke varied reactions from others, including fear, reverence, derision, bemusement, disgust, awe, and bewilderment.

Scientists not only claim the providence of the natural world, they are often accorded dominion over and judgment of such knowledge. Though others often approach science and scientists as uniform and monolithic in their practices, principles, and mores, scientists are quite human in their range of distinct individuality. Superficially, the lives of scientists can appear quite ordinary or quite extraordinary, depending on the measure applied. Most scientists’ lives reflect in some way the unique quality of their discipline, science; but the manifestation of that quality is informed by the particular aspects of their personal backgrounds, in terms of socioeconomics, heritage, demographics, religious belief, worldview, and politics.

Because scientists’ lives are lived and expressed within the body of science of their time, every scientist’s life contributes in some way to the advance of science, some with more impact than others. The narrative of the life of one scientist can be instructive both to those pursuing their own lives as scientists and to the continued collective advance of science itself.

With this aim in mind, Dr. Sherley will provide a brief narrative of his life as an African American, of Christian faith from the rural South, who was born a scientist. He will highlight significant career and professional challenges, civil service for science education, and contributions to the body of science that characterize his life as a scientist.