



BLUE RIDGE CHRISTIAN NEWS



Glenwood Baptist Church

"Something to Think About"

Our Strong Tower

By Dennis Love
McDowell County

The Bible refers to our great God by many names. One of those names is found in Proverbs 18:10. It says, *"The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous run into it and they are safe."* The Lord's name is a strong tower.

It's interesting to see how there are so many people who have names that match what they do in life. I have introduced myself to many people through the years, and when I tell them my name is Dennis Love, and that I'm a Pastor, they look at me and say, "Wow, what a great last name for a Pastor." And "Love" certainly is a great name for a Pastor, and I only hope that I can live up to my last name. I read about a dentist in Florida whose name is Dr. Toothman. I also read about a barber whose name is Dan Druff. And I also read about a man named Will Crumble. He's a professional home builder. Now, I'm not sure that I would want Will Crumble to build my house, but that's his name and I'm sure he's good at building. On the other hand, I would welcome Dr. Toothman to look into my mouth and do my dental work. I'm not sure if I would allow Dan Druff to touch my head. I would need to pray about that one!

Well, the Lord's name is a strong tower. Not a grass hut or a rustic cabin, but a strong tower. Isn't that an awesome name for our great God? **STRONG TOWER!** Did you know that you can run into that strong tower today and be born again? Did you know that you can run into that strong tower today and be energized in your spirit to live an abundant spirit-filled life today? Did you know that you can run into that strong tower today and find love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, humbleness and self-control? Did you know that you can run into that strong tower today and find rest for your weary soul? Did you



know that you can run into that strong tower today and our great God will talk with you and walk with you today?

Dr. Toothman might look in my mouth and do great dental work. Dan Druff might cut my hair just like I like it to look. Will Crumble might build me a great looking house. BUT the name that is above every other name is the name of Jesus, and that is why His name is a strong tower. The Bible says the righteous run into it, and we are safe. To me, this is shouting ground and to me, this is certainly something to think about! *"The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous run into it and they are safe."*

Dr Dennis Love is the Senior Pastor at Glenwood Baptist Church in Marion, NC. He and his wife Vicki have been married for 39 years and they have been in Marion for five years. They have two sons and three grandchildren.





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Discussion Times:

February 17 at 9:30am

March 2 at 9:30am

March 16 at 9:30am

All meetings will be located at the Mitchell County Senior Center. If you cannot attend but are still interested, please call us directly at **828-682-9675.**

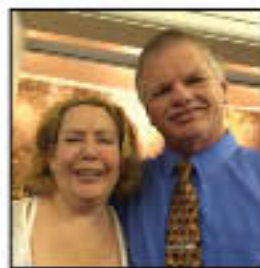
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The Inspiring Word

Unlikely People that God Used (Mark)

By Terry Cheek
McDowell County



For the Inspiring Word, the month of March will begin a new series of articles titled Unlikely People That God Used. We're going to learn from God's word there isn't anyone the Lord will not use if they will come on His terms. My inspiration comes from the many people I meet who have awesome testimonies about how God rescued them from drugs, alcohol, dangers and even themselves. Yet, despite their awesome testimonies, many of them feel God has no place for them. Talking with them has made me realize there are a lot of born-again believers who, for whatever reason, believe God won't use them because of their past. I want them and everyone reading this series to know that God's word is filled with men and women who were saved from devastating situations and moved forward to proclaim the gospel and lead many to Christ. This series will share the stories of many from God's word and my prayer is that it will encourage you to be obedient to God's call for your life and let Him call others through you.

Let's begin with a familiar name, someone we all have heard of. John Mark! We're introduced to John Mark, in the book of Acts. From chapter 12 where James the brother of the Apostle John has been executed by Herod and Peter has been jailed until after Easter. Then Peter was to be executed also. The Bible tells us God moved and freed Peter. He went to a house where believers were meeting to pray. So, from Acts 12:12 in the KJV, we learn *"And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying."* Peter came to Mark's home where God was worshipped and served daily. So, we know Peter was an influence on Mark through his mother, Mary.

We also know from Colossians 4:10 that Mark and Barnabas are cousins. This explains the relationship that placed Mark in the company of Barnabas and the Apostle Paul. However, things did not go well for Mark. He accompanied Barnabas and Paul on a missionary trip and, for unknown reasons, Mark abandoned the group and returned to Jerusalem. This did not sit well with Paul. Sometime later there was a second trip planned and Barnabas wanted to give Mark a second chance, but Paul said no. There was an argument, Paul and Barnabas parted ways. Barnabas took Mark and went one direction while Paul took Silas and went another direction. Mark had not only abandoned Paul and Barnabas, but he had also failed the Lord! That is the point of this story. I will venture to say none of us have gone through life and not failed the Lord?

Our lives before salvation were to a degree a failure, many of us after being saved either by choice or circumstance failed God. So, does that mean our ability to serve God is forever ruined? Let's continue with Mark's story and find out what happened to him.

We lose track of Mark for about ten years, then his name reappears in scripture. From Colossians 4:10-11 from the KJV we read *"Aristarchus my fellow-prisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him:)" (11) And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only are my fellow workers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me."* Paul refers to Mark (Marcus) as a fellow worker for the kingdom of God! Wow, what happened? Well, remember Peter. According to 1 Peter 5:13 while closing his letter Peter refers to Mark as his son. Not by birth, but by faith. Just as Timothy was Paul's son, Mark was Peter's son in the faith. You see, others may have written Mark off as an unreliable servant of the Lord, but Peter knew what it was like to suffer the humiliation of abandoning Christ and having to recover a reputation from it. Simply put, Grace and Mercy was what happened to Mark. Mark became a strong ministry partner to Paul as we learn from 2 Timothy 4:9-11 KJV *"Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me: (10) For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia. (11) Only Luke is with me. Take Mark and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry."* Paul once again has been abandoned but this time he asks for help from none other than Mark. Our understanding is that help came, Mark was a stand-up soldier for Christ, having earned the respect of his peers. Mark went on to write one of the four gospels, believed by many scholars to be the experiences of Peter scribed by Mark.

When we apply Mark's testimony to our lives, we learn that failures are recoverable and not only that they can be beneficial to the Lord's work in and through our lives. If you have a Mark moment in your life don't be hard on yourself. Come to the Lord, ask His forgiveness and find a godly, patient mentor to begin the process of maturing into a modern-day Mark.

Until we meet again in person or in print, may God richly bless you is my prayer!

Terry is the Executive Director and broadcaster of The Inspiring Word media ministry. You can contact Terry by email at theinspiringword@gmail.com Or by visiting www.theinspiringword.org



Contents

In Every Issue

Clint's Chronicles on the Funny Farm - p. 15

Life Lessons - p. 9

Your Government - pp. 32-33

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"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace: that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation: that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!"

Isaiah 52:7 KJV



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John's Precision Auto Body (22)

AUTOMOBILES - Tires

Buff Tire & Service (8)
McCabe Tire & Service (35)
Spruce Pine Tire (12)

BUILDING SUPPLIES

Summit Building Supplies (12)

CHURCHES

Altapass Baptist (4)
Bear Creek Baptist (4)
Berry Chapel Baptist (4)
Burkemon Baptist (4)
Faith Fellowship (4)
First Baptist Spruce Pine (4)
Grassy Creek Baptist (4)
Great Hope 7th day Adventist (4)
Morganton Seventh day Adventist (4)
Newland Christian Church (4)

Pine Branch Baptist (4)
Pleasant Hill Baptist Church (4)
Plumtree Presbyterian (4)
Spruce Pine United Methodist (4)
The Rock Church (4)
The Bridge (4)
West Burnsville Baptist (4)

CHIROPRACTIC

Cruz Chiropractic (44)

CPA

Jamie Miller (7)

DENTIST

Scott Murphy (19)

DSS

McDowell DSS (18)
Mitchell DSS (41)

EVENTS

Catawba River Baptist Assoc. (35)
Freedom Life (44)
Hope 4 Mitchell County (39)
Jason Project (14)
Liberty Hill Baptist (41)
Morganton Rec (32)
Mountain Time on Main (8)
Pie Bake Off (39)
Yancey Baptist Assoc. (27)

Yancey Senior Center (13)

FARM SUPPLIES

Griffith's General Store (17)

FINANCIAL PLANNING

Retirement Resource Management (25)

FLOORING/CABINETS

Carolina Flooring/Cabinets (8)

FUNERAL SERVICE

Beam Funeral Service (20)
Heritage Funeral Home (42)
Sossoman's Funeral Home (7)

FURNITURE

Buck Stove (46)
Peoples Furniture (15)

HEALTH CARE

Carolina Home Care (44)
Bakersville Medical Clinic (37)
Pruitt Health Care (48)

HOME BUYERS

Sillman Home Buyers (31)

HOSPICE

Hospice and Palliative Care of the Blue Ridge, Inc (34)

Hospice of Rutherfordton (13)
Compassionate Care of Western North Carolina (2)

HOUSING

Clayton (26)

INSURANCE

First Brockland Insurance (14)
Fortner Insurance (19)
McDowell Farm Bureau (41)
Miller Insurance Group (11)
Mitchell Co. Farm Bureau (35)
Premier Insurance (20)

MULCH

McClure Construction (47)

ORTHODONTICS

Small & Martin Orthodontics (21)

PAWN

Mountaineer Pawn Shop (19)

PLUMBING/HEATING

Burleson Plumbing Heating (17)
Benjamin Franklin Plumbing (5)

PRESCRIPTION

The Prescription Pad (5)

RADIO

Glory Radio (9)

REALTORS

Whitson Realty (44)

REHABILITATION/NURSING

Brian Center (6)

RESTAURANTS

Abeles Restaurant (30)
Bantam Chef (22)
Bubba's Good Eats (14)
DT's (5)
Western Sizzlin (25)

RETAIL

Grassy Creek Clothing (37)

STORAGE

DR Storage (36)

TAX SERVICE

Jackson Hewitt (27)

TRANSPORTATION

Mitchell Transit (42)
Yancey Transit (16)

TREE SERVICE

Ray's Tree Service (24)

Church Directory

Altapass Baptist Church

3631 Altapass Hwy
Spruce Pine, NC
828-765-0660
altapassbaptistchurch@ccvn.com
www.altapassbaptistchurch.org

Dr. Marcus R. Benfield

Sunday School - 10:00am
Worship - 11:00am
Sunday Evening - 7:00pm
Sunday Youth Program - 7:00pm
1st & 3rd Sunday
(Conductors for Christ ages 5-11)
2nd & 4th Sunday
(Teen Discovery ages 12-18)
Wednesday - 7:00pm

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Bear Creek Baptist Church

327 Bear Creek Road
Bakersville, NC 28705
www.bearcreekbaptist.com

Reverend Bruce Cannon

Sunday School 9:45 AM
Worship Service 10:45 AM
Discipleship 6:00 PM
Evening Worship 6:45 PM
Wednesday Worship 7:30 PM

"For God so loved the world, he
gave his only Son..."

The Bridge Church of WNC

207 Pinebridge Avenue
Spruce Pine, NC 28777
www.bridgewnc.org

Pastors - Tom & Tammy Anglin

Sunday Service 10:30AM
Wednesday Service 7:00PM
Church Office M-F
9:00AM-3:00PM
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Our passion is to help connect the Body of
Christ in this area in order to see the Fire
of God transform our community, state,
nation and world! (See John 17:21)

Berry Chapel Baptist Church

280 Chapel St.
Spruce Pine, NC 28777
828-765-6590
www.berrychapelbaptist.com

Pastor - Steve Williams

Sunday School 9:45 AM
Worship Service 11:00 AM
Sunday Evening Care Meal/
Ministry - 5:30 PM
Wednesday Evening
Service 7:00 PM

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The Rock Church

4806 US 64
Morganton, NC 28655
Phone: 828-334-3193
www.brcmorganton.com

Pastor - Billy Chapman

Sunday Morning - 10 AM
Sunday Night - 6 PM
Tuesday Night - 7 PM

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Grassy Creek Baptist Church

793 Old NC 226 Hwy
Spruce Pine, NC
828-765-4620
www.grassycreekbbc.org

Sunday School 10:00am
Morning Worship 11:00am
Sunday evening 6:30pm
Wednesday:
J.A.M. (Jesus and Me) 6:30pm
Mid-week worship 7:00pm
"That Mitchell County
may know Christ"

Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church

2187 Jamestown Road
Morganton, NC
828-584-8212

Pastor Steve Beltz

Sabbath (Saturday)
Bible Study - 9:30 am
Sabbath Worship - 11:00 am
Vegetarian Buffet after church
Wednesday
Praise, Prayer & Proclaim -
7:00 pm
www.morgantonsda.org

Faith Fellowship Church

Champ Ray Rd.
Micaville, NC 28755
(828)-675-9284
www.ffcn.org
www.ffcnradio.org

Pastor: David Gillespie

Sunday School - 10:00 am
Worship Service - 10:45 am
Wednesday Bible Study - 7:00pm
"The steps of a good man are
ordered by the Lord;
And he delighteth in his way."
Psalm 37:23

Plumtree Presbyterian Church

4527 Hwy 18E
Plumtree, NC 28664
828-765-6919
www.plumtreepresbyterian.com

Pastor Ryan Bridgeo
pastor@plumtreepresbyterian.com

Sunday School 9:45 am
Worship Service 11:00 am
Life Groups Tuesday-Thursday evenings, 7:00 pm
Fusion Youth Wednesday's, 6:30 pm
Healing Services 2nd Sunday of each month, 6:30 pm

John 15:16 You did not choose me, but I chose you
and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that
will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you
ask in my name.

Pleasant Hill Baptist Church

2396 Enola Road
Morganton, NC 28655
(828) 437-4082
www.pleasanthillbc.church

**Senior Pastor
Dr. Jack Hodges**

Sunday School: 9:30 am
Sunday Worship: 10:30 am
Sunday Evening: 6:00 pm
Wednesday Evening 6:30 pm

"Love All, Reach All, Teach All, Send All"

West Burnsville Baptist Church

222 West Burnsville Church Rd.
Burnsville, NC 28714
(828)-682-3990

Pastor: Terry Long

Sunday School: 9:45 a.m.
Morning Service: 11:00 a.m.
Evening Service: 6:00 p.m.
Wednesday Service 6:30 p.m.

Church vision: Glorifying God through
knowing, growing, going, to build the church
and impact the world.

Burkemont Baptist Church

4668 Burkemont Rd.
Morganton, NC 28655
828-437-2357

For more information,
please visit
www.burkemontbaptist.org

Dr. Luke A. Lane

8:30am - Early Worship
9:45am - Sunday School
11:00am - Worship
6:00pm - Evening Worship

Marion Seventh-day Adventist Church

188 Ward Dr.
Marion, NC 28752
(828) 668-4018

Pastor Tim Sheridan

Sabbath (Saturday)
Bible Study - 9:15 am
Sabbath Worship - 10:50 am
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First Baptist Church of Spruce Pine

125 Tappan Street
Spruce Pine, NC 28777
828-765-9411
www.sprucepinefbc.com
www.sprfbcc.blogspot.com

**Dr. Rocky Branch
Senior Pastor**

Sunday School - 9:45 am
Sunday Worship - 8:30 and 11:00 am
Sunday Evening - 6:00 pm
Wednesday Evening - 6:30 pm

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Great Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church

2907d US Hwy 70 E
Morganton, NC
828-475-2040

Pastor Barry Mahorney

Sabbath (Saturday)
Bible Study-10:00am
Sabbath Worship - 11:30am
Vegetarian Buffet after church
Wednesday - Praise, Prayer &
Proclaim - 7:00pm
www.greathopesda.com

Pine Branch Baptist Church

48 Church Road
Spruce Pine, NC 28777
Phone: (828) 765-9101
www.pinebranchbaptist.net

Reverend Bobby Joe Greene

Sunday School • 9:45-10:40am
Worship Service • 10:45am
Sunday Evening • 6:30pm

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Spruce Pine United Methodist Church

11090 Hwy. 226 South
Spruce Pine, NC 28777
www.sprucepineumc.org
spumc3@bellsouth.net
828-765-7446

Pastor Rick Schilling

Sunday School - 10:00am
Sunday Worship - 11:00am
Choir Wednesday - 7:00pm

The mission of Spruce Pine United
Methodist Church is to be a beacon on
a hill spreading the Good News of Jesus
Christ through: Worship, Fellowship,
Education, and Nurturing Service

Newland Christian Church

2800 Millers Gap Highway
Newland, NC 28657
Phone (828) 260-1404
www.newlandchristianchurch.com

Pastor - Phillip Greene

Sunday School: 9:45 am
Sunday Worship: 11 am
Sunday Evening Bible Study: 6 pm
Wednesday Evening Prayer Meeting: 7 pm

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A Grateful Girl

Hurry Up and Wait

By Patti Jensen
Mitchell County

"But God's not finished. He's waiting around to be gracious to you. He's gathering strength to show mercy to you. God takes the time to do everything right—everything. Those who wait around for him are the lucky ones."
Isaiah 30:18 (MSG)



I am not a "be early" for everything person. But then my pet peeve is being late. I am more of an "on time" person. My friend Shirley loved to be early for everything. And by early, I mean she would be completely happy if we were an hour early. An hour! To me, that was a lot of hurry up and wait, but when I was with Shirley...we were early.

One November we were in Washington DC to visit the White House. First Lady Laura Bush had recognized a non-profit project we were working on in our hometown and had included locally made Christmas ornaments from our project on the White House trees that year. We were so honored, and Shirley was beside herself. See, Shirley had taught high school US History for 30 years. She loved US History and politics. So being in Washington DC and being invited to the White House to meet the First Lady was thrilling.

On the day of the event, we were instructed to go to the gate at the East Entrance of the White House to be checked in for the event. We were up early that morning (of course) and went down to catch a taxi to the East Entrance. As we jumped in the taxi and told the driver where we needed to go, he paused. He then said, "Ladies, I could drive you around the block and take your money, but the East Entrance to the White House is right across the street and down that sidewalk". Geez. How funny! We thanked the man for being so honest and kind and jumped out and crossed the street and down the sidewalk.

As we excitedly walked up to the guard at the gate, Shirley told them we were there to go to the White House to meet Laura Bush. He glanced at us and then studied a sheet of paper and a computer screen in the gatehouse. Then they asked us our names again. Then they studied the paper again before saying, "Ladies I don't see your names on the list."

What? Shirley was shocked and flustered. She quickly told the guard that we were indeed on that list! He told us to wait as he made a call. In the meantime, Shirley was calling our US Representative's office to see what was going on. After a few long minutes, the guard politely said he had an answer. It appears that we were an hour early for the event and the guest list had not even been sent down to the gate yet. Ha! We were so excited to get to the White House and see what was waiting for us that we got there so early we couldn't even get in!

Ugh! I glanced at Shirley with my "See that's why we shouldn't be early" look, but then we just laughed. And we laughed about that story for years afterward! We eventually made our way into the White House for the reveal of the Holiday decorations and reception. It was wonderful and so special. First Lady Laura Bush was so gracious.

That was just one of the many hurry up and wait moments in my friendship with Shirley. I think Shirley always wanted to be early because she didn't want to miss a thing.

Sometimes in our walk with God, there is some hurry up and wait. We can get so excited about a new idea or a new project or a goal that we go full speed ahead towards it. We jump in feet first. We want to check it off our list and get to the good stuff! We don't want to miss anything we think is coming to us. Our excitement can sometimes overtake our plan. And then God says, 'not yet'. He stops us and tells us to wait.

God doesn't make us wait to punish us or frustrate us, but more to shape us. He makes us wait sometimes to give our faith time to grow to the size that we will need to take on what He has in store for us. But waiting is hard. Especially when you believe you are ready for the next step.

And remember, God also waits for us. He has so much in store for us and He waits for us to trust Him with those things and with His timing. Waiting on God is a show of our faith and our commitment to say that we want what GOD has in store more than we want what WE want in our own timing. Are you able to wait on God today?

"The Lord is good to those who wait hopefully and expectantly for Him, to those who seek Him." Lamentations 3:25a (AMP)

"I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD."—Psalms 27:13-14

Patti Jensen is the writer and creator of the lifestyle blog "A Grateful Girl" which features encouragement, a focus on gratitude with some lifestyle tips and recipes thrown in for good measure! Patti is married to Jack and has two daughters, two great son-in-laws and a new granddaughter, Georgia Grace. You can find her posts on Instagram and Facebook and on her blog at <http://www.agratefulgirl.com>.



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What Are My Options?

By Jim Huskins
McDowell County



Most Christians believe that we are—or should be—keeping the Ten Commandments. Few actually do. Regardless of how well we avoid coveting, adultery, lying, idol-making and so forth; no matter how honorably we treat our parents; most Christians consistently break the Fourth Commandment. Exodus 20:8 says: “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.”

God describes Himself as unchanging, yet most believe that He changed His mind about Sabbath. We believe that Sabbath “does not matter”, or that we can choose any day as “our” Sabbath, or that Sabbath was “just for the Jews.” Scripture says otherwise.

Sabbath is an integral part of creation. Genesis 2:1-3 tells us that when God finished creating the world in six days, He rested on the seventh day, blessed it, and made it holy. He ordained a day to celebrate the cessation of His creative activity. We are commanded to share His celebration by ceasing our creative activity for one day each week. God makes it clear at Sinai that Israel must keep His Sabbath forever because they are an example to all the world. On the seventh day each week, God’s people are to rest from their labor, bring their families and worship Him.

Sabbath is important to God. While He was giving instructions for building the Tabernacle and its furnishings, formulating holy incense and anointing oil, constructing the priestly garments and vestments—some of the most important work in history—He also gave us Exodus 31:13. It says that, no matter how busy we are, and no matter how important our task, we must not fail to keep Sabbath. Most English translations say something like “you shall” keep My Sabbaths. The Hebrew says: “Above all, you must keep My Sabbaths.” God’s perspective is that nothing is more important than keeping Sabbath. Why, then, do we trivialize the fourth commandment?

When Jake and Elwood—The Blues Brothers—were given “A Mission from God,” they let nothing stand in their way. Not even little things like honesty and integrity and the safety of others. You and I do the same thing. When we perceive a “calling,” we charge ahead with little concern for God’s principles and commands. God told Moses that His people must put aside everything to keep Sabbath.

Most Christians dismiss Sabbath by noting that Sabbath is a perpetual covenant between God and Israel. They believe that the “Church” replaced Israel in God’s plan. Every time the New Testament uses the term Israel, it is referring to the blood descendants of Jacob. Those who follow Messiah are, through faith, grafted into Israel. Galatians 3:7 says that those of faith are the true sons of Abraham. By faith, we are joined to Israel’s covenants along with her blessings and obligations. That includes Sabbath.

God desires to impart His holiness to all the dimensions of our lives. He sanctified the spatial dimensions of height, width, and depth by giving us the Tabernacle: a space set apart from all other spaces. A place where He could dwell in Holiness.

But we also live in a fourth dimension: time. We cannot see the time; we only see its effects. Without exception, time causes decay. This decay, called entropy, is described by the Second Law of Thermodynamics. Time measures the rate of entropy. As a partial buffer against our decay, God sanctified the Sabbath and set it apart from all other blocks of time. Yom Shabbat—the seventh day—is Holy: a Holy day for us to spend with our Holy Creator. It is the only day of the week God gave a name. Ironically, we named the other six days for pagan deities.

Exodus 31:13 tells us that we must keep Sabbath “above all.” It also tells us why: “That you may know that I, the LORD, sanctify you.” Keeping Sabbath clothes us in God’s holiness. This is no small task.

We cannot be in God’s presence unless we are righteous according to His standards. We cannot attain that righteousness on our own. By faith in Messiah, we are clothed in His righteousness. One of the reasons God gave us Sabbath is to prepare us to receive the righteousness that we do not deserve. When Jesus says that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath, one of the implications is that man does not bring holiness to the Sabbath. On the other hand, Sabbath was created to bring holiness to man.

Many Christians think Sabbath is unimportant. Exodus 31:14 says that anyone who profanes Sabbath shall be permanently separated from God. Verse 16 says that Sabbath will last forever. We learn from the prophets and the book of Revelation that Sabbath will be kept during the Millennium. Why would God cast aside this marvelous gift to us in the meanwhile?

The answer is that He did not. No verse of scripture states that God altered or moved or revoked the Fourth Commandment. That idea was forced on the Church by Rome in the fourth century. Constantine claimed that he converted to Christianity, but he remained a sun-god worshipper to his death. That’s why he commanded everyone in his realm to worship and rest on “the venerable day of the sun.”

What God says is that nothing is more important than keeping Sabbath. The false prophets of “replacement theology” say that Sabbath does not matter. God says otherwise. One day we will be called to give an account of which option we chose.

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The Beginning Tree
The Ending Tree

By Glenda Ward
McDowell County



Experiencing pain and suffering in life is hard to deal with most of the time. But through our walk in Christian Faith, we are to embrace real hope through the wisdom in God's Word. If we allow Him, God will work through our suffering with us. All the answers we need surrounding our circumstances are wrapped up in God. God is with us even in our pain and suffering. He comes alongside us to give us peace and comfort because He cares.

Suffering is a real part of life, but God did not design our lives to be this way. Man was created in innocence, placed in a perfect environment, subjected to a simple test, and warned of the consequences of disobedience. Man was not compelled to sin but, was tempted by Satan who chose to disobey God. Adam and Eve had a perfect life by God's design. Adam was the first human created By God in His own image and Eve the first woman. "And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you, it shall be for meat" (Genesis 1:29). The first mention of a tree on earth is in Genesis Chapter 1: 11 – "God said, Let the earth bring forth the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind." Verse 12 – "And the earth brought forth the herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind."

In Genesis Chapter 2:7 "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Verse 8 – "And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there He put the man whom He had formed." Verse 9 – "And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil." God took Adam the man and put him into the Garden of Eden to dress it and keep it. In verse 16 – God tells Adam, "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: verse 17 – "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it."

In Chapter 3 the serpent enters the scene. The creature which lent itself to Satan. Satan who, as the prince of this world system, is the real though the unseen ruler of the successive world powers that points back to the beginning of sin in the universe. The woman Eve was deceived, tempted by the serpent. Seeing that the tree was good for food, pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit and did eat. The man Adam transgressed deliberately and willingly did eat of the fruit she gave him. Both transgressed. And to both their eyes were opened and their mind knowingly.

The tragic consequence of this temptation and fall was nothing less than the universal sinfulness of all humanity. Satan's assault was threefold: 1-The temptation was initiated by Satan's introducing doubt and denial of God's Word (See Genesis 3:1-5). 2-The fall brought consciousness of sin, of condemnation, and of the separation from God as indicated by the fact that Adam and Eve hid from the presence of God. 3-Man's nature became evil and hostile to God. This is a state of spiritual death issued in eventual physical death, both of which being implied in Genesis 2:17. The serpent, which was Satan's tool, is cursed by God (See Genesis 3: 14).

Sin's disorder makes it a necessary hardship for man because of the earth being cursed (See Verse 17, Chapter 3). In the beginning, God provided everything needed to sustain life. Now that sin is upon the earth ...the curse upon the ground is for man's sake. Because Adam hearkened to the voice of his wife and did eat fruit from the forbidden tree man must now work and till the ground to have food to eat. It makes inevitable sorrow in life, the brevity of life, and certain physical death.

Our Lord specifically designates Satan as the enemy. All men outside of Christ are enemies of God. At the moment Adam and Eve chose to do the one thing God told them they must not do, sin entered the world – and with sin came suffering and death. The consequences of that sin have devastated all of creation ever since. God warned that one of the consequences of sin would be death. They would no longer live under the protection of God's presence; their physical bodies would also suffer under the weight of sin. Physical pain, broken relationships, and hardships in life today are the consequences of that sin.

But, one day we will be redeemed and restored to God's likeness. As Christians, we are to encourage the believer who might be walking through a difficult time in life to look forward and past the sufferings of this present time. Our sufferings are not worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed. We have a glorious future ahead and although this does not reduce our current pain or circumstance it does encourage us to remember our current situation is only temporary and our future destination is eternal. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

We can now have True Life because of God's Truth and His indwelling Spirit in our lives. We have the assurance of better things to come. All our suffering and pain will cease when the new heaven and new earth are unveiled. Sin and its consequences will be no more. Think about it ...sin started from a tree and the fruit thereof, and now that True Life, as stated above, is now made available to all mankind through Christ's Crucifixion and Death upon yet another tree. This tree of life obtains an even richer meaning for the redeemed in an eternal paradise prepared by God for sinners SAVED BY THE BLOOD shed of Jesus Christ upon that tree and by God's divine Grace. We are set apart for God. Believers are eternally set apart for God by redemption, "through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrew 10:10). Positionally believers are "saints" and

"holy" from the moment of believing. (In experience, believers are being sanctified by the work of the Holy Spirit through the Scriptures. And believers' complete sanctification awaits the appearing of the Lord.)
Salvation

The Christian has been saved from the guilt and penalty of sin and is safe. The Christian is being saved from the habit and dominion of sin. The Christian will be saved at the Lord's return, from all the bodily infirmities that are the result of sin and God's curse upon this sinful world, and brought into entire conformity to Christ. Salvation is by grace through faith, it is a free gift and wholly without works. The divine order is first salvation, then works (Ephesians 2:9-10; Titus 3:5-8).

Glenda Ward is a member of Grand View Baptist Church in McDowell County. She is the mother of five grown children. Glenda is a Christian writer/author of "Something to Think About" – weekly Christian Articles. She writes Church Programs & Bulletins, VBS Material, Christmas and Easter Programs; all material based on the KJV of the Bible. Also testing the field in tributes, individual memorial writings, etc.





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A Lenten Message

By Jody Griffin
Avery and Mitchell County

"And he said to them all, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." (Luke 9:23, KJV)

A Lenten Message...From an Unexpected Source (Prison)

Lent...Can feel so 'unrelenting', If spent...Just repenting
It's meant...For reflection, to lead...One direction
The path of the Savior...Calls for change of behavior
Starts with admitting...And tempts us toward quitting
But the Truth, it compels...And the Promise it sells
Means Lent leads to LIFE...and in spite of the strife
That we find...When we make up our mind
To walk as He walked...Talk as He talked
To live like He lived...love like He loved
To go where He went...raised to Life up above
Sacrifice came and Sacrifice went...So that those who believe, any percent
Will know that these days...Will end in true Praise
When all's said and done...It's the death of God's Son
But because He is risen...We are ALL freed from prison
Although tried and convicted...We are never evicted
From the grip of His Grace...So we trust and replace
All that we once claimed...Cause it led to our shame
So, for 40 long days and 40 long nights...We give up our plans, lay down our rights
We turn from our sins, we freely confess...That without Hope from the Lord, we are truly Hope-less
Then perspectives are changed...and burdens are lifted
We now see this time from new hearts that have shifted
From the curse of the past...to a Love that will last
Forever and ever for eternity...Love gave up His Life that ALL might be free
All it takes is believe...and then you WILL receive Thank You, LORD!



Jody Griffin is pastor of Central Baptist Church in Spruce Pine and Community Funded Chaplain at Avery-Mitchell Correctional Institution.

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By Doug Harrell
Mitchell County

If you are old enough you may remember the song by The Rolling Stones, Satisfaction:

*I can't get no, oh, no, no, no, hey, hey, hey
That's what I say
I can't get no satisfaction, I can't get no satisfaction
'Cause I try and I try and I try and I try
I can't get no, I can't get no*



Most of us go through life struggling to get satisfaction. We look for ways to bring joy into our lives, ways to erase our hurt and pain, ways to ease our spinning thoughts and fears. We tend to feel our inadequate capabilities don't measure up to the task before us, we are afraid to get out of our comfort zones. Try as we might, we can't get no satisfaction in our lives. Two things must come into focus if we are to overcome this longing for true satisfaction in our lives; belief and faith.

"Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses. And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation. Oh, that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness." Psalms 107:5-9 KJV

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report. Through faith, we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." Hebrews 11:1-3 KJV

We must have a sincere hope for a better today, a better tomorrow and a better life in general. If we have hope, a genuine desire with the expectation of fulfillment, and we build that hope upon His righteousness and promises we will reach that goal of satisfaction. Nothing else in this old world will do it. So many times, we look for excitement and satisfaction in the things of this world. The excitement (supposed) of an affair with what we might think is greener grass on the other side of the fence, the enhancement, (we think) of our personality when we have a few drinks. We think the big house and the fancy car might give it to us. That does not happen. The Lord wants us to be happy and have satisfaction, but we usually mess up big time when we take our eyes off the instructions and directions for the good life.

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." 1 John 2:15-16 KJV

The song "My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less" says it this way:

*"My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness
My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness
I dare not trust the sweetest frame
But wholly lean on Jesus name
On Christ the solid rock I stand
All other ground is sinking sand
All other ground is sinking sand"*

Build your hope on Jesus because all other things will give you no satisfaction, only by the blood of Jesus can we attain that hope and eternal satisfaction that comes from knowing and accepting Him as our only true path. He leads us toward our righteousness through His sacrifice that was given so that we could have the blessed assurance that all is well with our souls.

To God be the glory.

Doug Harrell is a life-long resident of Mitchell County, Owner of Harrell Hill Farms, Inc, a member of Bear Creek Baptist Church.

A God-centered Perspective

By Dan Quorollo
Burke County



In his book, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, author A.W. Tozer made this accurate observation: "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us" (*The Knowledge of the Holy*, Kindle). Our ideas of God are not merely theological ideas that are removed from reality; rather, they are the ideas that enable the right living. What we believe about God is foundational to our Christian life.

Psalms 139 brings us face to face with the reality of who God is and is arguably one of the grandest psalms with the book of Psalms. It is a psalm that emphasizes theology in practice and represents the journey of the psalmist who begins with reality and ends with a prayer. What he learned about God removed his sense of self-dependence and caused him to fully rely upon the God with whom he came face to face. The more we learn about God, the less dependent upon ourselves we will be.

Psalms 139 consists of four stanzas, each stanza consisting of six verses. I believe the structure of the psalm leads from the reality of God's knowledge to a plea for God's searching. When one considers the greatness of God, the natural response is to flee. David identifies the futility of fleeing and embraces the reality of God's knowledge and pleas for God to search him.

In 139:1-6, David emphasized God's omniscience and emphasizes the reality that God knows me. His knowledge is thorough, complete, and always accurate (139:1). He knows every detail (139:2a), thought (139:2b), activity (139:3), and every word (139:6), even the thoughts that form the words. As David concluded this stanza, he burst out, *"Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it."* The extensive and perfect knowledge that God has of David is too wonderful for him. It is too high for David and is therefore unattainable and incomprehensible.

In the second stanza, David emphasizes God's omnipresence (139:7-12). God is always everywhere present equally and entirely. Therefore, I can be assured God is with me. As David began this section of Scripture, he asked the question, *"Whither shall I go from thy spirit?"* Having reasoned that there is nothing in our lives absent from the knowledge of God, David began to ponder the futility of escaping God's presence. If he were to attempt to flee God's presence, his effort would be futile because His presence is universal (139:7-8) and inescapable (139:9-10). David also identified the futility of hiding, for the darkness is light to God (139:11-12).

In Psalm 139:13-18, David emphasized God's omnipotence, a term meaning God is all-powerful. David was clear: God designed me. Our design is sovereignly planned (139:13-14), intricately detailed (139:15-16), and infinitely vast (139:17-18). The sum of thoughts of God directed towards man is vast. He regards them as totaling a great sum in verse 17 and a number unable to be determined in verse 18. In fact, if David were to attempt to counter these thoughts, they would exceed the grains of sand.

Finally, David emphasized God's holiness in 139:19-24 where we learn God compels me. God's response to the wickedness of man is emphasized in this passage as he considers it from God's perspective (139:19-20) and man's perspective (139:21-24). God will not tolerate wickedness, nor will He excuse those who disdain Him. Those striving to live holy lives align themselves with God's values and welcome God's searching for their lives. Rather than attempting to flee, embrace God's evaluation and pray *"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts. And see if there be any wicked way in me."*

Pastor Dan Quorollo is pastor Morganton Baptist Church. Check us out on our website www.morgantonbaptist.net or find us on Facebook and YouTube.



Nuclear Physicist for Creation!

By Jonathan Sarfati

Dr. Heinz Lycklama was born in the province of Friesland in the Netherlands during the Nazi occupation. After the war, his family immigrated to Canada for better opportunities. He earned a Bachelor's degree in Engineering Physics (1965) and a Ph.D. in experimental Nuclear Physics (1969) from McMaster University in Canada (at around the same time as CMI-Canada's Dr. Jim Mason was also studying nuclear physics there). By this time, Heinz had already published 10 peer-reviewed papers in scientific journals, including *Physical Review*, probably the world's most prestigious physics journal.

Dr. Lycklama emphasizes the importance of God as Creator: it means that He owns us and therefore has absolute authority over us. And he copiously documents that Jesus and the New Testament authors affirmed Genesis as real history. He then worked for some decades in the telecommunications and computer software industries. In 1992, Dr. Lycklama formed Open Systems Technology Associates (OSTA) to offer his technology management consulting services to various start-ups in the high technology industry.

In 2013 Heinz founded the Apologetics Forum of Snohomish County in Washington State, USA, to help equip believers in the defense of their Christian faith. He regularly teaches and arranges seminars on topics related to the Bible and science and has presented in a number of countries around the world.

With such a long career in science, it is not surprising to learn that Dr. Lycklama was already interested in science in high school. But even earlier than that, his favorite subject was mathematics. The basis for his later (even busier) career as an apologist goes back even further. He says he was blessed to be raised in a devout Christian family: "My parents faithfully took us to church each Sunday and instructed us in God's Word. I never wavered in my belief in God, with Christ being the Creator, Redeemer and Savior."

Unlike today, evolution wasn't brought up at high school. Evolution clearly has no relevance to his main subjects of physics and chemistry, and even his biology class didn't mention it—despite later propaganda that "Nothing in biology makes sense except in the light of evolution."

So Heinz was not confronted by the conflict between the Bible and evolution until his first-year geology class at university: "The professor directly challenged students who believed in the Bible, pointing out that the layers of sediment on the earth were the key to the history of the earth and that this was in conflict with the Bible."

However, this didn't affect his general science career, for which evolution was again irrelevant, including his graduate studies in experimental nuclear physics. Evolution and the Christian faith

Things had changed by the time his own children were attending public schools in the mid-1970s: "Audrey, our oldest daughter, came home from school one day and told Gerda (my wife) that we came from a monkey." (Evolutionists might protest that they believe that we came not from monkeys or apes as such, but from a common primate ancestor to monkeys, apes, and humans. But if people could see this proposed ancestor, most would indeed call it a monkey or an ape, and language is defined by usage.)

This motivated Heinz to develop teaching materials about the issue for Sunday school and home Bible studies. At the time, the late Dr. Henry Morris's books *The Genesis Flood* (1961) and *The Genesis Record* (1976) were very helpful. He saw evolution as a serious stumbling block for young Christians, for two main reasons: All attempts by evolutionists to show that the first life came from non-life by natural processes can be explained by evolution have come to naught.

1. They are indoctrinated in secularism and evolution on a daily basis, and:
2. They are not getting answers to their hard questions."

And in his creation talks, Dr. Lycklama emphasizes the importance of God as Creator—it means that He owns us and therefore has absolute authority over us. And he copiously documents that Jesus and the New Testament authors affirmed Genesis as real history. Another very important biblical teaching is that death is the result of Adam's sin, as opposed to evolution's teaching that the death of the unfit led to man.

After seeing the attempted indoctrination of Audrey, Heinz and Gerda enrolled their children in a biblically sound Christian school until they were ready for university or their chosen career path. Later, Audrey saw the importance of the issue and gave her own children a Christian home school education. Unfortunately, she died of cancer in late 2013 but was instrumental in helping Heinz's founding of the Apologetics Forum.

Evolution vs science

Dr. Lycklama points out that Christians should have no fear of evolution on scientific grounds. Rather, "Evolution is the greatest myth ever foisted on our society in the name of science." One strong reason he provides goes right back to the supposed beginning of neo-Darwinian evolution by natural selection. Natural selection is really differential reproduction, i.e. the fittest are those that leave the most offspring. So, before this can even get started, there must be at least two self-reproducing entities—at least one of which must have arisen directly from lifeless, non-reproducing chemicals. But, he points out: "All attempts by evolutionists to show that first life from non-life by natural processes can be explained by evolution have come to naught for four main reasons:

1. The Law of Biogenesis discovered by Pasteur in 1864.
2. The failure of experiments like that of Miller in 1953 to show that life can come from non-life.
3. The mathematical probability of forming the first living cell by random chance processes is beyond possible, and
4. Information in a cell (DNA) requires an intelligent mind."

The failure of the origin of first life from non-life by natural processes is actually a showstopper for evolution.

And even if we grant the first self-reproducing cell, it's not the end of the

problems. No one disputes that things change, but the small changes observed in nature just don't add up to big changes. For one thing, they are going in the wrong direction: downhill instead of uphill. And, he points out, "the fossil record does not show the 'innumerable transitional links' expected by Darwin"—even 160 years later, and neither does it support human evolution.

What about church leaders who are afraid to challenge the ruling 'scientific' paradigm? Dr. Lycklama reminds his readers and listeners that many supposed irrefutable proofs of evolution in the years since Darwin have been totally discredited, yet too many Christians of the day swallowed evolution because of them—and some are still in today's textbooks!

"Some of the more dramatic examples were (and still are) Haeckel's embryonic recapitulation and embryo similarity, vestigial organs, and claims made by evolutionists at the Scopes Trial in 1925. Dr. Jonathan Wells identified ten discredited icons of evolution in his book by the same name, *Icons of Evolution*, and he identified more discredited icons of evolution in his more recent book *Zombie Science*. Recent examples include the alleged '98% human-chimp DNA similarity', and the alleged 'junk DNA'."

Trust the Bible!

The above are just some of the many reasons that Christians ought not to be intimidated by evolutionary 'science', and instead believe Scripture as written. Heinz points out:

"The truth of the Bible has also been confirmed by history, geography, prophecy, and archaeology. In terms of prophecy, more than 50% of the prophecies in the Bible have already been fulfilled. Archaeology has supported the accuracy of many statements in the Bible."

Heinz is impressed by the Dead Sea Scrolls discovered in Qumran in 1948. They show the accuracy of the copying of Isaiah, and that Isaiah's prophecies about Christ were written centuries beforehand, not after the events, as skeptics asserted. He is also impressed by the Ebla tablets, discovered in northern Syria in 1974 and dating from centuries before Moses. They document the five cities of the plain (Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, Zoar) in Genesis 14, and destroy skeptical theories that writing wasn't invented by Moses' day.

Radiometric dating

The RATE team has also identified many discordant dates for rock samples when different radioisotope dating methods are used. This all puts into question the accuracy of dates determined using conventional dating methods that depend on the validity of the three basic assumptions.

Many people think that radiometric dating proves millions of years. After all, haven't scientists precisely measured both half-lives and amounts of isotopes in samples? So I asked Dr. Lycklama since he is a specialist in experimental nuclear physics. He pointed out: "It takes more than today's known decay rates to determine dates. There are three basic assumptions made in radioisotope dating methods:

1. The initial conditions of the sample are known.
2. There has been no contamination of the sample.
3. The decay rate of the radioactive isotope has remained the same since the sample's formation."

He then referred to the meticulous research by the RATE group in the early 2000s, which showed that these assumptions were demonstrably false: "For example, they have found C-14 in diamonds and coal where there should have been none if the earth was millions/billions of years old. The RATE team has also identified many discordant dates for rock samples when different radioisotope dating methods are used. This all puts into question the accuracy of dates determined using conventional dating methods that depend on the validity of the three basic assumptions."

Relativity and quantum mechanics

There is no doubt that the 20th century was revolutionary for physics. Some Christians are unnecessarily unnerved by these developments. But Dr. Lycklama wants to reassure them: "Relativity and quantum mechanics are part of our operational scientific knowledge. Einstein's Theories of General Relativity and of Special Relativity have never been falsified and are regarded as true science. Quantum mechanics solved some of the classical physics problems that had remained unresolved in the 20th century. But this did not render classical physics obsolete at all. The dual wave-particle nature of light has been well established by science using the scientific method.

"I do not see relativity and quantum mechanics as conflicting with what the Bible teaches. In comparison, evolution behaves more like a dogmatic belief system that cannot be refuted by any conceivable evidence."

Advice for science students

Heinz says: "I would encourage Christians today to study and know His Word first, and with that knowledge to enter a field of science that is of interest to them. "We need to counter the indoctrination of evolution and secularism with scientific evidence for creation and against evolution."

Heinz concludes: "Throughout my scientific career and beyond, I've been encouraged that true science has always supported the truth of God's Word. As a scientist, I'm not afraid of what real science will discover in the future—in fact, I look forward to it."



Why is my Brain Not Working?

By Miguel Cruz
Yancey County

Brain health is becoming a major issue in health care today. Alzheimer's disease is now the 6th leading cause of death in the U.S. and the major issue regarding brain health today. Here are a few more facts regarding Alzheimer's according to the Alzheimer's association.

Between 2000 & 2017 deaths from Alzheimer's increased 145%

Currently, 5.8 million American's are living with Alzheimer's and it is projected to rise to 14 million by 2050

Every 65 seconds someone in the U.S. is diagnosed with it.

We all know someone with a little bit of dementia, and we just brush it off as they are getting old. The unfortunate fact is that's where Alzheimer's begins. Not to say that all dementias end in Alzheimer's, without proper examination and testing, it's impossible to know who will and will not end up with it.

The key is, catch it early, and treat it early.

If you find yourself walking into a room and forgetting what you went in there for. Forgetting names of obvious objects, it's right there on the tip of your tongue but you just can't say it. Or you are losing things way too often. You may already be headed there. This should not be happening in your 40's, 50's or even the 60's+.

If you mention these things to your doctor, they are likely to just brush it off as "you are just getting older, it's normal". I would not walk but run out of that doctor's office and find someone who is willing to listen to you and recommend a plan of action to reverse dementia, it is possible.

There is a phenomenon called "neuroplasticity" which is the term used for the brain's ability to repair and heal itself. For this to happen there are a few things that you must know.

1. The brain must have the proper nutrients.
2. The brain must be exercised. Expand your thought process, watching TV makes you brain dead.
3. Testing is available, you must see a doctor properly trained in neuroplasticity, just throwing drugs at it will not work.

If you are interested in learning more, I recommend a book called, "Why Isn't My Brain Working" by Datis Kharrazian. He spells out not only a good understanding of the subject but how you can start a treatment program on your own. I have used his recommendation to successfully reverse my own dementia which started in my 50's. Everything I described above was happening to me which started me on a path to recovery and knowing how to help others.

For more information, I may be reached at drmacruz@icloud.com

Dr. Miguel Cruz is in practice along with his wife of 35 years, Lesia Cruz who is a certified Integrative Nutritionist. They own Cruz Life Center in Burnsville NC. Dr. Cruz is a licensed Chiropractor since 1981. When asked what he does for a living he explains that he helps people get out of pain and improve their overall health without the use of drugs or surgery. Something everyone seems to want but nobody seems to know how to get there. Dr. Cruz accepted Jesus Christ in the summer of 1979 while in chiropractic school. He has since dedicated his life towards helping people grow in physical health and spiritual health.



A Few Small Steps in Faith

By Rev. John Sorenson

Let's face it. The Great Commission can sometimes feel overwhelming. How can we, as individual Christians, reach the world with the message of hope and salvation like Jesus commanded us to do?

When we look at the numbers, the task is great. Even with modern technology, almost two billion people have never had the chance to even hear the Good News of salvation because no one has ever told them. So, where do we even begin?

The reality is, we have never been closer to completing the Great Commission than we are right now. Reaching the entire world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ is within our grasp – possibly within our own generation. Here's why.

Ralph Winter, founder of the U.S. Center for World Mission found that in 100 A.D. there was one Christian for every 360 people on earth. In 1900, one Christian existed for every 21 people. Today, there are only eight people for every practicing Christian. That ratio is lower than it has ever been in history. That excites me!

The point is, we are living in the greatest revival the world has ever seen. The Great Commission can be accomplished, but only if we are willing to share our faith. Think about it. If every Christian was equipped to share their faith, and they actually did it, every person on earth could have the opportunity to hear about the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ.

Not all of us are called to travel the world as a missionary, but we can share our faith right here at home, in our own communities – with our friends, co-workers, and the people we meet in our neighborhoods. Begin by taking a few small steps in faith and trust that God will lead you to someone who needs to know about Him.

Step 1: Pray for open doors. Often, we don't see opportunities because we aren't looking for them. Prayer opens our own eyes to the needs around us.

Step 2: Start a Gospel conversation. Invite a friend to join you for coffee. Ask a co-worker how they are doing, physically and spiritually. Offer to pray or help someone in need. Then really listen.

Step 3: Share your God-story. Our personal testimony about what God has done for us can change lives. People might be able to argue with Scripture, but they can't dispute what you personally have experienced.

Step 4: Keep the conversation going. Don't be discouraged if someone doesn't pray to receive the gift of salvation right away. Follow up. Invite your friend to church. Offer to meet with them again to answer any questions.

Remember, Jesus commanded us to share the Gospel. We can't force someone to accept it. But we can help to keep Jesus in the forefront of their minds and allow the Holy Spirit to work. All it takes is a few small steps of faith.

Rev. John B. Sorensen, D.D. is the President/CEO of Evangelism Explosion International, headquartered in Arden, N.C. EE has been a leader in equipping Christians to share their faith for more than 50 years. For more free tips and resources, visit evangelismexplosion.org.



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"No Regrets Family"
Child Slavery, Just How Bad Is It?

By Dean Honeycutt
Mitchell County

I would like to call your attention to Child sex trafficking because I fear we pay far too little attention to this huge problem. I was first made aware of the magnitude of "human slavery" at a "For King and country" concert in Charlotte. I believe at times we are so shocked at children being sold for sex we want to put the issue away in a closet and shut the door and not open it because it is so horrifying. The only way we are going to stop this horrible sin is to bring it into the light by making it known and punish severely those who sell children and young women.

I would like to share part of an article written by John Whitehead, January 28, 2020, entitled *The Super Bowl's Biggest Losers: The Boys and Girls Being Sold for Sex 20 Times a Day*.

The following is a portion of Whitehead's article.

"Children are being targeted and sold for sex in America every day."—(John Ryan, National Center for Missing & Exploited Children) There can only be one winner emerging from this year's Super Bowl LIV showdown between the San Francisco



49ers and the Kansas City Chiefs, but the biggest losers will be the hundreds of young girls and boys—some as young as 9 years old—who will be bought and sold for sex during the course of the big game.

It's common to refer to this evil practice, which has become the fastest growing business in organized crime and the second most-lucrative commodity traded illegally after drugs and guns as child sex trafficking, but what we're really talking about is rape. Adults purchase children for sex at least 2.5 million times a year in the United States.

It's not just young girls who are vulnerable to these predators, either. According to a USA Today investigative report, "boys make up about 36% of children caught up in the U.S. sex industry (about 60% are female and less than 5% are transgender males and females)."

Consider this: every two minutes, a child is exploited in the sex industry. In Georgia alone, it is estimated that 7,200 men (half of them in their 30s) seek to purchase sex with adolescent girls each month, averaging roughly 300 a day. On average, a child might be raped by 6,000 men during a five-year period.

It is estimated that at least 100,000 children—girls and boys—are bought and sold for sex in the U.S. every year, with as many as 300,000 children in danger of being trafficked each year. Some of these children are forcefully abducted, others are run-aways, and still, others are sold into the system by relatives and acquaintances.

Child rape has become Big Business in America. This is an industry that revolves around cheap sex on the fly, with young girls and women who are sold to 50 men each day for \$25 apiece, while their handlers make \$150,000 to \$200,000 per child each year.

This is not a problem found only in big cities.

It's happening everywhere, right under our noses, in suburbs, cities, and towns across the nation. Debbie, a straight-A student who belonged to a close-knit Air Force family living in Phoenix, Ariz., is an example of this trading of flesh. Debbie was 15 when she was snatched from her driveway by an acquaintance-friend. Forced into a car, Debbie was bound and taken to an unknown location, held at gunpoint and raped by multiple men. She was then crammed into a small dog kennel and forced to eat dog biscuits. Debbie's captors advertised her services on Craigslist. Those who responded were often married with children, and the money that Debbie "earned" for sex was given to her kidnappers. The gang raping continued. After searching the apartment where Debbie was held captive, police finally found Debbie stuffed in a drawer under a bed. Her harrowing ordeal lasted for 40 days.

While Debbie was fortunate enough to be rescued, others are not so lucky. According to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, nearly 800,000 children go missing every year (roughly 2,185 children a day). With a growing demand for sexual slavery and an endless supply of girls and women who can be targeted for abduction, this is not a problem that's going away anytime soon. For those trafficked, it's a nightmare from beginning to end. Those being sold for sex have an average life expectancy of seven years, and those years are a living nightmare of endless rape, forced drugging, humiliation, degradation, threats, disease, pregnancies, abortions, miscarriages, torture, pain, and always the constant fear of being killed or, worse, having those you love hurt or killed.

Peter Landesman paints the full horrors of life for those victims of the sex trade in his New York Times article "The Girls Next Door": "Andrea told me that she and the other children she was held with were frequently beaten to keep them off-balance and obedient. Sometimes they were videotaped while being forced to have sex with adults or one another. Often, she said, she was asked to play roles: the therapist-patient or the obedient daughter. Her cell of sex traffickers offered three age ranges of sex partners—toddler to age 4, 5 to 12 and teens—as well as what she called a "damage group." "In the damage group, they can hit you or do anything they want to," she explained. "Though sex always hurts when you are little, so it's always violent, everything was much more painful once you were placed in the damage group."

Again, this is just a portion of the article. I wanted to share it with you because it is powerful and informative. Be vigilant if you see something suspicious say something. Keep your eyes on your children and keep up with who they relate to on social media.

You may read the entire commentary at The Rutherford Institute Facebook post-January 28, 2020. You can also read the original article in the John White commentary section located at <https://www.rutherford.org/>

Pastor Dean Honeycutt shepherds Snow Hill Baptist Church in Bakersville, NC. He may be reached at 828-385-0213, snowhillbaptist@gmail.com, or visit their website at www.snowhillbaptist.com.



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Mine Creek Baptist Church

Fighting for Truth

By Chris Rathbone
Mitchell County

You and I as Christians, are living in dangerous and troubling times. The Apostle Paul certainly wrote truth when he told Timothy, *"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away."* (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

Just in the last couple of decades since I've been in ministry as a pastor, we can look around us and see these scriptures along with many others being fulfilled right in front of us. These rapid changes in our nation, to many people, even Christians, seem to go unnoticed or they seem oblivious to the way culture has shifted. Many even seem ok with it! Sadly, there has been such a drastic shift in the many churches to liberal beliefs, that often one cannot tell the church from the world. Christians, including pastors and preachers, have been constantly pressured to conform to new norms that the world around us has been pushing. Folks want to claim heaven while living for hell! The preaching of holy and righteous living often is a thing of the past and if one does, they are labeled as hateful and mean spirited. The truth of scripture has been compromised and watered down to the point that when someone preaches truth it is labeled as hate. When people have been conditioned by weak theology for so long, the truth becomes offensive because they aren't used to hearing it!

Over the years in ministry, there have been many occasions when I've been asked for counsel by individuals. Often questions will be asked, and I do my best to give Biblical answers. You just wouldn't believe how sometimes Scriptural truth is met with anger and rejection. I've concluded that people are looking for the Bible to somehow condone sinful behavior instead of searching for truth to stand on and help them through their situations. And it's not just from counseling sessions. Preachers and Pastors, including myself, are confronted by people who have been "offended" by Biblical sermons that have been preached. The anger is directed toward the messenger, but the truth is they are angry about being told the truth.

Herein lies the problem: People have been taught to doubt the authority of Scripture. Paul told Timothy that *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."* 2 Timothy 4:16-17. Read this next statement very carefully: If we come to the point where Scripture is no longer the standard by which we measure our faith and practice, then anything goes. When the Bible is no longer how we learn what we are supposed to believe and how we are to strive to live, then we have no foundation on which to stand. Instead, man will be blown about by every false doctrine and teaching that comes along. I'm not surprised by how the unbelieving world lives, but I am heartbroken by how those who claim to be believers in Christ choose to live.

Paul charged Timothy to preach the Word, meaning the Scriptures. There was coming a time when man would not want sound doctrine but would raise up teachers who would teach them what they wanted to hear. They would turn away from the truth and turn to fables (2 Tim. 4:1-5). This is being played out right before our eyes, Christians. There are men purposely preaching false messages to appease the masses who are more than happy to hear them. Man has always struggled with striving to conform to God's word. Now man has simply quit trying, making up his own truth and raising up false teachers who are more than glad to accommodate them.

Again, I'm not talking about those who are unbelievers, I'm talking about those who claim to be born again, who name the name of Jesus and intentionally reject the truth of Scripture. The Bible never defines marriage in any other way than between a man and a woman. Yet here we are arguing over same-sex marriage. According to Scripture, God has always recognized life in a mother's womb, but we have Christians defending abortion. The fact of the matter is abortion kills babies! Sex outside of marriage is fornication (sexual sin), but for the most part, the modern church just shrugs it off and gets angry with preachers who teach sex is for the covenant of marriage. Lying is wrong, but we are often afraid to call someone out on it. When many Christians are confronted with behaviors in their life that are wrong, they will scream, "Don't you judge me!" The simple fact is they just don't want anyone, even if it's Biblical, to tell them the truth.

Folks listen, we've got a hard road ahead of us in this world. The Bible says that it will only get worse. However, we must never give up on standing for truth according to the Bible. You and I are not responsible for whether people will receive what is truth. Our responsibility is to make the truth of Christ known, to make His teachings known. While doing this there will be rejection, persecution, and often we will be hated for it. But someone has to decide which is more important, pleasing God or pleasing man. I for one would rather preach the word of God and suffer the consequences of man than to preach the word of man and suffer the consequences of God. Help me my fellow Christians to fight for the truth!

Preacher Chris Rathbone serves as Pastor at Mine Creek Baptist Church.



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Sudoku Solution

5	1	9	8	3	2	7	4	6
6	7	4	1	9	5	8	2	3
8	2	3	7	6	4	9	5	1
3	5	7	2	1	8	6	9	4
9	6	1	3	4	7	5	8	2
4	8	2	6	5	9	3	1	7
1	9	8	4	7	6	2	3	5
7	4	5	9	2	3	1	6	8
2	3	6	5	8	1	4	7	9

A Pastor's View

"Culture-blind" — or Cowardly?

By Shawn Thomas
Angleton, Texas



In Washington Irving's delightful *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon*, the author journals about his attendance at a venerable English country church: "The congregation was composed of the neighboring people of rank, who sat in pews sumptuously lined and cushioned, furnished with richly gilded prayer-books, and decorated with their arms upon the pew doors; of the villagers and peasantry, who filled the back seats and a small gallery beside the organ; and of the poor of the parish, who were ranged on benches in the aisles." (*The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, "The Country Church,"* Washington Irving, p. 104)

One is immediately struck by the incongruity of the church seating arrangement: the wealthy enjoying lavishly decorated pews, but the poor unceremoniously inhabiting the back seats and benches on the aisles. It is such a flagrant violation of the command of James 2: "My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism. For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes ... and you pay special attention ... and say 'You sit here in a good place,' and you to say to the poor man, 'You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool,' have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives?" (James 2:1-4)

Surely anyone attending that church who possessed both a Bible and conscience could have discerned that this scenario was wrong — couldn't they? There are at least two explanations for this kind of blatant aberration:

1. They may have been "culture-blind." Believers in any setting can find it difficult to "escape" the cultural presuppositions they were nurtured in, and to detect contradictions between their culture and scripture. After all, those things seem to them to be "normal;" they were brought up that way. This is one of the reasons why C.S. Lewis recommended reading books and sermons from other ages, and why Lesslie Newbigin encouraged Christian interaction with churches in other parts of the world — these members of other times and places are not bound by our cultural limitations, and they can help correct our "culture-blindness" with the light of God's truth.

2. But a second explanation exists. There is the distinct possibility that the wrong was indeed noticed even by some of those inhabiting that culture — but that those who detected it were not courageous enough to speak up about it.

Irving's account ought to cause Christians today to examine our own practices: what blatant compromises with scripture do we tolerate in our churches week after week, to which we ourselves are just as "culture-blind" as the ancient English were to theirs? And are there those of which we ARE indeed aware — as perhaps some of them were — but we are just too cowardly to speak up against them?

Shawn Thomas is a Southern Baptist pastor for almost 35 years. I currently serve as Senior Pastor of the First Baptist Church of Angleton, Texas.

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The Rest of The Story

By: Farmer Doug

I cannot help but belly laugh when I read these episodes of Clint on the farm and remember back to the day it took place. That watering tank is still working and still has to be cleaned out quite often but the electric fence has been replaced by a 4-strand barbed wire fence that has a gate where Clint decided to become an electrified wire clutcher. I remember my disbelief when I looked back and he was standing there shaking like a leaf holding the wire with this weird look on his face. I knew that it would not kill him but thought he had lost his ever-loving mind! His story tells it all and is totally funny. Enjoy the read and don't hold on to electric fences!

Clint's Chronicles on the Funny Farm

By Clint Pollard

Many of you have written, emailed or called about this column. It seems that you find delight in my many foibles, misadventures and near-misses with danger. Also, some have questioned my veracity – that would be TRUTH telling – regarding these tales. A couple things you should know: The Lord undoubtedly protects me from myself and the myriad monsters and events that seek to snuff me out, and these stories are absolutely true (not to say I don't exaggerate a teeny tiny bit @) Now get a load of this:

Pride Comes Before Electrocution!

It was another warm and DRY day at Harrell Hill Farms. I understand, now, why farmers are obsessed with the weather. I was asking God to open the heavens and pour moisture on our parched farmland. Hay ain't growin', 'maters are wilting, 'tater patch looks like a forest fire aftermath...the soil is groaning for water. Babbling creeks and free flowing streams which had cascaded only weeks before now have slowed to a mere trickle.



This day my friend Doug Harrell has drug me all over the mountainous terrain, spraying some kind of dastardly weed killer on the fence line. He's learned not to trust me on the tractor in the presence of other human beings so he drives, dragging me and 10,000 feet of yellow hose in his wake. I am trudging through the valley, pulling 5 miles of hose pipe, spraying this modern day nuclear waste on a gazillion miles of pig weed. (By the way, one day I will ask the Lord how come He made pig weed...it's ugly; it chokes edible plants, and has thorns the size of horseshoe nails...that just ain't right!) Anyway, I'm cautiously running behind the tractor trying to avoid falling into a groundhog cavern. For I know there is an underground monster wanting to drag me to the center of the earth's core and devour my flesh!

Having dumped our load of herbicide it's time to repair the watering holes for the cows. I guess they are called watering holes, although they are more like watering tanks. They really aren't tanks either, they are really cement donuts which rise out of the earth and fill with water from who knows where. I mean there is no water on the gardens, no water in the creeks, and here I am looking at a round concrete hicky-doo full of life saving water...go figure. Man, so much to learn on this farm!

Anyway, A.D. Harrell – "Daddy D" to his family – has told Doug we need to unstop these fountains, geysers, watering holes...whatever in the heck they are. Seems mud and debris are interfering with the flow. So off we go to do whatever a farmer does to unstop the cow spring!

Well, there's an electric fence around the pastures to keep the bovine in and others out. Weeks ago, I was shown where to connect and disconnect the power making entry safe. If you care, the power comes out of a little out-building, sort of an ancient haunted shed type structure beside Daddy D's home. My first foray to the shed I fully expected a two-headed snake, a gigantic spider or at least a swarm of bees to assault my personage. Although I do recall the spider webs appearing like a Johns-Manville fiberglass factory. Thankfully not a single behemoth approached me, and Doug told me always to remember to disconnect the power before touching the wire. Duh! What kind of moron does he think I am?

As we neared the cow watering spigot I thought I saw Doug take the wire in his hands to steady his vault over the fence. You need to know that Doug and Daddy D are my heroes, in many regards, but I especially long to be a farmer like them. And, Doug and I have long had a competitive "thing" between us, whether playing golf, picking beans or eating cake. One always hopes to outperform the other. Back to the fence...

Following in Doug's footsteps, I grabbed hold of the barbed wire, with both hands, preparing to carefully lift my right leg over. BAM...BANG...%\$#@!...lightening raced through my fingertips, tingled through my wrists – continued up my arms, neck and head, spilling down into my back and belly, exiting through my feet. Heck I don't know – it's not a constant shock, it's a SLOW electrocution technique. I felt like an electric eel, did the hokey pokey, wriggling and dancing to the rhythm of pulsing electricity. Nearby Doug had "that look", as if he was suspended in time and space, unsure he was seeing what he was seeing.

Meanwhile, I'm clinging to this fence for dear life – smoke emanating from inside my wet gloves (Okay, not exactly pouring out but so it seemed). Yet I thought, "If Doug Harrell can hold this wire I CAN TOO. I will not give up." And I did...and I did...and I did. My hair standing on end...each appendage covered in goose bumps as body hair rose to the heavens...smoke coming from my ears...I was convulsing to the passage of intermittent electricity. I wore a hunted look, a

sickly grin as I was not about to fail what I thought was another test of my farmer mettle.

Doug finally approached and said, "Uh, what are you doing?" At that moment, I lost my will to continue this insanity...I don't care if Doug had held this fence for longer than I...time to surrender. Periodic bursts of electricity passing through Farmer Clint's body cannot add to life expectancy...I would simply lose this challenge!

Pouncing over with both legs, I released the wicked barbed wire at last. I gazed at Doug with newfound admiration and inquired, "How did you do that? I mean, didn't it hurt you?" Confused he asked, "How did I do what?" Perplexed and annoyed I continued, "Hold onto that wire so long...it's HOT!"

As I've come to expect, Doug just smiled at me – that kind of smile that implies, "Oh goodness where did I find this guy" – and said, "Clint, the fence is hot. I went under the wire, not over it."

I burst into laughter, the kind that shakes your belly and innards...still smoldering from the prehistoric torture fence. Now I was upset so I asked Doug, "Why did you let me do that – I could have been killed?" With a twinkle of mischief in his eyes and wonder in his mind he replied, "Well, I don't know about that. It's not likely you would be killed. But I've learned that when you mess up it's with gusto...and by the time I catch what you're doing it's too late to save you." I grunted and we moved on to help Daddy D unplug the cow fountain.

Tapping on Doug's shoulder, I pronounced with utmost confidence, "Bet you can't hold a hot fence as long as me." "Yeah, you win that one, Clint," he said, as he walked away chuckling and shaking his head.

I thought about my misplaced pride and how trying to outdo another, much less a friend, is not what God wants from me. Improper display of pride is shocking – get it, shocking! (That's funny I don't care who ya are!)

Regardless of my incompetence as Farmer Clint, I know that the Lord stood there with me – although He likely kept His distance while I held the hot wire. Yet, once again, miraculously I had cheated death on the funny farm.

Humbled in the Hills, Farmer Clint



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The Blessing of Blessing

By Caron Cline
Burke County



The letter written by the Apostle Paul to the church in Ephesus contains some of the most powerful promises concerning our identity as children of God. This letter was most likely circulated among the various churches in Asia Minor, including Laodicea. Identity theft is one of the greatest tools used by the devil to render believers useless in the kingdom of God. This letter from Paul was written as a revelation of the abundant blessings lavished by a gracious Father upon His children as well as practical instructions for living out our calling to the glory of God. We have an incredible destiny and we are loved with an everlasting love. Let's dive into the first few verses of this letter. In Ephesians 1:1-2, Paul calls himself an ambassador of Christ Jesus. Ambassador means one who is sent. Paul was personally commissioned by Jesus for Jesus' purposes. My favorite phrase is 'by the will of God'. How could it be God's will to call someone like Paul? He was a former persecutor of Christians; a Pharisee who thought himself holier than thou. He stood by and watched the stoning of Stephen, basically having the blood of Stephen on his hands. But the passion Paul had in persecuting the church was a gift from God that Satan had stolen. God took it back. God will use us in spite of how much we have blown it in the past. It takes one word of surrender and one step of repentance for God to pick us up and turn us around. He will pull us out of the miry clay and set our feet upon a rock. (Psalm 40) He will rewrite our story for others to see and we can fulfill God's intended destiny for our lives. He holds the master script, but He will not force us to accept His will. Our challenge is to say 'yes' to everything God has for us. God leaves that up to us; He gives us a free will. Paul said 'yes' and God took those gifts and turned the world upside down. As Paul greets the recipients of this letter, he proclaims two very important blessings over them: grace and peace.

The Greek word for grace is 'charis' and it means favor and the goodwill of God and Christ toward us.

The Greek word for peace is 'eirene' and it means one, quietness, rest; the peace of mind that is a result of reconciliation with God.

Without faith, it is impossible to please God, therefore, to experience the grace and peace of God we must be full of faith. We can rest assured that this is God's intended destiny for every one of His children.

The deeper we tread into Ephesians 1:3-14, the clearer our intended destiny shines. Paul actually becomes a worship leader in these verses. He begins to think upon the amazing benefits that we enjoy as faithful followers of Jesus and the blessings bestowed upon us by our Father. I don't think he can sit still as he writes or dictates this letter. I can see him getting more excited with every phrase. He blesses God and so should we because He blesses us. He blesses us with a blessing. That seems like an odd phrase.

He blesses us in Christ with every spiritual blessing. We will see the phrase 'in Christ' over and over throughout this letter because there are no blessings outside of Christ. Therefore, there are no blessings without a relationship with Jesus. Every blessing is hidden in Him. Those of us who have bowed our knees in surrender to His Lordship is now hidden in Christ with God. We are called to abide in Jesus and to allow His word to abide in us. We are to hang on His every word.

Let's go back to verse 3. We are blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

The Greek word here for spiritual means 'imparted by the Holy Spirit', so it is supernatural. The word for blessing here is 'eulogio'. A eulogy is kind words spoken over someone. It also means fine speaking; elegance of language; benefit; commendation.

Here is something exciting to think about: because we are in Christ, only supernatural spiritual words of elegance and commendation are spoken of us in the heavenly places.

Romans 8:33 reminds us that if God is for us, who can be against us? Our God is speaking kind words about us, His children. God is for us.

Corrie Ten Boom said: "God is voting for us all the time. The devil is voting against us all the time. The way we vote carries the election".

God is always speaking blessing over His children. Satan is always speaking curses over God's children.

We must make a choice to believe the truth over the lies of the enemy. Why would the Father refuse to listen or to speak negative comments about His beloved children? The truth can be summed up in just a few words. God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless and He is not interested in hearing any other report. He calls those things that are not as though they are! (Romans 4:17)

How can sinful creatures such as us attain the status of children of God, holy and blameless? The answer to this question is also in these verses: God loved us and predestined us for adoption as His children through Christ, according to the purpose of His will.

2 Corinthians 5:21 also tells us that "He (Christ) Who knew no sin became sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him". As born again believers, we stand before God wrapped in the righteousness of Jesus and as far as God is concerned we are holy and blameless.

We are blessed, chosen, adopted and redeemed. Redemption equals freedom. The blood of Jesus paid the ransom so that we could be released for the adoption process. The price was without equal. There was not enough money in the world to secure our release, but the blood of Jesus was sufficient payment. That blood bought our freedom and totally forgave us of every sin; past, present, and future. We are cleansed and our sins are completely removed.

Again, we are forgiven because of the riches of God's grace, which He lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight. This word 'lavish' means to shower generous quantities upon someone. It would almost seem foolish and shortsighted to lavish such wonderful eternal blessings upon people like us; dust. After all, we keep making the same mistakes; we keep doing the wrong things over and over; we fail to honor our Father as He deserves. Yet, God lavishes the riches of His grace upon us in all His wisdom and insight, realizing beforehand that we will fail at times to live up to our potential.

We were chosen before the foundation of the world to be hidden in Christ. God has an eternal viewpoint. In His omniscience, before the world began, we were already redeemed and sanctified and delivered into the kingdom of God for all of eternity.

These spiritual blessings that we experience are the revelation of the mystery of God's will. It's interesting to note that a revelation is a sudden understanding of a previous mystery. One minute you are blind to the truth but the next minute your eyes are open to truth. When a person receives Jesus as Savior and the Holy Spirit comes into their life, the eternal light of the glory of God opens their eyes to the truth in an instant. Suddenly, by the revelation of the Spirit, we get it! The mystery of God's will is Christ in us, the hope of glory. The blessings are no longer temporal; they cannot be removed. Once we are in Christ, all these things and more are ours. He has died and risen to provide us with everything pertaining to life and godliness. It's within us, not without. Our blessings are spiritual and therefore eternal.

One of the last blessings mentioned in these verses is the promise of our inheritance, an inheritance which we already possess. Our salvation is our inheritance, yet we still have not received it in its fullness. Jesus didn't leave His disciples, nor us, as orphans and once He ascended back to heaven, the Father sent His greatest gift and blessing to His children; the Holy Spirit. Once we believe in Jesus, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit. The word 'seal' means 'to stamp with a private mark for security'.

We are stamped and we are sealed. He is not leaving and no other spirit is coming in. Although the enemy can still attack a Spirit-filled believer's soul (mind, will and emotions) and physical body, he cannot touch the spirit which has been sealed by the Holy Spirit. He knows that we belong to the God of the Universe. This seal is also airtight and keeps our spirits fresh; it cannot spoil or decay. We are forever young!

Therefore, we are secure for all of eternity. The Holy Spirit is the guarantee of our inheritance and is always with us to witness to our spirit concerning the truth of our relationship with God the Father through Jesus the Son. He reminds us that we are heirs of God-coheirs with Christ-and that we possess every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. This gift has one purpose; that God might receive the praise and glory due to His name for all of eternity!

We are blessed, chosen, blameless, holy, adopted, redeemed, forgiven and sealed. Nothing on earth can ever compare!

Caron Cline is a follower of Jesus Christ who loves to teach the word of God. Her desire is to see every believer growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord.



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Preparation

Hebrews 11

By Harrietta Turner
Mitchell County

What Christian does not know of the Hebrews 11 Faith Chapter? And what Christian isn't constantly reminded in current sermons, especially by television evangelists.... of the Victories of the heroes of faith told of in the FAITH chapter in verses 1-35. And they tell us that these victories are to be ours through our faith if we have enough faith.

But how many sermons also mention that maybe we are going to be among those heroes of faith in the last verses of the chapter verses 36-38? *"And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still, others had trial of mocking and scourging, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth."* Hebrews 11:36-38. They kept their faith and were rewarded in the next life ... in eternity with our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ our crucified Savior!

Which group are we going to be in? I personally don't know which group I am to be in.

But I do know a few things God has revealed to me through these years. And I have found that fellow Christians usually and understandably don't want to hear about these things....

When I lived on a high mountain road in my home in Montreat, NC I had a dream one night, that was a little over 30 years ago. I dreamed that enemy troops were fast advancing up the mountain towards my home and I had time to collect some basic necessities and rush out. I was able to escape out through the midst of the upcoming soldier's unseen. Of course, I pondered the meaning of this dream and what to do about it.

Not much later I heard a report that during a Christian Conference in Ridgecrest, NC, at the Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center that the speaker Barbara Ann Chase, a spirit-filled Christian nun from Louisiana, said as she was speaking she saw enemy troops passing from Ridgecrest over the mountains into Montreat. Later I read that a Swannanoa, NC minister had a dream or vision of enemy troops passing by Swannanoa and headed to Black Mountain.

My mother owned several homes in Montreat, Black Mountain, and Swannanoa. I didn't see that I could move from Montreat. She had also purchased a vacation house up here in Mitchell County, NC on Deer Park Lake in the very high mountains, not far from Mt. Mitchell, the highest mountain peak East of the Mississippi River. And, in the not too distant future, our main house in Montreat, that we lived in burned totally to the ground with all the furnishings and collections of Christian books, musical instruments, etc. From the insurance money, we purchased a large stone home on quite a few acres on a mountaintop in Mitchell County and relocated there.

Since then a Montreat college professor, William Frostchen has published a book called *One Second After*, the story of the after-effects of an electromagnetic pulse (EMP) attack on the United States. *One Second After* tells of an EMP attack taking down the electrical grid of the country and the enemy troops filing into Montreat and surrounding areas. He mentioned many of the roads and areas where my parents owned and sold houses they owned. We still owned some after moving to Mitchell County.

I have heard that there is a group of "Preppers" here in Mitchell County, who have even had Professor Fortson here to speak at their meetings. But I haven't tried to find out who they are. I do that Jim Bakker of the former PTL Club and Community, who is now in the Ozarks with a Christian Community has also had Professor Fortchen as his guest and interviewed him on TV. Lately, Pat Robertson of the 700 Club TV Program has expressed very strong disappointment that our government has not been willing to spend the funds to protect our country against an EMP enemy attack.

Recently I was sharing all this with a renter of mine, who is very gifted with building and repairs, among other things. He wondered why only in that area I mentioned above were these things seen. I just said I thought it was because we all lived in that area. It doesn't mean it won't progress higher up into our area here where Prepper Groups are preparing.

I still don't know which group of Christians told in the faith chapter I will be. But I do know that I am living in a home on the edge of the cliff overlooking the vast mountain areas and part of the land that I own goes partly down the mountain.

The other night the Lord gave me a dream of caves, one cave after another. I believe He is revealing that the time has come to find some of our caves and enlarge them and make others as preparation for what is coming. I feel a bit like I may be that group of faithful Christians who wandered into the mountains and dwelt in caves rather than those who miraculously escaped the miracles of God. Only time will tell, and only God knows best. I felt I should have this information with others as the prophets have long warned that war, famine and accompanying difficulties are coming to the USA and that our whole country will be affected. We can try to be prepared as God leads us.

Harrietta Turner lives in Spruce Pine. She graduated from Tulane University School of Social Work.

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To satisfy the desolate and waste [ground]; and to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth? Job 38:27

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Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. 1 John 4:4

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An Insect that Is Used as a Plague?

By Christy Lowman
Burke County



This month I thought we would look at an insect that is talked about in the Bible. It is mentioned many times and was used to destroy crops, and as a plague. They were also occasionally useful in the Bible, like the time that John lived in the wilderness and survived by eating them and honey. Do you know what this insect is?

If you guessed locusts, you are correct. Locusts appear many times in the Bible. God used them as a plague to punish the Egyptians when Pharaoh would not let the Israelites go. He sent a swarm of them to devour every green thing in Egypt leaving absolutely no crop for the Egyptians to eat. Not only that, when the locusts were finished eating all the plants in Egypt, the Lord sent a west wind and sent them out to the Red Sea. Meaning, there were no locusts left for the Egyptians to eat except for maybe dead ones. People did and still do eat locusts. They are usually stir-fried, roasted, boiled, or dried. They are very rich in protein.

Locusts are mentioned again in the book of Revelations, where they are commanded to harm but not kill the people who are not the Lord's people. The Lord's people will have the seal of the Lord on their heads. This period is what is called the end of time, and the locusts are commanded to not eat anything green during this time.

Locusts are herbivores, invertebrates, and are very similar to grasshoppers. The main difference in the two is that locusts can change their behavior, which is normally solitary, into a thick mobile swarm, destroying and consuming every green plant that is in its path. Grasshoppers are not able to change their behavior. Locusts have serrated jaws that move from side to side, and they can become cannibal when plants run out.

They usually live around five months and their life has three stages: egg, hopper, and adult. They grow as long as 3 inches. The female desert locust can lay eggs up to 3 times her short life with as many as 158 eggs each time. This is during the time when she is not swarming. During swarming episodes. The female will lay fewer eggs, a maximum of 80 each time. Heavy rains will cause the eggs to hatch.

A desert locust swarm consists of 40 to 80 million locusts. They cover vast distances. Forty million locusts can eat the same amount in one day as 35,000 people. In one day, a swarm the size of New York City eats the same as all the people in New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey!

When desert locusts swarm they threaten the livelihood of 1/10th of the world's people. Their swarming episodes cause famine, starvation, along with major agricultural damage to plants and crops.

Many countries are affected even today by the desert locust. When they are not swarming, they inhabit about 30 countries. When they are swarming their territory increases up to 60 countries.

Is it not amazing that we serve a God that commands the locusts to come and go? A God who made insects that are able to cover vast areas and eat as much as 423 million pounds a day within a huge swarm? God amazes me with the animals He has created and the purposes He created them for! Doesn't it amaze you? Do you think you could eat a locust? I think if I was hungry enough that I could. What about you?

Dear Lord, You never cease to amaze me of Your creativity and purposes that You have created animals. The amount of thought, details, and reasoning behind each and every one You created is amazing! We can see the love you have poured into creating every living thing! We praise You and thank You for Your amazing creations! Please be with us, open our hearts and minds as we continue to learn more about them and You. In Jesus's name Amen.

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Christy Lowman is a Christian author and illustrator that lives in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains with her husband and two children. She enjoys writing and illustrating books for all ages. Some of her short stories are published with Guideposts and HCI. Christy gives all the glory to God in everything she does. A portion of every book sold from the Small Bible Character Series will be donated to battle human trafficking. If you enjoy her books, 'like' her author page on Facebook and let her know! You can buy her books at https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=dp_byline_sr_book_1?ie=UTF8&field-author=Christy+Lowman&search-alias=books&text=Christy+Lowman&sort=relevancerank You can reach her at <https://www.facebook.com/authorChristyLowman/> or christysoaps@yahoo.com.

Saving Just One

By Phillip Greene
Avery County



I came across a story and I felt it would be something that hopefully will inspire someone today. The author is unknown:

"After a few of the usual Sunday evening hymns, the church's pastor slowly stood up, walked over to the pulpit and, before he gave his sermon for the evening, briefly introduced a guest minister who was in the service that evening. In the introduction, the pastor told the congregation that the guest minister was one of his dearest childhood friends and that he wanted him to have a few moments to greet the church and share whatever he felt would be appropriate for the service."

"With that, an elderly man stepped up to the pulpit and began to speak. "A father, his son, and a friend of his son were sailing off the Pacific Coast," he began, "when a fast-approaching storm blocked any attempt to get back to shore. The waves were so high that, even though the father was an experienced sailor, he could not keep the boat upright, and the three were swept into the ocean as the boat capsized."

"The old man hesitated for a moment, making eye contact with two teenagers who were, for the first time since the service began, looking somewhat interested in the story. The aged minister continued with his story. "Grabbing a rescue line, the father had to make the most excruciating decision of his life: to which boy he would throw the other end of the lifeline. He only had seconds to make the decision. The father knew that his son was a Christian, and he also knew that his son's friend was not. The agony of his decision could not be matched by the torrent of the waves. As the father yelled out, 'I love you, son!', he threw out the lifeline to the son's friend. By the time the father had pulled the friend back to the capsized boat, his son had disappeared beneath the raging swells into the black of night. His body was never recovered."

"By this time, the two teenagers were sitting up straight in the pew, anxiously waiting for the next words to come out of the old minister's mouth. "The father," he continued, "knew his son would step into eternity with Jesus, and he could not bear the thought of his son's friend stepping into an eternity without Jesus. Therefore, he sacrificed his son to save his son's friend. How great is the love of God that He could do the same for us? Our heavenly Father sacrificed His only begotten Son that we could be saved. I urge you to accept His offer to rescue you and take hold of the lifeline."

"With that, the old man turned and sat back down in his chair as silence filled the room. The pastor again walked slowly to the pulpit and delivered a brief sermon with an invitation at the end. However, no one responded to the appeal. Within minutes after the service, the two teenagers were at the old man's side.

"That was a nice story," politely said one of the boys, "but I don't think it was very realistic for a father to give up his only son's life in hopes that the other boy would become a Christian."

"Well, you've got a point there," the old man replied, glancing down at his worn Bible. Sorrow began to overtake the old man's smiling face as he once again looked up at the boys and said, "It sure isn't very realistic, is it? But I'm here today to tell you that I understand more than most the pain God must have felt to give up His only Son. For you see, I'm the man who lost his son to the ocean that day, and my son's friend that I chose to save is your pastor."

This story has floored me more than once in life because it shows us the purpose that God may have for someone, even when we don't know, and essentially the old man had to make the same choice that God did. God looked down and realized he could only save one, and in that, He had to sacrifice His own son to do that. He knew that Jesus' blood would save us, but for that to happen, he had to let Him go.

If we are faced with the same situation ... What would we choose? Would you be willing to sacrifice one to save another? Share Christ today. Love with the love of God.

Phillip Greene is the Station Manager/Program Director for WECR-AM Radio/Glory 1130.

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Morganton Seventh Day Adventist

Ringo Is Turning 79!

By Steve Bietz
Burke County



Ringo Starr is going to be 79 years old this year. 79! The Beatles had a hit song called Yesterday. It was written by Paul McCartney in 1965. The words go like this: yesterday, all my troubles seemed so far away. Oh, I believe in yesterday. Suddenly, I am not half the man I used to be. There's a shadow hanging over me, oh yesterday came suddenly.

Indeed, for Ringo, the Beatles and the rest of us, suddenly, is a good description of what time does.

In 1962, just a few years before McCartney of the Beatles penned Yesterday, Peter Paul and Mary sang a song that spent five weeks at number one. It was called: Where Have All the Flowers Gone? Yes, another song that speaks about the subject of time.

No, I'm not stuck in the 60s. But the sentiments of the suddenness and the bewilderment overtime still rings true. We almost shutter wondering about the time and our planet. We may question, what can we expect when it comes to time? On Friday evening, March 6, I will begin a series that I am calling, Prophecies of Hope, in the Morganton Seventh-day Adventist church.

You may have questions about time. Did you know that the Bible has predicted the course of history with 100% accuracy? Many people looked for the future with fear and uncertainty. Not only has the Bible predicted the course of history with perfect accuracy, the Bible tells us what is coming next. The book of Daniel and Revelation will dispel your fears and give you a foundation for how you can prepare for upcoming events.

So many times, I hear that the book of Revelation is a closed book and that it cannot be understood. Well if that is the case, then its title, the Revelation of Jesus Christ, must be the cruelest trick I have ever heard. Instead of a closed book, it is a very revealing book that we can read and understand.

A major portion of the Bible involves prophecy. God knows the future like the back of his hand, and we would be foolish to not take advantage of the revealing future that the Godhead has given us in the Holy Word.

I hope you are not ignoring the Biblical prophecy. God's prophecy is a sure word that can keep us from being overly concerned about time. The Bible tells us the future. I encourage all of us to depend on scripture not CNN News to understand the future of planet earth.

Also, if you would like to attend the Prophecies of Hope series, I want to invite you to come and see. Opening night is Friday evening, March 6th at 7:00. It will be held at the Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Auditorium, located at 2187 Jamestown Rd in Morganton. The meetings will continue that weekend from Friday, March 6th through Monday, March 9th each evening beginning at 7:00. The Times They Are A- changing. Bob Dylan sang it in 1964. Maybe I am stuck in the 60s, but mostly I am stuck in the study of prophecy that we find in God's word. I hope you are also stuck in biblical prophecy.

Steve Bietz, Pastor, Morganton Seventh day Adventist Church.



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Spirits in the Sky

By Tim Tron
Burke County

A couple of weeks ago, the news of a famous retired basketball player dying in a helicopter crash has caused many in our nation to take pause. He was only 41. His life, one of a truly, gifted and amazing athlete, was followed by wealth and fame. Sadly, it is now all gone. What will remain are the memories and legacies to which he may have imparted; be they good or bad, as a two-edged sword, we may never know.

Each morning we awaken, we are afforded another precious gift, another day of life. We should never take one of them for granted, for we never know when this may be our last.

The other morning, I was afforded the blessing of meeting a friend at a church on the mountain, one that he was looking at possibly joining in the future. As I drove along the winding road, there was much to reflect upon. Overhead, the skies were a crystalline clear as the John's River's icy waters. Their reflection of earth's outer sphere, like a deep cerulean blue, gave the rising sun something with which to compete for the beauty and majesty. As my car drove up the mountain, the sunrise cast long shadows behind me, forcing darkness in pockets upon the eastward facing slopes; behind them, the veil of white lay waiting. As I made the crest of the mountaintop, the morning's first light made the snow-covered forest come alive. Like a multitude of angels at Jesus' birth, so too were the trees enshrouded by the luminescence of an untold number of diamond-like snowflakes.

Here and there around each bend, chimneys spewed forth slender columns of woodsmoke, each rising like tendrils into that azure blueness above. Each a signal of life within. Inside the humble cabins, the morning coffee had begun to percolate as the fire cracked and popped. Somewhere nearby, bacon sizzled in a cast-iron skillet. Some would be preparing for church while others would simply be rising to live another day of life, one with the hope of a tomorrow and the other just wishing there was one.

For every portion of living, there is a double-edged sword with which we must contend. One side of the blade, as my friend put it, is Mercy: the other side Justice. Life cannot have one without the other. Justice without mercy is a formidable and a fearsome judgment to any who have received it. Mercy without justice is like giving freedom without having any fear of retribution; there is nothing for which to be freed if there is nothing for which to fear. Yet, God hath given us a sword for which the balance between justice and mercy is perfectly balanced. In fact, on the traditional broadsword, the center of the sword is slightly raised, giving height to the intersection of the two opposing sides, taking the high road, if you will.

Through God's love for us, we are afforded the perfect balance of Justice and Mercy. For with each gradual trial we weather, by His Grace, we grow stronger in our faith. For if we find ourselves facing the proverbial headwinds in our daily walk with Christ, we must know that we are going in the right direction. For faith without trials is a faith untested. *"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."*

Just as each edge of the blade could be considered to stand for justice and mercy, so too could they stand for Thoughts and Intent of the human soul. *"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."*

Just as the word of God is quick and powerful, so too are its intention. Like a playbook on how to live life, its instructions are clear, succinct, and powerful. Yet, to the unbeliever, the words are only that, just printing on the page. As God spoke through the prophet Jeremiah, *"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end."* He gave us Christ, with whom we were spared eternal damnation and the expected end we deserved, with that ultimate justice; his death was the punishment for our sins.

To the unbeliever, the Bible is nothing more than theory, conjecture of good intentions.

As I was speaking to one of our department's professors this week, the difference between theory and application came to mind. While we are immersed in the pursuit of education at our institutions of higher learning, most of what we achieve is theory.



It is not until we go out into the "Real" world, get jobs, and start careers that we actually apply that theory. That application becomes the tools of whatever industry we pursue, sometimes for the rest of our lives. However, God has allowed me to return to the place from whence I began so long ago. As I listened to the very well-meaning professor describe the course layout, I found my mind jumping from the theory he was describing to the applications I had used in my nearly two decades of working in the industry. From that life of experience, from the applying of theory, I once more made the jump back to the present and was able to interpret his descriptions, but far from the conventional line of thought to which he was used to instructing.

For those of you who have learned or are trying to learn to speak a foreign language, you can relate. You at first must think of the foreign word's meaning in your mother tongue and then speak the foreign word. Slowly, as you become more proficient, eventually, you can skip the literal translation because you just know the foreign word, has finally become one of your own, no longer foreign. So too is the word of God. Like many who are lost and haven't come to know or accept Christ into their lives, the words in the Bible are only that, words. But Jesus told his followers that they would not be alone; that he would send a Comforter. He also said that he would never leave us nor forsake us. That Comforter, that being with whom he spoke, was to be the Holy Spirit.

Through the Holy Spirit, we are made anew, *"And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."*

From whence we came, is to which we shall return. For once we have walked in the way, we are made anew, and from there, we can speak to those who have yet to find the way, the truth, and the light. From our experience in the application of the word, we have become wiser, and with this wisdom, we are then able to help those who are lost. *"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."* From theory, as some may say, to become one with the Father through the power of the Holy Spirit, we are changed. Walking in Christ, we are no longer living in theory, but rather, in the application of what it was meant to be, where Justice and Mercy meet in that high rounded middle of the blade, to which nothing can prevail, neither spirit nor soul.

As the finger-like wafts of smoke rise into the morning sky from their hand-hewn stone chimneys below, so soar the spirits of many who have breathed their last. Don't go another day without seeking out that friend, that neighbor, or even that family member who might be lost. Seek them with all your heart. And remember, for, by the Grace of God, we go. We are all but a heartbeat away from eternity. Live each day as if it were the most precious gift. You never know when it will be your last.

Thanks be to God.

Timothy W. Tron lives in Collettsville, NC, with his family. He is the former Director of the Trail of Faith in Valdese, where he still volunteers and helps with tours. He now teaches Math full time at Watauga High School in Boone. He is the author of a new Christian series, "Children of the Light," with the first book being, "Bruecke to Heaven," and his recent book, being the second, "The Light in the Darkness." He is an active blogger, artist, and musician. Timothy also has a BSEE from UF, and is a Lay Speaker. He can be reached at twtron@live.com



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What We Believe

By Brian Barrier
Burke County

Here are some of the essential elements of our faith at the Blue Ridge Christian News:

God

God is the Creator and Ruler of the universe. He has existed eternally in three persons and chooses to manifest Himself in these three ways: as God the Father, as God the Son, and as God the Holy Spirit. These three are co-equal and are one God. (Genesis 1:1, 26-27; 3:22; Psalm 90:2; Matthew 28:19; 1 Peter 1:2; and 2 Corinthians 13:14)

Jesus

Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, who is fully God and fully human in His incarnation. He lived a sinless human life and offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all humanity by dying on a cross. He arose from the dead after three days to demonstrate His power over sin and death. He ascended to heaven and will return again to reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. (Matthew 1:22-23; Isaiah 9:6; John 1:1-5; 14:10-30; Hebrews 4:14-15; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Romans 1:3-4; Acts 1:9-11; 1 Timothy 6:14-15; Titus 2:13)

The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the very Spirit of God, fully divine, manifested in the life of every believer from the moment of salvation. He is equal with the Father and the Son as God. He is present in the world to make men aware of their need for Jesus Christ. He provides the Christian with power for living, understanding of spiritual truth, and guidance in doing what is right. The Christian seeks to live under His daily control.

(2 Corinthians 3:17; John 16:7-13; 14:16-17; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 2:12; 3:16; Ephesians 1:13; Galatians 5:25; Ephesians 5:18)

The Bible

The Bible is the divinely inspired, authoritative, infallible, living and active Word of God to all men. It was written by human authors under the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is the ultimate source of truth for Christian beliefs and living. In it, we find a guideline for a right relationship with God and God's creation, and a blueprint for personal, emotional, and spiritual growth. (2 Timothy 1:13; 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:2-21; Psalm 119:105, 160; 12:6; Proverbs 30:5)

Humanity

Humanity is designed and made by God in His image. We have been created as cognitive, moral, ethical, and physical beings and have been equipped by God for both relationships with Him and with one another. Both male and female are gifted by the Creator with characteristics which equip them for the purpose for which they have been created: relationship, dominion, and responsibility. Although God designed us to have fellowship with Him, we became alienated from God through disobedience. As a result, all human beings are born with a sinful nature and choose to sin against God. We are incapable of regaining a right relationship with God through our own efforts.

(Genesis 1:26-28; Psalm 8:3-6; Isaiah 53:6; 59:1-2; Romans 3:23; 5:22; Colossians 1:21; 2 Corinthians 5:17)

Eternity & Eternal Security

Our soul, the essence of our being, was created by God to exist forever. That forever is spent in one of two places: eternally present and in union with God because of His forgiveness and salvation or eternally separated from God because of sin and unbelief. At the moment that our physical body dies, those who are saved are immediately taken to heaven. Those who have rejected God's gift of salvation will spend eternity separated from God in hell. Because God gives man eternal life through Jesus Christ, the believer is secure in that salvation for eternity. Salvation is maintained by the grace and power of God, not by the self-effort of the Christian. It is the grace and eternal power of God that gives this security.

(John 3:16; 5:11-13, 10:29; 1 John 2:25; Romans 6:23; Revelation 20:15; 2 Timothy 1:12; Hebrews 7:25; 10:10-14; 1 Peter 1:3-5)

Salvation

Salvation is God's gift of redemption and reconciliation to Himself and is offered freely to all who accept, by faith alone, Jesus Christ as God's only son and receive Him as Lord and Savior. We can never make up for our sin with self-improvement or good works. It is only by trusting in Jesus Christ as God's offer of forgiveness that you can be saved from sin's penalty. Eternal life begins the moment you receive Jesus Christ into your life by faith.

(Romans 5:1; 6:23; Ephesians 2:8-9; John 1:12; 14:6; Titus 3:5; Galatians 3:26)

Brian Barrier is a life-long resident of Burke County, U.S. Army Veteran, a member of Pleasant Hill Baptist Church and Publisher of the Blue Ridge Christian News.



Rabies, Murder and Reconciliation

By Tracy Jessup



"You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not murder,' but I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment... So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift."
--- Matthew 5:21, 23-24

Author and Pastor David Jeremiah tells the story about a man whom a dog that was discovered to have rabies had bitten. Though the man was rushed to the hospital, medical science could do nothing to help the man, and his doctor faced the difficult task of telling him his condition was terminal.

"We'll do all we can to make you comfortable," the doctor said, "but in the meantime, I suggest you get your affairs in order."

Immediately the man picked up a pencil and began writing vigorously on a sheet of paper.

"I'm glad to see you are working on your will," the doctor told him.

"This ain't no will, Doc," the man replied. "This is a list of people I'm going to bite before I die!" (How to Live According to Jesus p. 34).

In today's passage, Jesus begins a new section of the Sermon on the Mount by addressing second-hand interpretations of the Law. Six times in vv. 21-48, Jesus presents us with a contrast, each beginning with this formula: *"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago... but I say to you..."* (vv. 21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43). The contrast is not between the Law given through Moses and the teachings of Jesus. Jesus already has reminded us that he has not come to destroy the Law or the Prophets, but to fulfill them (cf. 5:17). What we have here is a contrast between the true interpretation of the Law given by Jesus and the false interpretation given by the Pharisees. It is an explanation of how the righteousness of one who follows Christ exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees (cf. 5:20).

The scribes and Pharisees seemed to be attempting to restrict the application of the sixth commandment to the act of murder alone. By refraining from this action, they considered themselves to have kept the commandment. However, Jesus disagreed and maintained that the prohibition against murder included one's thoughts and words as well as one's actions. In other words, uncontrolled angry thoughts and insulting words are forms of violence and destruction.

Not only should we avoid uncontrolled angry thoughts and insulting words, but we also should take action toward reconciliation. Simply put, broken relationships with others influence our relationship with God. This is why Jesus says, *"So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift"* (5:23-24). John Stott writes, "If we want to avoid committing murder in God's sight, we must take every possible positive step to live in peace and love with all men" (The Message of the Sermon on the Mount, p. 86).

Prayer: Lord, help us not to harm others by our words, deeds, or thoughts. And when we do, may we take the initiative to mend the relationship.

Dr. Tracy Jessup serves as vice president for Christian Life and Service and senior minister to the University. He is a graduate of Gardner-Webb with a B.A. in Music and earned his M. Div. degree at Samford University's Beeson Divinity School. He completed his Ph.D. at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. He also teaches in the undergraduate department of religious studies and enjoys the opportunity to serve the local church through interim pastorates, pulpit supply, and preaching revival services. He and his wife, Teresa, have two children, Christian and Anna.

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Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

By Timothy Eller
Burke County

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is real! This is one of the most pervasive mental health issues within our country. I was a firefighter and EMT for 13 years. These were some of the greatest years of my life. It was my passion and what I loved doing from a small child. When I was a kid, I would cross the road to the Charlotte Fire Station 13 to look at the fire trucks. My dad would take me to eat my Happy Meal and play on an old ladder truck that was on a friend's car lot. From several critical incidents, I developed PTSD. But I was not willing to admit or acknowledge that this influenced me. More Firefighters and EMS Members die from suicide than job-related injuries. Often because of the love for the job and dedication of the professionals they are reluctant to ask for help. My wonderful wife advocated for me to get help. I took her advice and finally was willing to acknowledge the situation and talk about it. If you're out there a soldier, firefighter, first responder, or police officer and you are having trouble sleeping, feel depressed, or overly anxious, advocate for yourself and get help. You owe it to yourself not to bear the burden alone. You don't have to suffer alone.

Tim Eller graduated from Carolina Graduate School of Divinity and has been involved in prison and jail ministry for the past fifteen years. Currently he is operating in the capacity of a servant of Jesus Christ.



Habits of the Heart: A Study of the Spiritual Disciplines "Fasting"

By Dr. Jack R. Hodges, Jr.
Burke County



For followers of Jesus Christ to grow into the likeness of Christ, our journey requires a commitment to grow spiritually and practice spiritual disciplines. Over the last several months, I have invited you to look at two "internal" disciplines, meditation and prayer. The spiritual discipline of meditation calls us to enter into the living presence of God for ourselves. And prayer is that moment and place where we find ourselves face to face with our God, connecting and conversing with Him on a deep, intimate level.

Look with me now at a third internal habit of the heart: fasting. "Yet even now," declares the LORD, "Return to Me with all your heart, And with fasting, weeping and mourning..." (Joel 2:12)

It would be accurate to say that fasting is a biblical discipline that has not been given much thought, much less practice in the modern evangelical movement. In a land of plenty, fast food and gourmet restaurants rule the landscape, food is plentiful and accessible, and we live in a culture that values eating and, unfortunately, obesity has become a major health issue. Clearly, we, as a culture, are missing something very important about keeping our bodies fit and healthy. Could it be that God, in His infinite wisdom and His deep care for us, has given us some valuable insights into taking care of this body (which is a gift)? Could it be that there is an ongoing need to purge our bodies of the constant influx of chemicals, drugs, and food carcinogens (e.g., glutens, dioxins, and genetically modified ingredients, etc.), which have become toxic to our bodies? Since biblical times, the spiritual discipline of fasting has been practiced and the scriptures have much to say about it. The list of biblical figures who fasted is long: Moses, David, Elijah, Esther, Anna, the prophetess, Paul, and even Christ Jesus all regularly fasted.

The spiritual discipline of fasting is not about dieting. It is not about prevention or intervention. Throughout the scriptures, fasting refers to abstaining from food for spiritual purposes. Richard Foster (Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth. Harper & Row) notes, "It stands in distinction to the hunger strike, the purpose of which is to gain political power or attract attention for a good cause. It is distinct from healthy dieting, which stresses abstinence from food, but for physical, not spiritual purposes" (p. 42). Biblical fasting always centers on spiritual purposes. Throughout the Word of God, the normal method of fasting involved abstaining from all food, solid, or liquid (but not water) for a period. We know that when Jesus went out into the wilderness to fast (Lk. 4:1-13), He was led there by the Holy Spirit. He ate nothing during that 40-day period, and we read that toward the end of His fast, He was hungry. Jesus would regularly pray—conversing with God to hear and speak with the Father, understanding His will and purpose, and then He would obediently move and act upon the Father's commands. Believers, too, are invited to pray without ceasing—for God's ears are always tuned to hear His children and are committed to converse with us anytime and anywhere.

This time, however, it was the Spirit of God that led Jesus to an extraordinary experience which we know as a "fast." Knowing that Satan would confront Jesus in the wilderness, the Spirit of God wanted Jesus to be ready for the temptations. The question arises: If God knew that Jesus would battle the "deceiver" in the wilderness, then why would God require that Jesus submit Himself to abstinence from nourishment, knowing full well that Jesus would be hungry, weak, and vulnerable? The answer is, of course, that this was to demonstrate that our power over Satan does not come from our own strength, wisdom, power, or might—but rather solely from the power of the presence of the Holy Spirit and by His authority alone.

Satan tempted Jesus to eat, saying "If You are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread." Clearly, the temptation was aimed at Jesus' vulnerability and indicates that His fasting was from food, not water. Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone.'"

Although the duration of Jesus' fast was for 40 days, there doesn't seem to be indicated elsewhere in scripture a prescribed period for fasting. This "Temptation of Christ" sequence certainly does not suggest nor qualify that a fast must last for 40 days. The real significance of Jesus' fast was that the Lord responded to the Spirit of God and obediently made an intentional choice to abstain for the purpose of spiritual preparation. Jesus obediently fasted to ready Himself for the temptation. How often do you and I face a specific spiritual challenge and we find that we are ill-equipped to handle the onslaught of the attack? Perhaps, the reason is that we have failed to respond to the prompting of the Holy Spirit to ready ourselves for the attack. How do we do that? By entering a Holy Spirit-driven season (time) of fasting. We humbly and sincerely agree to abstain from any and all distractions so that we may hear the unobstructed, clear, and unimpeded directions from God which will guide us through the valleys of temptation, confusion, mixed emotions, attacks or offensive intrusions into our spiritual, emotional, psychological, and/or physical lives.

William Horne (The Practice of Fasting in Church History: A brief annotated timeline of fasting in Christian writing. In Medium, Feb 21, 2018), argues that fasting has often historically been used as either a practice tied with a "works-salvation" theology or as a means to get God's attention. Neither of these motives is rooted in a truly biblical understanding of fasting. Foster points out that to "use a good thing to our own ends is always a sign of false religion. How easy it is to take... fasting and try to use it to get God to do what we want" (p. 48).

Fasting, as a spiritual discipline, is never commanded in the Word of God. Rather, the believer is free to follow their conscience and the prompting of the Holy Spirit. Fasting must center on God. It must be God-initiated and God-ordained. Our motive must be for God to change us and ready us to use for His glory alone—for nothing can be allowed to stand in the way of His glory and honor. When the Holy Spirit of God calls His beloved into a fast, He is inviting us to step into the spiritual furnace that seeks to burn away all that controls us. As we seek to be transformed into the image of Jesus Christ, we humbly offer up all that is impure—and we declare to the Lord, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way." (Ps. 139:23-24)

Dr. Jack R. Hodges, Jr. is the Senior Pastor at Pleasant Hill Baptist Church in Morganton, Burke County. He has served as a pastor, a biblical counselor and a International Mission Board missionary.

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Hope 4 Mitchell County

By Brian Barrier
Mitchell County

Often, people are looking for someone or something to give them hope. If they can't find it in a person or thing, many will begin to have a feeling of hopelessness. We can see the very real effects of that in our communities today. People turn to abusive relationships, drugs, alcohol, and many other destructive behaviors looking for hope.

If you Google the word hope, the first definition you get is "a feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen." My study Bible gives this definition, "confident trust with the expectation of fulfillment." I think everyone reading this has experienced hope and many have even felt hopelessness at some point in their life.

Does the Bible have anything to say about hope? Of course, it does! In fact, depending on the translation you read and the source for research, the word hope appears at least 130 times in the Bible! Most often, hope is synonymous with salvation and its many blessings, past, present and future as found in God's Word. So, the real question is, how do we, who have our hope in salvation through Jesus, lead others to Him? There is a local non-profit organization in Mitchell County called "Hope 4 Mitchell County" that is leading the way in doing just that!

According to one of the founders, Dr. Rocky Branch, Hope 4 Mitchell County is a non-profit organization that seeks to serve the needs of children, families, and individuals in Mitchell County. It's non-denominational. The faith-based approach seeks to impact this area through outreach projects, community events, free counseling and various other projects.

The organization was founded by Dr. Rocky Branch and his bride of 39 years, Janice Branch. Both grew up here and wanted to give back to the county in a positive way. Dr. Branch is also the Senior Pastor at Spruce Pine First Baptist Church. Rocky said that H.O.P.E. stands for Help Others by Preaching and Evangelism.

The idea was really born when at the young age of only 16 Rocky found himself in a bad time and bad situation in his life and reached out to a local pastor by phone at 1:00 A.M. That pastor told Rocky that it was late, and he was too tired to talk to him at the time. He suggested Rocky call back in the morning. Just a few years later, Rocky surrendered his life to Jesus Christ and knew that people should have access to someone to talk to any time, day or night.

Hope 4 Mitchell County currently has three main programs to reach the community. They operate a 24-Hour substance abuse and/or crisis hotline. The telephone number is (828) 520-1010. Dr. Branch said they have as many as 20 trained counselors if needed. He personally staffs the line most of the time if he is available.

Another program inside the organization is called Hope 4 Mitchell County Martial Arts Academy. To encourage and reach new members and those who may be struggling in their life, Rocky only charges \$1 per lesson. His intent is not to have people leave other academies or teachers, but to encourage the underprivileged or those needing spiritual help to come join them. Through the discipline of martial arts and teaching of God's Word from the Bible, Rocky has been able to reach many in the community.

The last and largest program in Hope 4 Mitchell County is the annual Easter egg hunt. Dr. Branch said that 8,000 to 10,000 eggs are hidden at the local "Riverside Park" and serve an estimated 500 kids from Mitchell and surrounding counties during this event!

After spending about an hour talking with Rocky about Hope 4 Mitchell County, one thing is completely clear; he is passionate about bringing the community together, sharing and teaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ and working with other churches and organizations to make that happen. "We are the body of Christ," said Dr. Branch when referencing the Christian community. He went on to say, "We should be working together and not worrying about what church people attend."

As Rocky and I were talking, I couldn't help but think about what my own pastor has been teaching about reaching and loving those in need with the Gospel. That is exactly what Rocky is doing in Mitchell and surrounding counties. Jesus said in John 13:34-35, "I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you must also love one another. By this, all people will know that you are My disciples if you have a love for one another."

To learn more about Hope 4 Mitchell County the non-crisis number is (828) 765-9411. They are located at 125 Tappan Street in Spruce Pine, NC. You can



also visit <https://hope4mitchellcounty.blogspot.com/> or find them on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/hope4mitchellcounty/> for more information. You can also catch Pastor Rocky most every morning on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/rocky.branch.9> where he records short video devotions that are inspirational and challenging.

Brian Barrier is a life-long resident of Burke County, U.S. Army Veteran, a member of Pleasant Hill Baptist Church and Publisher of the Blue Ridge Christian News.



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Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them. Isaiah 42:9

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The Cross

By Allen Buchanan
Mitchell County



Often, I spend minutes to hours thinking about the life of Jesus on earth and how I long to see Him and my family already there in Heaven. We all know how man starts rushing in Christmas and Easter for secular gain. Man can try but he cannot change my thoughts and actions concerning the true meaning of these holy days.

With Easter on the horizon, I'm focusing on the cross and the pain Jesus endured. I have yet to meet anyone who hasn't experienced pain. Everyone has different types or degrees of pain. Accidents or disease are to blame. Tests ordered by your doctor to determine what is causing bad pain may be painful itself. I have sleep apnea and require oxygen around the clock. Once a year I get a blood gas test. Aside from passing kidney stones or having neuropathy stabbing pain, it is quick and extremely painful. The nurse draws blood from the back of my wrist for an arterial blood gas test or a blood gas analysis. It measures oxygen, carbon dioxide levels, blood pH levels, and lung function. Now that I've got you thinking about your daily pains when is the last time you thought of the pain our Lord Jesus Christ experienced on your behalf?

Although I have heard all my life that Jesus was nailed to the cross, I could not find scripture stating exactly that. The proof is found in John 20:25-29.

"The other disciples, therefore, said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them:



then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

After researching how criminals were held responsible in biblical times, I understood how the cross was the most dreadful of all because of the shame, the pain and how shocking it was to endure or watch. Before nailing Jesus to the cross, He was beaten with cords and pieces of bones. Some of you may recall your parents disciplining you with a switch or belt and thinking it to be the worse pain ever. Imagine suffering even more severely with cords and bones digging into your body with each strike. Then as the bone is pulled away, blood rushes from you leaving open flesh. While Jesus' mind and body were dealing with pain, He had to carry His own cross to the place of a skull called Golgotha. On His way, the cross became too much for Him so Simon the Cyrenian was chosen to bear it.

Jesus, my Lord, and Savior was nailed to the upright piece by nailing His feet to it. The crosswise piece held His hands with nails (or spikes) on each side. Once again, I think of the blood gas test and neuropathy pain I have associated with my nerves. The nails hammered into the center of just one hand would be more than I could take. Are you aware of how often we use our feet and hands? Imagine how many nerves are in each one. Then remember that only one nerve would be too much. Wasn't the nailing to the cross enough torture? No matter how awful your pain is, think about Jesus, the beating and then the crucifixion He endured. Remember, He died for everyone's sin, then He arose! Hallelujah He Lives!

Allen Buchanan is a freelance Christian writer. Allen attends Bear Creek Baptist church.

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Young Writer's Corner

Real Stories, Real People

By Hannah Hensley
Ervin, Tenn.

One of the most fantastic things about the stories I tell is that they are real. Real stories and real people. My heritage and my people. Though far from perfect, it's still wonderful, because sometimes by God's grace, imperfect people who are sinners on this earth, can be orchestrated to make a beautiful picture. It's my beautiful picture. It's mine, not just because I was born into this family, it's mine because it was given to me. It's a gift given to me by my parents, grandparents, great grandparents, etc. It's a gift given to my mom and my aunt and all the in-laws in my extended family; it's their gift, too. A gift of stories, heritage, and love. It doesn't belong only to the blood-related grandchildren; it belongs to the adopted into the family. Though adopted into the family, they're so loved and cherished they too have been given our stories and heritage to make their own. Not only were we given the gift of story and heritage, but the gift of an atmosphere full of honor, love, devotion, belonging and Appalachian and Blue Ridge Mountain traditions. We were also given, maybe, more importantly, a home. A home, a place to find comfort, joy, and happiness. A home where we can even bring our sorrows and woes. A place of feasting and rejoicing and a place to mourn together. A place where we are taught about our past and to plan our future. A place of understanding love. A home that's not our own abode, but a home that's open and given as a gift. Full of hospitality and love. No matter how much, no matter how little. No matter how clean, no matter how dirty. I love to write about our feasts at Mamaw and Papaw's table, but not every meal is biscuits and gravy or fried chicken. Sometimes it's takeout or leftovers. Sometimes it's soup beans or vegetable soup. Sometimes it's grilled cheese sandwiches and instant potato soup. It's not always the food, but it's the fact home was here and was opened, sacrifices made, we sat together, bowed our heads and prayed to the One who made it all possible. Most of the time our visits are last minute, but we know that their home is open to us. Most Sundays come after long and tiresome weeks and often they become filled with naps and TV. But couches and beds are here, and blankets and pillows are for those sleeping on the floor. In that home, we've been given stories, love, and hospitality. A second home. A place of rest. A place to escape from the mundane. A place where you are understood, but more than that, there is a sincere desire to understand you and your life. A place to talk of anything from cars and trucks to abortion. Where we talk of biblical truth and daily news. A place to learn of our past and our fathers and mothers before us. Their hardships, their victories, their songs, and their stories. How they preserved the food they grew. How they lived through wars and the great depression and came out of it victorious! All these things my dear Papaw Charlie and Mamaw Atlas gave me. Mamaw and Papaw give it to me. Mom and Dad continue to give it to me. But, with such a gift comes a certain amount of responsibility. A responsibility of respect, love, and loyalty to one another. You treat people how you want to be treated. You show hospitality. You give and make sacrifices for each other. You respect your elders, no matter how old, no matter how forgetful. And receive it, this gift, with the trust that you will take this story and hand it down to the next generation.

I have been given the gifts of grandparents attending church with me, never-ending hospitality, good food, biblical truths, genuine interest, an honorable heritage, taught about the love of God, shown respect, taught honor, shown real joy, many a laugh, encouragement and praise, truthful criticism, a family, the benefits of hard work, the love of mountains, the appreciation of dirt and the gift of home. All I had to do was accept the gift given to me and understand the importance of it. And the glorious thing is it's not just mine, it's been given to Christy (daughter-in-law) and Haddie (adopted) and all those who entered this family through marriage or adoption.

By no means is my family perfect and neither is our story and heritage. How could it be? We are sinners in a fallen world. We're lazy and loud. We embarrass one another constantly. We're self-centered and selfish. With our laughing comes joking and kidding and with that can come into consideration of the person the joke is on. Bitterness can be carried around for long periods of time. Pride can easily overcome us. But there is confession and forgiveness, and with our love for each other and our love for God, most often we're able to go on with life. To go on with the celebrations and feasting. To go on with the things that have a lasting impact on our lives and the lives of our loved ones.

So, tell your story. Show hospitality. Listen to Mamaw and Papaw. Drink your coffee slow. And more importantly, love God.

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Aging Well Conferences
Coming Soon!

By Carol Layton

First Baptist Church Swannanoa and First Baptist Church Murphy are each hosting Aging Well Conferences to be held this spring. The events are free but require registration.

The Swannanoa conference will be held March 20 and the Murphy conference will be held April 3. Both events are held 9:30 am – 12:30 pm and include lunch.

North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry (NCBAM) will provide programming for the conferences. In "Home Invasion Prevention," Angie Gregg, far west regional director for NCBAM, will share strategies for having peace of mind at home with proper planning and prevention. Anita Davie, west regional director for NCBAM, will share information about NCBAM's newest outreach, "One Hope." This outreach brings awareness to the epidemic of social isolation and loneliness and provides strategies for churches to offer a spiritual response.

For more information, contact Anita Davie at 828.450.1834.

Register for the free event at ncbam.org/events.



Carol Layton is the Director of Communications and Administration for NCBAM at Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina

Out of town? You can still read the "Good News" on our new Website: www.brcnews.com
And find us on Facebook

The Oil Kept Flowing

By Patricia Jackson
McDowell County



1ST and 2nd Kings contain many faith-building stories of miracles in the life of Elijah and Elisha. One of my favorites is the Widow's Pot of Oil. The first verse of 2nd Kings, Chapter 4 tells us about a desperate woman "Now there CRIED a certain woman". Her husband had died, and the creditor demanded payment - her two sons to be bondmen. She had a debt she could not pay and nowhere to turn to for help. Her problem seemed overwhelming, but it was just God's opportunity in disguise. There are numerous instances where God responded to a cry for help, including King David's cry in Psalm 41:1 "Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble". Just like David, she knew the one to call on.

She had only a small pot of oil, no money, and probably very little food. Elijah told her to borrow vessels from all her neighbors and borrow not a few. In other words, get as many vessels as they will give or loan you. The number of vessels she would acquire was in direct relation to her faith. If her faith in the words of Elisha was small, she would borrow only a few. But she had faith in the prophet's words and returned with many vessels. (Matthew 9:29 - "According to your faith, be it unto you"). We can only wonder how her unsympathetic neighbors reacted to her request for empty vessels. Perhaps they loaned the vessels thinking she had lost her mind or maybe loaned them just to see what would happen next. I like to think that God moved on these neighbors to loan her all the empty vessels they had.

Elisha told her to go inside with her sons, while he remained outside. In my mind's eye, I could see neighbors outside on their porch watching or in the narrow street, curious about what she would do with all the empty vessels. Surely, they mocked at her to each other. But inside the house, a miracle was happening!! The oil kept flowing out of the little vessel. They filled one large vessel, then another and another, until all the vessels were full.

She and her sons came out and gave Elisha the news "There is not a vessel more". He instructed her to sell the oil, pay off the creditor and live off the rest.

When the day ended, the mother and son had their financial needs met. More importantly, the neighbors also knew about the great miracle from God's Prophet Elisha and the mighty God of Israel he served.

Patricia Jackson is the Assistant Teacher for the Ladies Class at Redeemed Free Will Baptist Church, Glenwood, NC. She is a grant writer for non-profits, a published author and retired Nursing Home Administrator. She lives in Rutherford County with her husband. Contact information: email address: wyo2go@bellsouth.net



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The Great American Divide and Our Loss of National Identity

By Rev. Mark Creech

A few months ago, I was reading from my signed copy of W. A. Swanberg's biography, "First Blood: The Story of Fort Sumter." It's a marvelous account of events that led up to the firing on Fort Sumter, the act that represented the North-South quarrel and led to the greatest war America has ever known – the Civil War. In the book, Swanberg describes what was taking place in South Carolina just before the terrible War Between the States ensued. He wrote: "Almost without exception, the state senators and representatives were in favor of secession, the main points at issue being how soon and under what circumstances. That they had ample provocation to quit the Union, few had any doubt. The victory of Lincoln on the anti-slavery Republican platform, while not sufficient cause in itself, was regarded as the last straw in a thirty-year succession of wrongs against the South. They could give reasons galore to justify slamming the door on the Union. The slavery question, the tariff, the fight for territories, the endless fugitive-slave quarrels – undoubtedly all of these underlay the trouble. But probably Mary Boykin Chesnut, the pretty and mettlesome wife of Senator James Chesnut, struck more at the heart of the matter. 'We are divorced,' she said, 'because we have hated each other so.'"

For some time now, various news articles have been claiming that Americans are just as divided as they were before the Civil War and query as to whether we're headed for another one. God forbids.

Last year, C. Bradley

Thompson, a professor at Clemson University and an opinion contributor for USA Today, aptly wrote about America's current great divide. Thompson said: "There was a time, not long ago, when most Americans were proud to be Americans, and they liked each other. Sadly, that is no longer the case."

"People are so polarized in 2019 that we might now speak of the 'Disunited States of America' or the 'United States of Hate!'"

"Americans are irredeemably divided over Donald Trump, impeachment, capitalism, socialism, democracy, pronouns, abortion, marriage, immigration, climate change, reparations, Brett Kavanaugh, the Covington kids, free speech, drag queen reading hour, political correctness, and many other topics."

"All of our cultural institutions – the schools, Boy Scouts, NFL, Oscars, soap operas, late-night television, Broadway, stand-up comedy – have become polarized and weaponized. We can't even come together over the flag and the national anthem."

"It is not an exaggeration to suggest that liberals and conservative Americans hate each other. ... Where is all this leading us? This much is certain: To paraphrase Abraham Lincoln, a nation that hates itself cannot stand."

If anyone reflects on the matter deeply and has any semblance of patriotism, the current situation will precipitate tears. And, of course, could there have been any display more manifest and representative of the palpable hatred between our countrymen than when President Trump refused to shake Speaker Pelosi's hand and the Speaker tore apart his State of the Union speech in front of the entire country?

Thompson said he believes the answer needed to bridge the divide is a return to what he called "Americanism." Americanism, said Thompson, is the philosophy that despite our vast and varied differences, we agree that all men and women should be "equally free, morally sovereign and self-governing."

Yet as high-sounding and noble as that sentiment might be, it won't be enough to cause Americans to come together again.

Perhaps Yoram Hazony, in a Time Magazine article titled, "How Americans Lost Their National Identity," is closer to the truth and implies what must be done.

Hazony, who is an Israeli philosopher and political theorist, argues that Americans once "possessed an intuitive understanding of nationhood whose source was in the Bible." He says that the "original American states, while internally diverse, nonetheless, largely shared the English language, Protestant religion and the common law, and had fought Britain together. The nation reflected in these characteristics was so strong that Americans were gradually able to adopt other 'tribes' into the mix: Catholics, Jews and – with time – the African Americans who had lived through the evils of enslavement and segregation."

Hazony adds that Americans eventually sought to "counterbalance increasing diversity with a carefully protected common cultural inheritance: New territories were admitted as American states only once they had an English-speaking majority and adopted the common law. The eradication of slavery in the South and polygamy among the Mormons was likewise the result of a common cultural inheritance, descended from English Puritanism, which Americans insisted on maintaining even at the price of coercion."

Hazony further contends it was only after Americans' commitment to these principles begins to fade, which were fashioned out of a biblically rooted American nationalism (not the racist white nationalism), did dangerous and destructive



revolutionary new theories fill the vacuum. Hazony concludes, "As Americans have stopped reading the Bible, they have also lost an intuitive sense of what a 'nation' is, and of what must be done to maintain it."

Thus, the correct diagnosis of the division our nation now so painfully endures and the remedy to effectively treat it.

There is, unfortunately, no point of reference larger than us by which we define ourselves or hold ourselves together anymore. So consequently, we have become factions of competing value systems, each fighting against the other, most falling under the categories of politically Right or politically Left, to determine which will ultimately prevail.

But we should have no illusions as to the outcome. Our national ship will sink in this storm – unless it stops its drifting – unless it's turned away from the rocks of personal and public practical atheism – unless it is once again anchored to the conventional teaching of the Old and New Testaments.

It wasn't Abraham Lincoln who said it first, but Jesus Christ: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand" (Matthew 12:22-28).

A revival of Christian orthodoxy and adherence to its tenants is the only way to regain our national identity and stop the hate.

Reverend Dr. Mark Creech is Executive Director of the NC Christian Action League. You may contact him at rev.markcreech@christianactionleague.org or 919-787-0606

MEN'S FRATERNITY

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Regional News

Baptists on Mission - Mission teams are needed to do Vacation Bible School, Evangelistic Outreach, and Construction projects in our partner states of Alaska, Vermont, Maine, and Pennsylvania. Mission teams can make a great impact in reaching these communities for Christ. Visit our website for full lists of projects at <https://baptistsonmission.org/Mission-Projects/United-States/New-England> or contact NC Baptists on Mission at 919-467-5607 or mabernathy@ncbaptist.org. Deep Impact Kids, Are you looking for a mission opportunity for the children in your church? Deep Impact Kids will be serving in many communities across the state with hands-on mission projects designed for 1st-6th-grade children. Sign up your church now for a weekend, mini-week, or full week at one of these locations: Camp Cale, Red Springs, Shelby, Mundo Vista, Caswell, or Truett Baptist Camp. For more information contact Dollie Noa at dnoa@ncbaptist.org. Website <http://baptistsonmission.org/camps/di-kids>

Ombudsman Program - Volunteers needed to advocate, protect the rights of long-term care residents
Boone, NC (June 26, 2019) - The High-Country Area Agency on Aging Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program is calling for volunteers in Avery, Mitchell, and Yancey Counties. Volunteer ombudsmen, also known as Community Advisory Committee's (CAC) serve as advocates for residents living in nursing homes and assisted living facilities.
CAC members are trained, certified volunteers who are assigned to a local long-term care facility to advocate for residents' rights.
To learn more about becoming a volunteer ombudsman or to request an application, call Stevie John at (828) 265-5434 Ext. 126 or visit the High-Country Area Agency on Aging website at www.highcountryaging.org.

Bible Study Fellowship - Acts and Letters of the Apostles
In The Acts and Letters of the Apostles study, we see evidence of God's Unstoppable Spirit, the growth of His Unstoppable Church, and the Unstoppable witness of His people. Join us for this incredible study. Women Begin Thursday, September 12 - May 7, 2020
Women's Day group meet @ First Presbyterian Church, Spruce Pine 10 am-11:30 am Mitchell County Women's Evening group meet @ Grassy Creek Baptist Church, Spruce Pine 5:45 pm-7:15 pm Mitchell County
Men's Begin Tuesday, September 10, Men meet @ Higgins Methodist Church, Burnsville 6:55 pm-8:25 pm - Yancey County Contact: Nancy Ball (843)597-1196 (Day Women) - Angie Woody (828)467-3830 (Evening Women)

The Billy Graham Library - Book Signing: Ruth Graham, MARCH 14, 2020, 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM
Ruth Graham—daughter of Billy Graham—will be visiting the Billy Graham Library on March 14 to sign copies of her newest book, *Forgiving My Father, Forgiving Myself*. Founder and President of Ruth Graham & Friends, Ruth seeks to minister God's grace and comfort to those who are hurting and feel alone as well as to equip those who desire to help those who are hurting. In her most vulnerable writing yet, Ruth Graham reveals how a visit to Angola Prison inspired her to release the unforgiveness lurking in her own heart—toward others, herself, and even her heavenly Father.
Books will be available for purchase in Ruth's Attic bookstore, or you may bring your own. For more information, please call 704-401-3200 or email LibraryEvents@bgea.org. This is a free event, open to the public with no registration required.

Avery County

Avery County Events
March 1: High Country Junior Race Series Championships at Sugar Mountain Resort, 7:30 am
Beginning March 2: March Madness at Sugar Mountain Resort
March 7: The Collective performs live at Sugar Mountain Resort, 4:00 - 6:00 pm
March 8: Richard T. Trundy Memorial Sugar Cup Competition at Sugar Mountain Resort
March 15: Sugar Bear's Birthday Celebration at Sugar Mountain Resort
March 21: Closing Day at Beech Mountain Resort
March 28: Builders' Showcase at The Lodges at Eagles Nest
March 31: End of Season Celebration at Sugar Mountain Resort, 3:30 pm - 5:30 pm

Celebrate Recovery at Heaton Christian Church, Elk River Road; 6 pm, every Monday; all welcome.

Bible Study Fellowship- Banner Elk Christian Fellowship; Thursday at 9:30 am, contact Isabel Peterson 828-964-1402 for an in-depth Bible Class for women.

National Day of Prayer - on May 7th, 2020 at Newland Gazebo at noon.

Burke County

Burke County Chamber - 26th Annual ACC Chili Cook-Off - The ACC Chili Cook-Off will take place Friday, March 13, 2020 from 11:00 am to 1:30 pm at the Morganton Community House (120 North King Street). A BARGAIN PRICED \$7.00 ticket buys all-you-can-eat...

Catawba River Baptist Association - Children's and Youth Bible Drill - One of the greatest tools used in our As-

sociation is the tool of teaching children God's Word through the use of Bible Drills. We all know of the power of God's Word in a person's life and especially how powerful it can be in the lives of children. That being said, this year's Associational Bible Drill is scheduled for March 15th, at Wilkies Grove @ 3 p.m. If your church plans to participate in this wonderful ministry, please let us know by calling our CRBA office.

Men and Boy's BBQ & Rally - Tuesday, March 21, 2020, 6:00 - 8:30 PM at Mount Home Baptist Church, \$ 6 per person. Guest Speaker: Bucky Kennedy. Door Prize drawing! Grand Prize full size rifle. RSVP by calling CRBA at 828-437-0137.

Medical Patient Modesty is doing a Pie Bake-Off / Silent Auction - (<http://tasteoflocalfood.com/pie-bakeoff/>) in Morganton on Saturday, March 7th from 12-3:30 PM at Social Hall in the basement of Collett Street Recreation Center to benefit Medical Patient Modesty (<http://www.patientmodesty.org>) and we will need a number of volunteers (some must be teenagers under the age of 18).

Medical Patient Modesty is a non-profit organization that works to help educate patients and their families about how to have maximum modesty for procedures; how to stand up for their rights requesting a same-gender medical team for intimate procedures; and how to prevent sexual abuse by medical professionals. We also work to educate medical professionals on how to be more sensitive to patient modesty.

The proceeds from this event will help with our patient education/advocacy efforts.

We are looking for people from different churches in Burke County who enjoy baking to participate in our pie baking contest. The entry for one pie is \$10. You can find more information on the pie baking contest at <http://tasteoflocalfood.com/pie-bakeoff/bakerregistration.asp>.

Great Hope Seventh-Day Adventist Church - Reversing Diabetes seminar is about to begin again for those who want to reverse their diabetes and for those who want to prevent diabetes. Proven scientific methods are shared in a group setting. The seminar begins Monday, January 27 and continues on Monday evenings, 6:00 pm through March 2. Free admission, but seating is limited so please pre-register to secure your seat by calling Sharryn at 828-334-0084. Great Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church, 2907 US Hwy 70 E, Morganton (Drexel, across from Foothills Thrift Store). You will love feeling healthier!

Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church Event - The Giving Heart Thrift Shop is OPEN on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Like us on Facebook at [@thegivingheartthriftshop](https://www.facebook.com/thegivingheartthriftshop), The Giving Heart Thrift Shop is a ministry of the Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Prophecies Of Hope presented by Pastor Steve Bietz. The Bible has predicted the course of history with 100% accuracy since the beginning of time. Please join us as we explore History and Bible Prophecy! Admission is completely FREE and there will be FREE Childcare for ages 3-12 years old. We will also have FREE Study Guides each evening along with FREE Bibles and other Giveaways! Location: Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church, 2187 Jamestown Road, Morganton, N.C. 28655.
The seminars will take place the following evenings: Friday, Saturday and Sunday; March 6-8 at 7:00 p.m.; March 9, Monday at 7:00 p.m.; and Thursday and Friday; March 12 and 13 at 7:00 p.m.

Valdese Events

Concerts at the Rock presents: Carolina Blue - March 7, 2020, 7:30 p.m. - 10 p.m. Tickets \$20 in advance & \$25 at the door.

The Old Rock School in Valdese, North Carolina has become well-known throughout the nation for its outstanding bluegrass concerts. The 500-seat auditorium is the perfect place to hear all your favorites. All of us at the Old Rock School are very excited about the 2019-2020 season and are happy to bring it to you. The handicap entrance is located at the side of the building (elevator). Phone: 828-879-2129.

McDowell County

Cross Mill United Methodist Church - Cross Mill United Methodist Church in Marion is now accepting donations of NEW items for an upcoming fundraising auction. Proceeds from the auction will go toward much-needed church building repairs and our 24/7 Sharing Food Pantry Ministries. Any business and/or individual donations would be greatly appreciated. Call 828-460-9257, 828-442-8098 or 828-803-8790.

New Community Outreach Benefits McDowell Families with Children Teens for Christ B.E.A.R. Closet

(Baby Equipment and Resource Closet) - Beginning Wednesday, August 1st, 2018 the youth group at Cross United Methodist Church located at 85 West Cross Street in Marion will launch a new outreach ministry benefiting families with children. The outreach will be open the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of the month 4:00 to 6:30 p.m. and the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. For more information or if you are interested in volunteer opportunities call (828) 803-8790 or email TeensforChristBEARcloset@yahoo.com

Organic Gardening for the Home Garden, Tue, Mar 3, 6:30 PM Corpening Memorial YMCA

The Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Association of McDowell County will have their monthly program meeting on Organic Gardening for the Home Garden on Tuesday, March 3, 2020, 6:30 p.m. at the Corpening Memorial YMCA, 348 Grace Corpening Drive, Marion. Craig Mauney, Area Specialized Agent,

Commercial Vegetable and Fruits, with North Carolina Cooperative Extension will be presenting. Craig has a vast experience of over 25 years in the field. The Organic Gardener prefers to use organic methods and materials to grow vegetables, flowers, and even turf. Learn how to use the least amount of synthetic chemicals and practices that may be detrimental to your health and the environment. Join us as we learn an organic approach to fertilization and pest control practices. The program is FREE and open to the public. Read more at: <https://mcdowell.ces.ncsu.edu/2020/02/organic-gardening-for-the-home-garden/>

McDowell County Senior Games Early Bird Registration - Friday, March 06, 2020 at 08:30 am. McDowell County Senior Center, 100 Spaulding Rd, Marion, North Carolina 28752, Marion, United States
Come enjoy a nice breakfast with us and get your registration done for this year's McDowell County Senior Games. Breakfast is from 8:30am to 9:30am and Early Bird price will be \$10. After 3pm on March 6th it will be \$12. Registration deadline for our local games is April 6th. If you're not interested in sports that's ok too. We have the Silver Arts program in which we welcome local artists, crafters, wood workers, etc. We also welcome writers, singers, dancers and performers. We encourage you to bring your friends or family that qualify! To qualify you just have to be 50 or older. We look forward to seeing you there!! If you have any questions leave a message or call Brenda at 828-659-0821.

Pioneer Day - Pioneer Day, April 25, 2020 Mountain Gateway Museum 24 Water Street, Old Fort, NC 28762 (828) 668-9259 www.mgmnc.org Annual celebration of mountain heritage. The one-day festival features mountain music in the amphitheater, craft demonstrations such as weaving, blacksmithing, and pottery turning, "Hit or Miss" engine displays and vendors displaying and selling their wares.

Mitchell County

Bear Creek Baptist Church - Associational Bible Drills, Saturday, March 21, 2020; Children & Youth Drills, Registration: 9:30 a.m.; Drills: 10:00 a.m.; If you have questions, please contact Heather Bonaminio, 766-0953, our associational Bible Drill Director. Leaders, you will be able to register your participants online for the State Convention at ncbaptist.org. Go to ministries at the bottom of the page and click on Bible Drills. Please do this before you come to the associational drills.

Burnsville Spring Fest - Saturday, Mar 14, 2020 from 9:00am to 2:00pm; Burnsville Town Center, 6 South Main Street, Burnsville, NC 28714. The Burnsville Spring Fest is here! Celebrate the arrival of Spring by shopping a wide variety of unique items such as paintings, quilted sheep, teddy bears, wooden bowls, stained glass, painted signs, glass ornaments, beeswax candles, baked goods and much more!

Celebrate Recovery - This is a Christ and Biblical Based Program, giving hip and help for men, women, and families suffering from addiction. Any questions contact Josh Wise@385-0061

Mayland Small Business Center
28705 Business Breakfast: 2020 Business Growth Planning (1.5 Hours) NEW!
The 28705 Business Breakfast is a great place to gain valuable local information, build networking, discuss entrepreneurship, and grab a light breakfast. Sponsored by the Mitchell County EDC, the Town of Bakersville, the Mitchell Chamber of Commerce, and the Mayland Small Business Center, the free breakfast workshops place a focus on providing applicable information and business networking that will link entrepreneurs and spur local growth. Starting January 9, meetings will be on the second Thursday of each month through October. In this first meeting of 2020, Allen Cook, Director of the Mayland Small Business Center will discuss key areas that affect local business growth. Allen will also be asking for input from attendees on areas where local businesses need help in 2020. 2020 breakfast workshop topics will be built from your input. Networking and the light breakfast will start at 7:30 am with the workshop beginning promptly at 8:00 am. The meetings are always finished up by 9:30 am. Everyone is welcome at the business breakfast so make plans to attend.

Build/Optimize YOUR Facebook Business Page (2 Hours)
A Facebook business page is a great tool to interact with existing and new customers. This workshop will cover Facebook account set-up, best practices, the latest updates to Facebook for business, and optimization tips to build sales.
3/3, T, 1:30-3:30 p.m. Fee Waived Instructor: Jones Mitchell 828.766.1295

Build, Optimize and Link YOUR Instagram Business Page (2 Hours)
Instagram is a great way to showcase your product or service to potential customers. This workshop will cover Instagram account set-up, best practices, latest updates to Instagram for business, optimization, and show how to link Instagram posts to Facebook.

3/5, TH, 1:30-3:30 p.m. Fee Waived Instructor: Jones Mitchell 828.766.1295
Artist, Market Thyself! (2 Hours) NEW!
This class will focus on helping local artists build a personalized marketing plan that works with their schedule and computer skill level. This class will help artists assess their current marketing and learn the best sites, tools, and tactics for their niche.
3/11, W, 5:30-7:30 p.m.
Fee Waived Instructor: Drum-Dickson TRA Spruce Pine Gallery
28705 Business Breakfast (1.5 Hours)

Localized small business information and networking geared towards Bakersville and surrounding communities. Free light breakfast!

3/12, TH, 8:00-9:30 a.m. Fee Waived Instructor: TBD
Mitchell County Administration Building, Bakersville, 828.766.1295
Yancey Business Builders Breakfast (1.5 Hours)
Small business and entrepreneurship topics with a Yancey County focus. Networking and free light breakfast!
3/17, T, 8:00-9:30 a.m. Fee Waived Instructor: Brianna Robinson

Burnsville Town Center, 828.766.1295
Canva for Artists (2 Hours)
Design effective posts, ads, flyers, and much more using a free website called Canva! Seminar will focus on ways that artists can use Canva to market their art. Instructor will help attendees create a login, demonstrate best practices, and design a sample ad using Canva.
3/25, W, 5:30-7:30 p.m. Fee Waived Instructor: Jones TRA Spruce Pine Gallery 828.766.1295

Mayland Community College Foundation - Mayland Plant Swap and Shop - Saturday, April 2th; 10:00 - 2:00 pm, Pine Bridge Parking Lot, Spruce Pine. Come check out the great supply of spring plants: from beautiful hanging baskets, to herbs, to veggie starts. Plants grown in the MCC greenhouses and from local nurseries will be for sale. Several farmer's market vendors will also have booths. MCC will be giving away 4 packs of heirloom tomato seedlings. For a full list of vendors and more info visit www.mayland.edu/foundation/foundation-events/plant-swap/

Mitchell County Chamber - Spruce Pine Main Street Clean-Up - Saturday, April 4 - Downtown Spruce Pine; Time: 9:00 - 1:00 - Please join SPMS for our annual spring clean-up. Activities may include trimming, weeding, sweeping, planting and picking up trash. Please wear old clothes and bring your rakes, shears, gloves and garden tools. Trash bags provided. Hot dogs and drinks will be available to all volunteers who participate. Please meet at Central Park at 9:00 to be placed on a team (for safety reasons, we ask that all volunteers be at least 12 years of age). Rain date April 18th. To sign up call 828-765-3008 or email spms@downtownsprucepine.com. (head count requested please).

Mitchell County Cooperative Extension - Upcoming Pesticide Classes Schedule - The classes will be held at the NC Cooperative Extension Mitchell County Center, 10 South Mitchell Avenue, Bakersville, NC. Category (V) Classes March 24, 2020 2:00 or 6:00 pm; April 7, 2020 2:00 OR 6:00 pm. To retain your private pesticide license, you must attend a 2-hour category (V). You will also need to attend a 2-hour category (X) for a total of 4 hours. Call 828.688.4811 to register for these classes

2020 Livestock Kick-Off Meeting - Heifer and Herd Development, Mitchell County, Thursday, March 5, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. at Mitchell Senior Center, 152 Ledger School Road, Bakersville, NC. Dr. Deidre Harmon, Extension Livestock Specialist, NCSU Cooperative Extension, Waynesville, NC will be presenting on the importance of herd and heifer development along with says to do so on your farm. All producers, along with their family members are welcome! Full Meal Provided! Please RSVP by calling 828-688-4811. For more information contact Mitchell Cooperative Extension Center at 828-688-4811.

Neighbors Feeding Neighbors - 1353 Roan Road, Spruce Pine, NC 28777 (Rock House in Freedom Baptist Church parking lot). OUR MISSION: Is to reach out to those who have food insecurity with love and respect and serving those in need without judgement.

MARCH EVENTS
2nd: Food Box Pickup at the ministry from 12:00 to 5:00 pm
9th: Open Market at the ministry from 12:00 to 5:00 pm
14th: Community Meal from 4:00 to 6:00. Location to be determined.
16th: Food Box Pickup at the ministry from 12:00 to 5:00 pm.
23rd: Open Market at the ministry from 12:00 to 5:00 pm
28th: Community Meal from 4:00 to 6:00. Location to be determined.
30th: Food Box Pickup at the ministry from 12:00 to 5:00 pm.

The National Day of Prayer - The National Day of Prayer for 2020 will be held on the first Thursday of May, the 7th, 2020. Please watch for updates through the upcoming months. Call 239-248-2139 if you are interested in praying for this National Day of Prayer, "for such a time a this".

Tipton Hill Community Foundation (Tipton Hill) - Country Breakfast, the first Saturday each month, 7:30 - 10:30 am, at the old Methodist Church, across from Jerry's Store. Come join us for homemade sausage, scrambled eggs, gravy, jellies, juice, and coffee. Eat-in or take-out, all funds support the Tipton Hill Community Foundation.

Western Carolina Church GriefShare Ministry - meets on Thursday's at 6:00 pm at 31 Cross Street Suite 289, Spruce Pine, NC in Mitchell County
Facilitator: Carolyn Dotts. For more information call church office 828-765-4633 or cell 828-467-1433. The 2020 Spring cycle will begin in March, dates to be announced.

YaYa Village - We are announcing the Opening of YaYa Village Commercial-Share Kitchen!

We've realized there's a gap that needs to be filled between the production of

continued on page 33

The Broken are More Evolved
By Alan Griffin

You know who you are. You have struggled one way or another all your life. We are the lonely, the poor, the sick, the hungry, the drug-addicted, and the down-trodden. It would be easy to feel sorry for ourselves. We are single moms and dads. We are those who care for our elderly parents at a great cost to our own personal freedom. It would be easy for us to give up, but we never do. We daily stand our ground and continue the grind of life. What if I told you your struggles are a blessing? When you are barely keeping your head above water, that you are really being called by God? What if I told you that you are more evolved than wise men, the strong men, and the rich men of this world? Your hardships make you available to a level of communication with God that most powerful people could ever imagine?

"For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, so that no man may boast before God." 1 Corinthians 1:26-30 (NASB)

I have struggled all my life. I went to 13 different schools in eleven different states. I have been in and out of the hospital and medical facilities. I had spinal meningitis when I was twelve. The disease destroyed my thyroid and adrenal glands. It took doctors thirty years to discover my condition. I struggled with weight loss and sickness. Twice I have had open-heart surgery. I have had hernias, my appendix removed, intestinal disease, and arthritis so bad I had to have my knees replaced. Through all my pains and sufferings, I had something very special that took me years to discover. I have a special relationship with God. It took me thirty years to unravel the blessings God wanted to bestow on me, but on November 8, 1997, I surrendered my life to my King and Savior, Jesus Christ. Look at the Beatitudes in Matthews, chapter 5. It says, "Blessed or happy are the poor in spirit. Blessed are those that mourn. Happy are those who hunger and thirst for what is right. Happy are the merciful and the pure at heart. Happy are those who are persecuted for what is right." The Bible says, "to rejoice, for your reward in heaven is great." Jesus came to earth to save those of us who are lost. He came for the poor, the hungry, and those who suffer here on earth. He came for the sick because He is the Great Physician. But when Jesus heard this, He said,



"It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick" Matthew 9:12 (NASB)

Too many times we have turned our back on God and suffered our broken condition alone. When we neglect our relationship with Him, we suffer undue hardship. Without our daily devotions and our refilling of the Holy Spirit, we let our old ways creep back into our thoughts. We start to look back at the lifestyle we had before our rebirth. It is a very dangerous thing indeed. We open our self-up to apostasy, the falling away from God. *"But his wife, from behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt."* Genesis 19:26 (NASB) We can never go back. There is nothing there for us. To look back is to deny the truth that God has bestowed upon us. We are to always look forward to our wonderful relationship with God in heaven and the redemption of our bodies. He is here waiting and wanting to help us overcome the trials of this world. He is here wanting to help us overcome the roadblocks that prevent us from receiving the wonderful blessings He has in store for us. These blessings are ours regardless of the physical condition we are in.

Some of God's most dedicated people suffered from all sorts of diseases and mental disorders. Many Christians who are suffering today will continue to do so until they pass on to heaven. There are some who cite their good health to judge those of us who suffer from afflictions as punishment. Many times, when suffering has struck an individual or a family people of the Christian community say we are being punished because of a specific sin we have committed. This is simply not true. There are times when a person's lifestyle is directly to blame for their tragedy. But in most cases, we are simply the pawns of a world cursed by sickness and disease.

There are people who say we lack faith for if we were strong believers the atonement of Jesus Christ's shed blood would heal us. These people are well-meaning but are poorly informed. Often illness brings us closer to God and, like many others, we pray for God's healing. Look at the Apostle Paul. By my measure, he was the greatest Apostle of them all. In 2 Corinthians we read where Paul had a thorn in his flesh, and a messenger from Satan tormented him, preventing him from exalting himself. He prayed 3 times for the condition to leave him, but God only responded to his request by saying, *"My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness."* And Paul responds to God by saying, *"Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore, I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong."* 2 Corinthians 12: 9-10 (NASB)

There are countless times when God heals in miraculous ways, answering our prayers, and bringing forth wonderful stories of healing. God knows what is best for us. In my life, I have suffered greatly, and it seems the times of being completely well are far and few between. However, I thank the Lord for the trails that I face. They have placed me here before you on this keyboard. He has given me the desire to share with you the wonderful revelations of His Word. Who knows where I would be if it were not for the sicknesses I have suffered in my life? I consider my shortcomings as a blessing from God. He has taken the time to use my infirmities as an avenue to seek out further counsel from Him. *"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love Him, to those who are called according to His purpose."* Romans 8:28 (NASB)

God does not call the certified, those being trained to perform a job. He certifies the called. Training us regardless of our abilities. Our Christian churches today are filled with men and women who have the education to lead but were never called by God to do so. So many of our churches are struggling because the wrong people are leading them, and unfortunately, the right people are failing to step forward. Sadly, we are standing back and letting our Christian society decline. *"...I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight."* Luke 10:21 (NASB) We as infants are neglecting our Christian duty to serve. We stand afar off because we are still babies in Christ. We do not yet have the confidence to serve because we neglect our daily devotions. Many of us say we are not capable of performing a job. We fail to understand that confidence does not come from us. It comes from God through daily Bible study and prayer. We will always be babes in Christ until we go to work on our studies.

It is time we stand up for Christ. Behold, now is *"THE ACCEPTABLE TIME,"* behold, now is *"THE DAY OF SALVATION"* 2 Corinthians 6 (NASB) It is time we take our place in history. It is time we unite as one in Christ. It is time for us to accept our inheritance as sons and daughters of God. It is time we serve our Savior and share His name with all we meet. Why is it time? Because He sacrificed His life on that cross for us. He stood up for us and paid the price we could not bear to pay. We have some things. He had everything and gave it up for us. There is no other reason on this earth for Him to go through what He did, save one. He loves us!!! It is time for us to commit our lives. It is time for us to consider our sufferings a blessing from God. It is time for us to get down on our knees and thank God for the life He has given us. It is time we started serving in a Bible-based Christian church. It is time we shared our experiences with others, and how God has molded us into His family.

It is time to live for Christ.

Alan Griffin started the kidsnchrist ministries in November 1997. He has worked with inner city kids for 21 years. He found a need for specialized Biblical literature that would reach people of all ages and has been writing since 2005. The ministry has expanded their websites to reach around the world. Kidsnchrist.com, millennialchristian.com, teensnchrist.com, seniorsnchrist.com, picture-verse.com, and soulworks-smallgroups.com. We had an outreach of over 13,000,000 people last year with 36,000,000 impressions. If you have any questions for Alan you can reach him at alan@kidsnchrist.com



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In Like a Lion, Out Like a Lamb

By Bruce Cannon
Mitchell County

"In like a lion, out like a lamb," so goes the proverbial expression. Everyone hopes for much-improving weather as we go through the month of March. And, while I also hope that to be true, that expression reminds me of two of the names of our God. He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the Lamb of God.

Both names are equally precious to us. The name, "Lion", speaks of His regal character. The name, "Lamb," speaks of His being the Savior of the world. Both names are used in Revelation 5:5,6, "And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. 6 And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth."

When I think of a lion my mind conjures up an image of a male African lion. This animal is over 400 pounds and 4 feet tall at the shoulder. It is equipped with enormous fangs and incredibly powerful necks, forelimbs and claws that allow them to hunt, on average, the largest prey of any land animal. He is referred to as the "king of the jungle" and has no natural enemies.

What a perfect description of our God! Powerful; no enemies can stand before Him! He is our champion, our shield, our hiding place, our mighty fortress, our cleft in the rock, our hiding place. Under His wings and in His shadow we can abide. The picture of a mother hen and her chicks is also used in the Scriptures to speak of His protection. He can turn away all the fiery darts of the wicked one. He can heal all our diseases. He can save our souls, no matter what we have done, and declare us righteous before His presence.

As the Lamb of God, He is tender, kind, compassionate and loving. He was willing to go to the Cross for us. He shed His blood to wash away all our sins. Isaiah wrote in 53:7, "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." He had all authority and all power, yet He chose to not use it. He allowed Himself, who knew no sin, to die for those who had no hope...me and you!

What precious names are these: Lion and Lamb! Two names which bring great hope and peace to our hearts because we know that we need both. We need a Lion to fight our battles and win them because we can't on our own. We need a Lamb to be our sacrifice for sin so the righteous demands of God can be met for us to be able to go to Heaven.

In like a lion, out like a lamb. March, thank you for your blusteriness and calm that you remind us of our God. Lord, thank you for being our Lion and our Lamb! We praise You for Your protecting power, your shielding help on our behalf. We also praise You for being our sacrifice. We couldn't save ourselves, but you so wonderfully and graciously provided the payment for us. Thank you! In Jesus' sweet Name, Amen!

Rev. Bruce Cannon currently serves as the Senior Pastor of Bear Creek Baptist Church in Bakersville. Formerly he served as Director of Missions for the Bladen Baptist Association and has served on the General Board of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina.



The Rainbow is a Sign

By John McCoury
Roan Mountain, Tennessee

Whenever I catch sight of a rainbow, I like to point it out and say to any people nearby, "God put that there. Sometimes that catches them off guard. Sometimes they even to appear a little jumpy. They look around as though God is going to appear. Then I say, "That the rainbow is the sign of a promise. According to Genesis 9, God will never again flood the earth." I have found that to be a great way to start a conversation about Christ. We read in Gen 9:9-17 a covenant is a binding agreement between two parties that establishes them in a mutually committed relationship. Consequences for breaking the terms of the covenant are spelled ahead of time. Throughout the Old Testament God covenants with a group of people through an individual representative—here Noah, and later Abraham, Moses, and David. In this instance, God vows to Noah and the rest of creation that He will never again destroy the earth with a flood, that the seasons will come and go for as long as the earth remains, and that a rainbow will be the sign of His promises. The token was a beautiful sight to Noah, and it is a beautiful display to behold even to this day. It is the token of the rainbow. The rainbow came because there had been a storm. Every rainbow has a cloud as its background. The rainbow is brightest when the clouds are the darkest, but we must always realize that the rainbow can be revealed only when there is a break in the clouds. That rainbow says that the sun has been shining even though there are clouds.

The rainbow is the symbol of God's everlasting love. Read Isaiah 54:9. Sorrow is the dark background on which God paints His tokens of love. His grace can take the teardrops and storm clouds of our lives and turn them into arches of triumph and jewels of glorious luster. We do not know when the storm clouds will come, but we can always be sure that God will give a rainbow. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (I Corinthians 4:17). The rainbow on earth is only a half circle; but when we get to Heaven, it will be a complete circle. Revelation 4:3 states that John saw a "... rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald." The rainbow will be a complete circle and it will be only green, the color representing praise and worship. On earth, the bow is bent toward Heaven, not toward earth. It points up to tell us God's wrath was removed at Calvary. God made the rainbow a covenant sign. To help His people remember His covenants, God gave them visible signs. His covenant with Abraham was sealed with the sign of circumcision (17:11; Rom. 4:9-12) and the Mosaic covenant at Sinai with the sign of the weekly Sabbath (Ex. 31:16,17). God's covenant with Noah and the animal creation was sealed with the sign of the rainbow. Whenever people saw the rainbow, they would remember God's promise that no future storm would ever become a worldwide flood that would destroy humanity. The rainbow isn't only for us to see, for the Lord said "I will look on it" (Gen. 9:16). God certainly doesn't forget His covenants with His people, but this is just another way of assuring us that we don't need to be afraid. When we look at the rainbow, we know that our Father is also looking at the rainbow, and therefore it becomes a bridge that brings us together.

John McCoury is pastor of Evergreen church in Roan Mountain, Tennessee and also chaplain at Roan Highlands Nursing Center.



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YOUR GOVERNMENT PAGES

NC Senate District 47



Sen. Ralph Hise
Ralph.Hise@ncleg.net
919-733-3460

On February 18th, a North Carolina Court of Appeals' three-judge panel issued an injunction against our state's law requiring voter ID in North Carolina elections. It is troubling that three judges – all registered Democrats – decided to disregard and override the will of millions of North Carolina voters who voted to amend their own constitution and approve the voter ID amendment in the 2018 general election.

Voters' approval of the voter ID amendment led to the passage of Senate Bill 824 – Implementation of Voter ID Const. Amendment. Following Senate and House overrides of Gov. Cooper's veto, the bill became law on December 19, 2018. Session Law 2018-44, provides a wide array of acceptable forms of photo identification for voting identification, including student IDs, drivers' licenses, passports, military and veterans' IDs, voter and state employee cards, and Native American tribal cards. Additionally, the bill requires county boards of elections to issue free voter photo ID cards to registered voters upon request.

Unfortunately, the liberal elite, which includes this three-judge panel, have no interest in protecting the integrity of the ballot box nor allowing the will of North Carolinians to be carried out. Thirty-four other states have laws that require voter ID. North Carolina is the only state in the Southeast without a voter ID requirement. This is unacceptable, as is a three-judge Democratic panel overruling the vote of over 55% of North Carolina voters. Keep this in mind when you vote for judges at the ballot box, and when you vote for our President who appoints federal judges.

As always, please share your thoughts with me on these or other issues related to state government by emailing me at ralph.hise@ncleg.net or calling me at 919-733-3460.



Army Corps of Engineers Invests More Than \$336 Million in North Carolina

Long-awaited funding to study river basins and complete storm damage reduction projects throughout Eastern North Carolina. Each storm that hits North Carolina takes a toll on our beaches and river basins. After the historic



Sen. Burr tours Princeville, N.C. with Mayor Bobbie Jones following Hurricane Matthew in 2016.

damage inflicted by recent hurricanes, it's clear that it's not enough to simply rebuild. We have to rebuild in a way that applies the lessons of the past to mitigate future risks.

This week, the Army Corps of Engineers recognized this and announced an allocation of more than \$321 million for storm damage reduction projects throughout Eastern North Carolina. The Corps also announced it will invest \$15 million to study flood prevention around North Carolina's river basins and beaches.

Specifically, this funding provides:

- \$237 million to Surf City/North Topsail Beach, N.C. to construct natural barriers and dunes along nearly 10 miles of oceanfront.
- \$44.5 million to Carteret County (Bogue Banks), N.C. to build a consistent natural barrier along 22.7 miles of shoreline and adds dunes along 5.9 miles.
- \$39.6 million to Princeville, N.C. to better manage flood risks from the Tar River by increasing the elevations of N.C. Highway 33 and U.S. Highway 64 and installing additional levees.

Easter

EGG HUNT

Catawba River Soccer Complex



Saturday, April 4, 2020
Activities Start at 10am

EASTER EGG HUNT & ACTIVITIES:

Co-Sponsored by Morganton
Parks & Recreation and Summit
Community Church

STARTING AT 10AM

- Egg Spoon Relay • Corn Hole Toss
- Egg Hop Relay • Face Painting
- Storytelling
- Fresh Popcorn/Concessions

Starting Time For Egg Hunt Will Be Promptly At 11am

Candy and plastic eggs will be scattered in 4 respective age groups:

2 yrs & under / 3-4 yrs / 5-7 yrs / 8-10 yrs • 3 Grand Prize Eggs will be hidden in each age division.

YOUR GOVERNMENT PAGES

NC House District 86



Rep. Hugh Blackwell
919-733-5805
Hugh.Blackwell@ncleg.net

The teacher turnover rate for the state of North Carolina has hit a four-year low, according to recent data published by the Department of Public Instruction. The report is based upon the most recent survey of teachers by the department. Entitled "State of the Teaching Profession", the report says that 7.5% of teachers left the profession in the 2018-19 school year, compared to 9% in the 2015-16 school year, 8.7% in the 2016-17 school year, and 8.1% in the 2017-18 school year. This is after legislators raised educator salaries at a 20% rate over five years – the third highest in the country. Average teacher pay in N.C. is now \$54,000 – 2nd highest in the Southeast. The legislature has said it wants to get to the top of Southeast teacher pay. Two additional raises, one for this year and another for next year are currently prevented by Governor Cooper's vetoes.

Governor Cooper also vetoed the previous two-year budget. However, that veto was overridden by Republicans in the legislature, resulting in an average 9.9% teacher over the two years. For this year, the legislature's budget, but for the Cooper veto, would have provided an average 3.9% raise for teachers. In an effort to get a budget approved, NC Senate Republicans offered a 4.9% raise plus a \$1,000 bonus. Unfortunately, that effort that would have resulted in two more years of teacher raises was rejected by Democrats. Governor Cooper's vetoes not only applied to teacher pay raises but to other education funding as well. Thus, his veto of the most recent budget not only results in the denial of 6th and 7th consecutive raises for teachers but also denies more than \$630 million in new funding for K-12 education, including \$30 million more for classroom teacher supplies. Also, the Cooper veto prevents \$4.4 billion from being made available to school districts over the next ten years to help with new schools and repairs across the state.

It is unfortunate that teachers do not have the raises and funding support included in the vetoed budget. I am definitely of the opinion that continuing our consecutive increased teacher raises will help raise overall levels of satisfaction with the teaching profession, especially given the increased challenges that our teachers face in their classrooms. The additional pay can only provide more encouragement for educators to choose to stay with our school systems. Despite the Cooper previous vetoes, I am pleased to see the statistics released by the Department of Public Instruction on improved turnover. Hopefully, we will not see a major setback as a result of the current budget veto.

NC Senate District 46



Sen. Warren Daniel
Warren.Daniel@ncleg.net
919-715-7823

As we are just over a month before the 2020 "short session" convenes, I would like to give a brief preview of what may be topics of discussion. Mostly, I expect discussions to center on recent court decisions and unfinished business.

The 'short session' is usually the time where we review our 2-year budget to see if the second budget year needs to be adjusted to address changing or pressing needs. Since the General Assembly has already passed about 96% of what was in the original budget vetoed by Governor Cooper, I don't anticipate much adjustment. In fact, the continuation budget and the mini budgets that were passed in 2019, and which are currently in place, include about 94% of what the Governor's budget had requested. Another piece of unfinished business that may get discussed in May is the topic of criminal justice reform. I receive many emails regarding the 2nd Chance Act and the 1st Step Act that have not yet passed both chambers. I expect those bills to get revisited in May.

Many of you live in a county that has recently passed resolutions in support of the Second Amendment. One bill I filed last year that I will attempt to get passed in 2020 is a bill that will allow houses of worship to provide their own security by allowing their members who are concealed carry permits to be armed during church services. As you know, there have been several terrible instances across the country where armed madmen have come into a church during Sunday services and killed a number of worshippers. In a couple of cases in Texas, both cowardly shooters were stopped by either an armed church member or a nearby neighbor. Concealed carrying is currently allowed in all NC churches that do not have a school co-located on their campus. However, churches with schools are unable to legally protect themselves. As a result, both students in church-run schools, and worshippers at churches that have a school, are vulnerable. In light of recent attacks on churches, I believe SB 90 and variations like HB110 ARE much needed and should have wide public support.

Unfortunately, another topic we will need to discuss in May is the photo voter ID. In February, a 3-judge panel of the NC Court of Appeals placed an injunction on the law requiring a photo ID for voting, so it is now quite possible that no NC voter will be required to show a photo ID in the November election. Interestingly, neither of the 3 judges who imposed the injunction received even close to the number of votes as the voter ID constitutional amendment. Stay tuned for more developments on this topic.

There were also several funding items that are important to our district that is currently vetoed by Governor Cooper. First, the funding for school construction and the funds to get the NC School of Science and Math-Morganton opened; and, the billions for school construction and renovations. There may be money available now for the NCSSM in funds controlled by UNC and the Governor. In February, I released the following statement about the choice to delay opening the new NCSSM:

"In addition to blocking critical funding for N.C. School of Science and Math's Morganton campus, Governor Cooper has also blocked funding for public school construction, teacher pay raises, and in-home care for children with disabilities.

"The victims of his ill-advised Medicaid expansion-or-nothing ultimatum are piling up, and students and teachers all across the state are suffering the consequences. Governor Cooper seems more focused on fighting Republicans than governing this state, and now innocent high school students in my community and across western North Carolina are having their educational opportunities vetoed."

Governor Cooper has also objected to using cash on hand to pay for school construction. The state has about \$2.5 billion sitting in an account, and the budget that Governor Cooper vetoed would use much of that cash to pay for new schools.

Instead, Governor Cooper has proposed borrowing billions for school construction, a plan which the state's nonpartisan Fiscal Research Division says would require the taxpayers to pay about \$2.4 billion in interest over the next 30 years.

May the Lord bless you and your family. If you live in Burke, Avery or Caldwell Counties and need assistance with a state agency, do not hesitate to contact my office at warren.daniel@ncleg.net.

Bits 'n Pieces

continued from page 29

local food and their consumption. That's why we started YaYa Village Commercial Shared-Use Kitchen so that we could provide a certified area at a reasonable cost for locals trying to sell their products. This way we strive to help community entrepreneurs with their part-time business.

So, if you have a product you want to market and sell (like jams, jellies, baked goods, etc.) or if you need a commercial kitchen for catering, having a private Pop Up dinner, hosting a class or whatever you're imagining, we hope our Shared Use Kitchen can provide you with a solution.

Come visit our space, get an application and let us talk to see what is that you have in mind!

We are also serving lunch on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12:00 pm to 2:00 pm

Yancey County

Feed-A-Child Yancey County - Higgins fills bags on the second Tuesday of each month. We have been fortunate to have enough volunteers to fill the bags so far. They are going to continue the program this summer through the churches in the

county that have Wednesday night meals. If you have any questions about Feed-A-Child they can be directed to Bill & Nancy Watkins at 828-675-5367..

Mars Hill Farmers and Artisans Market - Saturday, Mar 14, 2020 from 9:00am to 12:00pm

Mars Hill College, 50 College Street, Mars Hill, NC 28754 828-712-6225
Market Hours: Season: Spring and Summer March - October, 2020 Saturdays, 9am - 12pm

Shoal Creek Baptist Church - Shoal Creek Baptist Church, Burnsville, NC; Sunday March 8, 2020; Worship and Praise service with Bethel Colony of Mercy and Beyond Measure, 6:00 PM

Humor

By Buddy Freeman
Madison County



“LAUGHTER IS HEALTHY FOR YOU”

A man and his wife attended a dinner party at the home of their friends. Near the end of the meal, the wife reprimanded her husband. She said, “That’s the third time you have gone for dessert. The hostess must think you are an absolute pig.” The husband replied, “I don’t think so. I’ve been telling her it’s for you.”

A new bride had cooked her first meal for her husband. She said, “My mother taught me to cook and I can cook two things well – apple pie and meatloaf.” The husband took a bite of his supper and asked, “And which one is this?”

A lawyer asked a defendant, “Do you wish to challenge any of the jury members?” The defendant said, “Well, I think I could take the little guy on the end.”

A man walked into a bank to rob it and he gave the teller a note that said, “This is a stickup. Give me all your money.” The teller passed a note back to him that said, “Fix your necktie. We are taking your picture.”

An inmate wrote his wife a letter. It said, “Don’t plant the potatoes – that’s where I buried the money.” He later received a letter from his wife that said, “Honey, they have dug up the entire backyard.” He wrote back, “Now you can plant the potatoes.”

Dr Buddy Freeman is now serving as the pastor at First Baptist Church of Marshall, NC.



The Shire Community

By Nancy Malik
Avery County



Avery County is exceptional in its four seasons, high altitude, lovely mountains and now we melt into ‘Spring’. Winter was great, complete with snow off and on, and now Spring is almost here!

On the Glory 1130am radio program, Adventures in Creation, “community” is the theme for the month of March. Each day highlights parts of Avery County that help it “tick” as a community, together. Schools, churches, law enforcement, health and rescue, government agencies, businesses (including two notable ski areas in it) all set it apart in its uniqueness as a community.

For my husband and I, as God led us on a journey to find a “special place”, it was the community of churches that touched our hearts. We thought there were 100 churches and we tried to pray for each one on sight. But someone who works for the county said there are 135! That is impressive for a county that is smaller in population. They are small, large and many in between in size. But all have an impact on the Body of Christ in the High Country.

It is evident, especially to newcomers, like we were three years ago, that there is a large population of believing Christians here. Even people who don’t attend church have knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Avery County has a community within the churches, the believers.

There are many ministries within the individual churches that serve the community and foreign missions around the world! Supporting missionaries is common here. Jail and prison ministries reach out to needy souls, as do addiction agencies, food, housing, and medical outreaches as well.

Two years ago, at Singing on the Mountain, local favorite Tommy Burleson, sent out a plea to Avery County. He told the Body of Christ to come out of their church buildings and become the body of Christ together.

I was a new widow at that time. But he spoke both my husband’s and my heart for Avery County and the United States, as well.

May the community of churches of Avery County and the rest of our country come together and serve others as well as each other, for our Lord!

Nancy Malik has lived 3 years in Avery County. She is a member of Heaton Christian Church. She has taught creations science to children for many years. She has a radio program M – F, 8:10 am and 12:50 pm on Glory 1130 am radio.

Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the LORD have created it.
Isaiah 45:8



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- Goodie Bags
- Door Prizes



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Five Ways to Experience Lent
By Kenny Lamm



I grew up thinking the four major days of the church year were Christmas, Easter, Mother's Day and Father's Day. They were certainly the days that seemed to receive the most excitement and attention.

Since my childhood, however, I have been exposed to and studied many different traditions of worship, and I find that we often miss out on some wonderful worship experiences when we eliminate many of the significant days from the traditional church calendar.

Feb. 26 is Ash Wednesday this year. This marks the beginning of the season of Lent which is a 40-day period focused on prayer and preparation to celebrate Easter. Lent culminates with Holy Week, beginning the Sunday before Easter and leading up to Easter Sunday.

The Sunday before Easter is Palm Sunday, or Passion Sunday, and celebrates Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The Thursday before Easter is Maundy Thursday or Holy Thursday and remembers the Last Supper. Good Friday is the day that we commemorate Christ's death on the cross. Finally, Easter Sunday is a great day of celebrating the resurrection.

We often miss out on some wonderful worship experiences when we eliminate many of the significant days from the traditional church calendar.

Lent has traditionally been marked by penitential prayer, fasting, and giving. Some churches today still observe a rigid schedule of fasting on certain days during Lent, which is often accompanied by giving up meat, sweets or other types of food.

Oftentimes, I give up something during Lent. And, what I have discovered is that every time I crave the item I have given up, I think about the reason I am giving it up and focus on the suffering and death of Jesus. It is amazing how much this helps me focus and prepare for Easter.

In my opinion, Easter is an even greater celebration when we truly experience Lent. Yet for many who have never been exposed to the "real" church calendar, the idea may seem somewhat foreign.

Here are some ways to help you experience Lent. If this is your first year experiencing Lent, prayerfully consider just one or two things. Some ideas may give you thoughts to consider for next year.

- Do a Bible reading plan with a friend.
- Do a family devotional each day.
- Fast from something in order to focus on prayer and seeking God.
- Give sacrificially to those in need – thought, money, time, energy or gifts.
- Drive in silence. Spend your morning and evening in prayer.

Kenny Lamm, senior consultant for worship and music for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina.

SEARCH
(Sustaining Essential and Rural
Community Healthcare)

SEARCH Community Meeting March 10
By Susan Larson, Co-leader



SEARCH (Sustaining Essential and Rural Community Healthcare) will hold an early spring meeting to which all are welcome on Tuesday, March 10, at 5:30 p.m. at the Trinity Episcopal Church, 15 Hemlock Avenue, Spruce Pine. The evening will begin with dinner, a potluck at which the main dish and dinnerware will be provided. Others are encouraged to bring a dish to share.

In recent weeks there have been meetings throughout Western North Carolina with the Independent Monitor hired to ensure that the agreement between the Mission Hospital System and HCA is honored. In seven locations people have shared many concerns and some praise about the effects of the transaction on hospital care throughout the Mission Hospitals. At the SEARCH meeting, there will be a follow-up discussion of possible responses to what people revealed in the sessions.

In addition, there will be a special guest speaker, Sheila Blalock, Director of Mitchell County Transportation. Taking the lead to apply for a major grant, Sheila was successful in securing funding that will purchase software to allow three counties, Avery, Mitchell, and Yancey, to coordinate their work. She will talk about the grant as well as the services offered by Mitchell County Transportation.

Anyone wishing to attend the meeting should send an email to SEARCHwnc.org with name, phone number, and number attending by March 6.

Susan Larson is a co-leader of SEARCH. She resides in Mitchell County with her husband, retired physician Dr. David Larson.



SEARCH co-leader speaks at the first SEARCH meeting of 2020.

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Dave Says

By Dave Ramsey

Tighten up!

Dear Dave,
I'm beginning to think we got in over our heads with our house. My wife and I make about \$125,000 a year combined, but we've never been able to put anything aside for an emergency fund. Our mortgage payment is 35 percent of our take-home pay each month. We have two young children, so we eat out a lot, but we have no debt other than our house. Do you think we should refinance our home? Jeff



Dear Jeff,
You two are making good money, and you're debt-free except for your home. You can't tighten up your budget enough to save up an emergency fund? Stay out of restaurants, dude! There's no law stating you must eat out a lot just because there are kids in the house. I mean, you've got no emergency fund. That's a pretty basic thing. You guys need to get on a written, detailed plan, and start hitting your goals. I'm talking about a strict, monthly budget. Now, I'll admit your mortgage payment isn't exactly what I would've signed you up for. Your house payments, or rent, should be no more than 25 percent of your monthly take-home pay. But your house payment isn't what's holding you two back. What's holding you two back is the fact that you haven't been willing to tighten up the finances in other areas of your life to offset biting off more than you could chew in terms of a home. No, I wouldn't refinance. You're fairly close where the mortgage payments are concerned, so I think you can make it through this by looking at ways to increase your income and selling stuff you don't need to build an emergency fund. You two have been smarter than some, but you're really going to have to buckle down and rearrange your priorities to make this happen!
—Dave

Cash-out my Roth IRA?

Dear Dave,
I have around \$15,000 in a Roth IRA. I just recently started studying your advice, and I was wondering if it would be a good idea to cash it out and put the money toward debt. Sarah

Dear Sarah,
I teach people to stop investing temporarily while they attack their debt. So, I wouldn't add anything to it at this point, but the worst thing you could do is cash it out. If you do, taxes and penalties will steal a huge chunk of that cash. The only time I take money out of a retirement account to pay off debt is to avoid bankruptcy or foreclosure.
Start working the Baby Steps from the beginning. Baby Step 1 is saving up \$1,000 for a starter emergency fund. Baby Step 2 is paying off all debts from smallest to largest, except for your home, using the debt snowball method. This will free up a ton of money! Then you're ready for Baby Step 3, which is increasing your beginner emergency fund to a fully loaded emergency fund of three to six months of expenses.
Now you're ready for Baby Step 4, which is 15 percent of your income going into retirement!
—Dave

Dave Ramsey is CEO of Ramsey Solutions. He has authored seven best-selling books, including The Total Money Makeover. The Dave Ramsey Show is heard by more than 14 million listeners each week on 600 radio stations and multiple digital platforms. Follow Dave on the web at daveramsey.com and on Twitter at @DaveRamsey.

Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy reward. Isaiah 58:8

New Dimensions Charter School

By David Burleson
Burke County



By looking at the calendar, spring is almost here but we have had some days that make us wonder. We all know that late March and early April can bring some snow and bad weather to our community. This year's winter has been very kind to us as we have currently missed only two school days because of inclement weather.
Our calendar committee and school board have worked very hard to develop the school calendar for 2020-2021. The recommended calendar was adopted by our school board during their February meeting. The 2020-2021 calendar is very similar to this year's calendar. The students at New Dimensions will head back to school on Tuesday, September 1, and the scheduled last day for students is Friday, May 28. Our calendar allows for a two-week Christmas break and a six-day break at Easter. With the calendar flexibility allowed charter schools, we can increase the amount of time per day and reduce the number of school days per year.
There are several exciting events planned for our New Dimensions family this Spring. Here are just a few of them:

- Monday, March 2 – Middle School ASU Math Night – Middle School Auditorium 5-6 p.m.
- Thursday, March 5 – K-5 Enrollment Open House Reading Around the World – 5:30 p.m.
- Sunday, March 8 – Daylight Savings Time Begins
- Tuesday, March 10 – Spring Pictures
- Thursday, March 12 – YMCA Family Fun Night – New Dimensions – 5 p.m.
- Monday, March 23 – Apples with Admin – Middle School Auditorium – 4 p.m.
- Friday, April 10 to Friday, April 17 – Easter Break for New Dimensions

Even though we are not finished with this school year yet, we are already planning our summer programs. If state funds are available, our goal is to provide our students who need a little extra help and support, the opportunity to get that during the summer months through a reading camp. The Read to Achieve legislation requires additional support for students in third grade who are not proficient in reading. Students who fail to meet this requirement will have the opportunity to attend our reading camp. We will have an excellent staff in place and based on our previous summer camps it has been a very rewarding experience for our students. Our goal is for this to be supportive and helpful, not punitive in any way. We stand ready to answer any questions you might have about summer camp.

Coach Brooks is also planning his athletic camps for the first few weeks of June. He is looking at other possible camps, so if you have any suggestions please let him know. The YMCA is planning an exciting summer for our students who need childcare. Each week will have specific themes like STEM, water activities, outdoor activities, along with many other fun-filled events. Be on the lookout for information and registration forms soon.

Not only are we planning for summer activities but have also geared up for the next school year by accepting enrollment packets for prospective students. Applications for the upcoming year are posted on our website and will be available at the school. Education night, Reading Around the World, (including a tour of New Dimensions) will be held on Thursday, March 5 from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. If this date is not convenient, the staff of New Dimensions will be more than happy to provide individual tours. Just give us a call (828-437-5753) or email us at dburleson@ndschooll.org to schedule a tour.

We have lots going on this spring, and we certainly appreciate the support of everyone in the New Dimensions family who work collectively to meet the needs of each of the children that we serve. Thank you for making New Dimensions such a special and wonderful place for all of us.

David Burleson is the Director of the New Dimensions Charter School in Burke County.

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Beyond the Walls

Freedom's Home Plan

By Marlene Houk
McDowell County

"What is Your Home Plan?" the case manager asked as he filled out the dismissal papers. Steve hesitated, his hands filling empty pockets. He wondered what a home plan would be if he could almost smell the burned bridges from broken family ties. When the officer released him, he would still be chained to his old ways.

Four years earlier, he had been arrested after a twenty-day drinking binge that included crime. He turned himself in and was placed under a suicide watch. He had reached the bottom. An alcoholic for forty years as well as practicing other addictions, he reflects about the times before his arrest, "I didn't care who I hurt to get these things." Now, he often wonders how he arrived home safely due to his alcoholic blackouts and the dings and dents in his car.

Three and a half weeks after his incarceration, Steve had walked into the prison chapel and asked the Lord to forgive him. He says, "I didn't want jailhouse religion. I wanted to be a child of God, and God delivered!" Steve had entered prison at age 57. At age 61, he was released. "Prison is no place for an old man," he declares. Although he had no outside money or anything given to him, not even deodorant, his trust in God kept him focused on the Lord and aiming for help.

After signing his papers and being released, he met his probation officer in the parking lot. He was driven to Freedom Ministries, a Christ-based pre-and post-release program located in Marion, NC, and Steve's outside life began. The ministry arranged for shelter in one of their transition houses and allowed him to rest for a few days. They asked for a year of his life and together, they formed a plan for his life. Freedom Life would provide transportation for work, to appointments, and buy groceries. During the year, Steve would participate in counseling and group meetings. He gladly chose Bible study also because he realized that the Lord was the Master of his plan.

As part of his plan, he began working with Marion Fabric and Upholstery, and it catapulted his ability to recover. There, Rick and Anthony, the owners, listened to his problems, included him in devotions every morning, and supported him in reaching his goals with Freedom Life. Steve says, "I knew they were there for me, and we became like family."

Following the grace and kindness that his mentors modeled, Steve now 22 months later, gives back. He participates in the same meetings at Freedom Life, but now he's able to listen with understanding to other clients' stories. "We are a brotherhood and we're concerned when one misses, he says, "and we reach out to them." We allow the Holy Spirit to lead, and we follow Proverbs' wisdom that iron sharpens iron. (Proverbs 27:17) For example, a typical focus of addicted men is that they do the same thing but expect different results. Steve recognizes this in the group meetings and helps them see that they need to change from within.

Now, after completing his plan with Freedom Life, Steve volunteers by transporting clients for the doctor appointments, motor vehicle appointments, IDs, to obtain clothes, groceries and job interviews. He is a transition house manager in the very house where God built a new foundation in his life. "Without Freedom Life's involvement, I would probably have gone back to prison," he summarizes. Then, with a chuckle, he says, "In prison, I worked for 70 cents a day in the kitchen. Now, I volunteer most of my time for Freedom Life. I'm the only one I know who took a cut in pay outside the prison walls!"

Steve describes his family at Freedom by saying, "We are not just a counselor and client but brother and brother. We are not simply acquaintances but have relationships."

"How has Freedom Life changed you?" was asked. He offers his answer with a smile, "Back then, my focus was self-centered and hurtful. Now, I want to encourage and help others, and God lets me! I appreciate the way that Freedom allowed the Holy Spirit to lead me. I belong to a good church and my understanding of myself is different than the endless cycle of addiction and feelings of worthlessness." He explains, "I am so sorry and ashamed of the things I've done. But through God's incredible love I have learned to receive forgiveness and I am no longer ashamed of who I am in Christ. Bonding with true friends, committing to a mutual plan with Freedom Life, and the Holy Spirit's guidance has helped him. He has arrived at a new home, not just on the outside, but within his heart on the inside. He adds, "I pray that the ones I've hurt will be able to forgive me. I pray that the pain I've caused them will no longer be a hindrance in their own heart's ability to know God's great healing and love. I am also working through my forgiveness of others as well."

Now, Steve Thomas tells those in need and in the pit of addiction, "Your answer is not in a bottle, pill, or needle. Seek counsel and the kingdom of God. You can't recover alone." Steve asks that the community pray for the broken and volunteer in any way, even to donating an old but usable vehicle that a client may be allowed to use as he or she works toward recovery.

Steve's home plan now is found in Isaiah 61:1 which says, "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;" The Lord had opened the gate of new life to Steve Thomas within the blocks of Marion Correctional Institution. Today, he loves serving the Lord through helping to pull others out of the same pit from which he has been pulled.

Freedom Life Ministries, a nonprofit corporation, helps current and former offenders embrace the freedom of real and lasting life change through the liberating power of Christ's love. Located in Marion, North Carolina. Contact information: Phone (828) 559-2224. Info@freedomlifeministries.org. Ms. Houk is a board member and volunteer with Freedom Life Ministries.

Marlene Houk is a regular contributor to Blue Ridge Christian News. Her passion is to delve deeply into the truths of Bible women and to discuss those in Bible Studies called Backstage Pass to Bible Women. She and her husband discover joy, nurture, and challenge in their church. Her contact is marlenehouk@bellsouth.net. Learn more about women in the Bible at Marlene's website: www.MarleneHouk.com



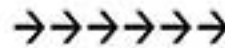
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Crossword

Across

1 He will surely violently turn and _____ thee like a ball (Isaiah 22:18)
 5 had given them much exhortation, he came into _____ (Acts 20:2)
 10 Create in _____ pure heart, O God (2,1) (Ps 51:10)
 13 Gray hair is a crown of splendor it is _____ by a righteous life (Prov 16:31)
 14 beginning to end, are written in the _____ of Jehu (2 Chron 20:34)
 15 He _____ his arrows and scattered the enemies (Ps 18:14)
 16 Suddenly _____ like the blowing of a violent wind came (1,5) (Acts 2:2)
 17 It _____ good land which the LORD our God doth (2,1) (Deut 1:25) KJV
 18 exiles who lived at _____ Abib near the Kebar River (Ezek 3:15)
 19 they which could _____ should cast themselves first into the sea (Acts 27:43)
 20 he burned the bones of the king of Edom into _____ (Amos 2:1) KJV
 22 Absalom had taken a pillar and _____ it in the King's Valley (2 Sam 18:18)
 24 If the iron be blunt, and he do not _____ the edge (Eccl 10:10) KJV
 27 Joshua son of Nun, who had been Moses' _____ (Num 11:28)
 28 a desolation, an _____, and a curse (Jer 25:18) KJV
 31 pure gold, more rare than the gold of _____ (Isa 13:12)
 34 if the _____ are dull white, it is a harmless rash (Lev 13:39)
 36 the LORD drove the _____ back with a strong east wind (Exod 14:21)
 37 from my own _____ and from my father's family (Gen 24:40)
 39 _____ your hands, all you nations; shout to God (Ps 47:1)
 40 slaughtering them along the way to a point below Beth _____ (1 Sam 7:11)
 41 they threw the _____ into the sea to lighten the ship (Jonah 1:5)
 44 _____ your treasure is, there your heart will be (Matt 6:21)
 45 But I have a baptism to _____ (Luke 12:50)
 47 ye shall _____, like as ye fled from before the earthquake (Zech 14:5) KJV
 49 thrown into the sea with a millstone _____ around his neck (Luke 17:2)
 50 Then the men stepped _____, seized Jesus and arrested him. (Matt 26:50)
 54 Let their table be made a

snare, and a _____ (Romans 11:9)
 56 man shall not _____ by bread alone, but by every word of God. (Luke 4:4)
 57 they cast the _____ (that is, the lot) in the presence of Haman (Est 3:7)
 58 enemy said of you, _____ The ancient heights have become (Ezek 36:2)
 59 David returned to his _____ in Jerusalem (2 Sam 20:3)
 61 the price of his _____ shall be according unto the number of years (Lev 25:50)
 62 I want you to _____ the words spoken in the past (2 Peter 3:2)
 63 Solomon had built the supporting _____ (1 Kings 11:27)
 64 he cometh with clouds; and every _____ shall see him (Rev 1:7)
 65 the teachers of the law and the _____ mocked him (Matt 27:41-42)
 66 A state of confusion

Down

1 Honey from the comb is sweet to your _____ (Prov 24:13)
 2 "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the _____ nine? (Luke 17:17-18)
 3 men _____ into the city that day as men steal in (2 Sam 19:3)
 4 Every day I _____ in the temple courts teaching (Matt 26:55)
 5 Men _____ their tongues in agony and cursed (Rev 16:10-11)
 6 for anger _____ in the lap of fools (Eccl 7:9)
 7 the sons of Esau, who is _____ (Gen 36:19)
 8 he hath faith, and have not works? _____ faith save him (James 2:14) KJV
 9 to him as righteousness for _____ generations to come (Ps 106:31)
 10 They conquered Ijon, Dan, Abel _____ (2 Chron 16:4)
 11 or he may die in battle and someone _____ marry her (Deut 20:7)
 12 In the third year of _____ king of Judah (1 King 15:33)
 19 Mockers _____ up a city, but wise men turn away anger (Prov 29:8)
 21 That which groweth of _____ own accord (Lev 25:5) KJV
 23 Adams first son (Gen 4:1)
 24 to see if there are any _____ understand, any who seek God (Ps 14:2)
 25 and he _____ someone so that he dies, he is a murderer (Num 35:18)
 26 the love of God (Gr.)
 29 was in the _____ that is called Patmos, for the word of God (Rev 1:9) KJV
 30 The LORD is _____ to all who



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call on him (Ps 145:18)
 31 This miraculous sign will _____ tomorrow (Ex 8:23)
 32 Woe to those who _____ iniquity, to those who plot evil (Mic 2:1)
 33 Master, we've worked _____ all night (Luke 5:5)
 35 there lay Sisera with the tent _____ through his temple (Judg 4:22)
 38 rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, _____, malice (Col 3:8)
 39 shall ye not eat of them that _____ the cud (Lev 11:4)
 KJV
 41 for an act of kindness shown _____ to a _____ (Acts 4:9)
 42 shall I come unto you with a _____, or in love (1 Cor 4:21)
 43 He asked the king's _____, "Why did the king issue (Dan 2:15)
 44 but _____ eyewitnesses of his _____ majesty (2 Pet 1:16)

46 seventh letter of the Greek alphabet
 48 treacherous, rash, conceited, _____ of pleasure (2 Tim 3:4)
 51 their mighty ones are beaten down, and are fled _____ (Jer 46:5) KJV
 52 He _____ forever by his power, _____ eyes watch the nations (Ps 66:7)
 53 I also want women to _____ modestly, with decency (1 Tim 2:9)
 54 came to the place called the Skull, there _____ crucified him (Luke 23:33)
 55 I have finished the _____, I have kept the faith (2 Tim 4:7)
 56 vain for you to rise up early, to sit up _____ (Ps 127:2)
 58 My days _____ swifter than a runner; they fly away (Job 9:25)
 60 Come to me, _____ you who are weary and burdened (Matt 11:28)
 61 abbr. for books 9 and 10 of the Old Testament

Solution on page 14



Retirement Resource Management

An Alternative to the ROTH IRA

By Steve Gaito
McDowell County



With the passage of the Secure Act in December, many in the financial planning world have been reconsidering how to plan for retirement. The truth is that retirement planning changed with the 2018 Trump tax brackets. This change created an opportunity to pay lower taxes now and reorganize where retirement assets should be kept. To illustrate this situation, would you prefer to pay lower taxes now to avoid higher taxes in the future. Or would you rather pay a lower rate on the qualified assets you have saved today to minimize the impact of a tax increase in the future? The answer to both of these questions is yes. It is time to think of the total tax burden you have in retirement accounts. You do not own all of your IRA or 401(k) plans. You are business partners with the IRS. Personally, I don't believe they are a great partner. This is because the IRS controls the rules. This is where the Secure Act comes into play. The Secure Act changed how people have to take distributions from inherited IRAs. Before the Secure Act, you could spread the distribution out over the non-spousal beneficiaries' life. This was known as the stretch provision for the IRA. It was a great strategy. With the passing of the Secure Act now these distributions must be taken in a 10-year period. So, the bottom line is that the government wants their money sooner. Given this situation, many people are considering converting qualified (IRA) plans to Roth IRAs. This makes sense as it pays the tax at the lower rate, eliminates the taxes on the inherited Roth IRA and there is no need to spread out the money over the 10 years since there is no tax consequence. You do have to consider the brackets when implementing this conversion. I run these calculations every day.

There is however an alternative to the Roth IRA that frequently flies under the radar. It is an insurance product known as Indexed Universal Life. Used properly it can provide tax-free income, growth without loss and a death benefit that can pass to the next generation tax-free. This product is not for everyone as qualifying will depend on a person's health and need for either income or death benefit. These products can also provide for tax-free money should there be a need for either critical or chronic care. These are all great benefits that you do not get with a Roth IRA. For me, the best reason to use this product is that it can provide tax diversification. Most are aware of the need for investment diversification, but tax diversification is equally important. I cannot tell you with any amount of certainty what will happen with taxes, but what I can tell you is that tax-free is better than taxable. Given our current taxes and the likelihood that they will increase when the Trump tax law sunsets or goes away in 2026 that it makes sense to diversify the parts of your retirement plan that is subject to taxes. In most cases, I recommend that using an Indexed Universal life product for between 25-33 percent of your retirement assets. This way you have the flexibility to choose where to make your income withdrawals from to create the most tax-efficient plan.

I know this may sound complicated, but you worked very hard for what you have saved. In retirement, you get very few opportunities to save on the taxes you pay and right now there is a great opportunity to see what you can do to improve your situation. Call my office today to see how we can help. (828) 559-0299 or send me an email to steve@retireerm.com

Steven W Gaito is a certified financial planner, owner of Faith Based Health Care and Retirement Resource Management, National Speaker on the topic of Social Security optimization, quoted in national publications like Money Magazine, US News and World Reports and Fox Business. Loves to educate and teach on financial topics like taxation of retirement accounts, long term care, healthcare, and efficient savings plans for small businesses. Has provided financial planning for missionaries through the International Mission Board.

For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.
Isaiah 61:11

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Mitchell County 4-H

Mitchell County 4-H LEGO Team Excels at 1st LEGO League Competition and The Sewing Club

By Kim Slotnick

After four months of preparation and practice, the Mitchell County 4-H Robotics Team, County Crashers, competed at the Regional FIRST LEGO League Competition. The competition was held at Olympic High School in Charlotte, NC on November 23rd and included 35 teams from throughout the region. Teams competed during an all-day session with four components, a presentation, 2 interviews, and the robot game.

FIRST LEGO League (FLL) is a competition organized by FIRST for elementary and middle school students. Each August, FIRST LEGO League introduces a real-world challenge for teams to focus on and research. The program is also based on scientific principles.

Representing Mitchell County were team members Riley Silver, son of John and Misti Silver, of Bakersville; Daniel McClure, son of Will and Holly McClure of Spruce Pine; Jace Blanton, son of Jason and Kristy Pyatte of Spruce Pine; Bransen Pittman, son of Brandon and Lisa Pittman of Bakersville; Troy Gouge, son of Doug and Ellen Gouge, of Bakersville, NC; and Samuel Jones, son of Terry and Roycene Jones of Green Mountain, NC. The team coaches were Steve Rowland and Misti Silver, both of Bakersville. They were supported by Kim Slotnick, Mitchell County 4-H Program Assistant.

This year's challenge was to identify a building in their community that had an issue that needed to be improved. They chose to "solve" the problem of no access for persons with disabilities to the Mitchell County Cooperative Extension Building. There were several components to the challenge and the boys selected the areas they wanted to tackle, considering their strengths.

The boys had to develop a skit that shared the problem. One of the boys played the role of a handicapped youth in a wheelchair who was unable to get to the second floor of the building because it wasn't accessible. Another component was to demonstrate teamwork and the members assembled a 3-D model that illustrated the concept of their access solution. A third component was to build a LEGO model that would showcase the function of their solution. The fourth component was to develop programming for the LEGO robots to autonomously maneuver around the table and complete challenges. They were scored on the successful maneuvers they completed in this arena and had to demonstrate the maneuvers in three different heats.

When asked about his first experience, Jace Blanton said "FIRST LEGO League was challenging and creative. Our team looked at its strengths to assign tasks. It was a lot of fun to work with other boys from throughout the county."

Prior to the competition, the team was also required to present their solution to an elected official. Current Mitchell County Commission Chair, Jacob Willis, listened to their presentation and offered feedback.

1st LEGO League is sponsored in Mitchell County by the NC Cooperative Extension Service's 4-H Youth Development program. Plans are being made to put together additional teams for the 2020 season. If you'd like to learn more, please contact Kim Slotnick, Program Assistant at (828) 688-4811 or via email at kslotnic@ncat.edu

The Spirit of Giving During the Holiday Season

The Mitchell County 4-H Sewing Club members were busy elves during the holidays. The Club worked on their community service project to give to homebound seniors in the community. The Sewing Club is led by Volunteer Leader, Sally Woody and Volunteer, Belinda Autry. The leaders and club members; Maya Peight, Tiffany Pore, Ciara Silvers, Kyra Schlabach, Gretchen Schlabach, and Keirsten Schlabach, had decided to make walker bags for senior citizens that have limited mobility and are using walkers to get around. These bags hang over the front bar of the walker and have pockets on both the front and back for storing personal items and essentials. The bags were designed and sewn by the club members using bright and colorful coordinating fabrics. The girls packaged each bag with instructions and Holiday Greetings to go out to folks who would benefit from having a walker bag. Melissa Hoilman of Meals on Wheels said that recipients Carol Gunter, Carol Plumridge, and Leo Riddle were delighted with their gifts. The bags were delivered by the Meals on Wheels volunteers who visit homes regularly to provide warm nourishing meals for homebound citizens.

Kim Slotnick is 4-H Program Assistant for the NC Cooperative Extension-Mitchell County Center, you may contact her at kim_slotnick@ncsu.edu.



Robotics Team members are, left-right: coach Misti Silver, Jace Blanton, Riley Silver, Bransen Pittman, Troy Gouge, Daniel McClure, Samuel Jones, coach, Steve Rowland.

Pause...and Consider

Pedaling Into God's Presence

By Ken and Jan Merop
Avery County



Exercise!
It's necessary for everyone to keep our joints moving, blood flowing, and energy levels rising for our overall wellness plan to care for body, mind, and spirit.

With that said, I didn't have much of an excuse for letting it lapse as it had. Oh, there were reasons, but neither did I figure some way around the obstacles of that season of life. Instead, I'd walk when the weather permitted, but the weather was less than cooperative.

A couple of months ago, I got started again. I had been bemoaning the fact that the bike I had saved so long to purchase and had used religiously in Florida, remained hanging on a hook in the garage. Admittedly, I need flat surfaces to bike the way I'm comfortable.

That meant attaching a rack to our car, putting our bikes on it, driving to a flat path, unloading...you get the picture. And though rides outdoors can't be beaten, they're few and far between.

So, I wondered out loud, "Is there some way to make my bike stationery in the basement so that I could 'ride'?"

I really didn't know what I was asking for. So, when my husband told me about bike trainers that can do just that, I got excited.

Long story short, we purchased one online and Ken had it together in no time.

Now I have a routine that keeps me moving and doesn't depend on the weather. Between my bike, Bow Flex and Gazelle...along with stretching...some joints that had begun aching to feel good again. And there's a bonus. As I exercise in my quiet place with praise music in the background, I pedal right into God's presence.

Our mind and spirit need spiritual food. Romans 12: 2, NLT says, "Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think."

It's easy to let laziness creep in and steal that fervor for the Word of God. Somehow eating the 'fast food' of the world deceives and leaves one hungry for 'true nourishment'...available only when you feast on God's amazing truths and principles.

Are your knees aching from lack of kneeling in prayer? Has your energy for service taken a back seat to personal pursuits? Perhaps your spiritual 'joints' are getting a little stiff from lack of use. Is it time to get back in the race?

Throw off the obstacles. Reconnect with God. Meet him in a quiet place at a specific time.

'Pedaling' into his presence will rejuvenate your love and faith. Selah

DELICATE STRENGTH

*With legs that appear so delicate they couldn't hold up a flea,
the butterfly tenaciously clings to the nourishing blossom...
proving there's strength where none appears to be.*

Aha! And we must do the same.

*Attach ourselves to our life-giving Lord,
Who infuses us with His strength...?*

Delighting in His promises and standing on His Word.

*"...by which have been given to us exceedingly great
and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers
of the divine nature..."*

2 Peter 1: 4



Ken and Jan love residing in the mountains of Avery County. Visit Jan's new blog @pauseandconsider.net, Journeying with Jan. Ken's photos can be seen at kenmeropphotography.com.

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New Airline Promises To Be Nice To Customers:
The Enduring Power Of Kindness

By Jim Denison

As someone who flies a lot, one attribute I seldom ascribe to the air travel industry is "niceness."

Airline service personnel must deal with unpredictable weather, equipment problems, and overstressed passengers all through the day. Conversely, when we call for help with changing flights or deal with gate personnel, we have learned to expect long delays and escalating frustration followed by abrupt service.

Enter David Neeleman, the founder of JetBlue, Westjet, Morris Air, Azul, and Open Skies.

His new airline, to be called Breeze Airways, expects to begin service sometime later this year. It will feature low costs, low prices, and more comfortable travel experience with expanded legroom for passengers. It will fly from and to "secondary" cities that don't usually have direct air service to each other.

And it will offer one other element Neeleman thinks will be a significant competitive advantage: his employees will be nice to their customers.

The Forbes article notes: "It stands as an indictment of this nation's current airline industry that someone now is ready to compete—and win—at least partially on making old-fashioned, positive human connections between employees and customers the featured aspect of their operation. We'll see, over time, whether it'll work."

"It's also rather refreshing that someone not only recognizes the glaring problem with service quality in the US airline industry today but is aiming to do something about it."

The enduring power of kindness

David Neeleman knows something Christians will do well to remember when we treat others with the grace we have received, our kindness draws them to our Lord.

Maya Angelou famously observed, "People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." In our secularized, chaotic, divisive culture, one of the most distinctive features of the Christian faith should be the kindness with which we treat others.

But we should note that such kindness is a "fruit of the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22), the result of the Holy Spirit's work in and through our lives. The only way to sustain kindness in unkind times is to live in submission to his power and purpose. The more we stay in touch with the Spirit in prayer, Bible study, worship, and surrendered faithfulness, the more he will manifest himself through us.

When was the last time someone treated you with kindness? You will likely remember the experience long after you forget its context.

Who will remember your kindness today?

Jim Denison Ph.D speaks and writes on cultural and contemporary issues. His daily column is distributed to more than 113,000 subscribers in 208 countries. See more on the website www.denisonforum.org. Copyrighted and printed by permission from Denison Forum.



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And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. Mark 4:27

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Location Location Location

By Kurt Bomar
Avery County



These are the three most important rules in real estate transactions, but they are important in our spiritual life too.

2 Sam.22:21-22 says: "The LORD has dealt with me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands he has rewarded me. 22 For I have kept the ways of the LORD; I am not guilty of turning from my God."

These words were written by King David. It sounds like he feels pretty good about himself. You're probably thinking he must have written these words before his adultery/murder episode with Bathsheba and Uriah, right? Wrong!

How can he say this then? It's really simple. It's not about the timing (before or after sin). It's about the location.

When we are in the presence of our enemies (as David was here), we have the right to declare our righteousness. We can tell our enemies, and Satan, "Get away from me, the word of God tells me I righteous in the eyes of God because of Christ Jesus" (2 Cor. 5:21). Satan's favorite weapon is condemnation.

When we are in the presence of a Holy God, however, we rightfully realize how sinful we are. Consider Psalm 38:

1. "LORD, do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath. 2 Your arrows have pierced me, and your hand has come down on me. 3 Because of your wrath, there is no health in my body; there is no soundness in my bones because of my sin. 4 My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear... 18 I confess my iniquity; I am troubled by my sin... 22 Come quickly to help me, my Lord and my Savior."

And Psalm 51: "When the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba. Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. 2 Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. 3 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me."

You see, David wasn't ignoring his sin but put another way, he would say: When I am in the presence of my enemies, I see myself through the cross. When I stand before the cross, I just see myself.

It's all about our location.

Kurt Bomar is pastor of Walnut Grove Church.



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A Quilt of Valor

By Terry Willis
Mitchell County

A Quilt of Valor – to comfort and heal when touched by war was presented to Terry L. Willis, A Purple Heart recipient of the Vietnam War, on December 25th, 2019.

Presented by Sandra Kay Scott Biller, who pieced and quilted the quilt. Sandra is a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution of Burnsville, North Carolina.

Sandra has quilted several other quilts for wartime veterans she is acquainted with.

Terry says, "I am very grateful for the time and effort she has put into this endeavor and thankful to be a recipient of this honor." Terry lives in the Newdale Community.



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One Golden Rule for a Happy Marriage

By Joyce Meyer



I think most people would agree that a good marriage isn't just going to "happen." It requires some give and take. And more than anything, the key to having a great relationship is a commitment to do things God's way.

For example, one major way I've discovered I can improve my marriage is by having an attitude of giving, rather than getting. Our natural inclination is to focus on ourselves—what we want and how we can be happy. But Acts 20:35 says, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (NIV).

If you enter marriage with the mindset that your spouse should make you happy all the time, you're setting yourself up for disaster. However, if you instead focus on choosing to be a blessing to your spouse—if you set your mind on thinking about what you can do for them—then you'll not only strengthen your marriage, but you will also become truly happy.

I admit I used to be an incredibly selfish person. To be honest, I just plain wanted my way, and I got upset when I didn't get it. In fact, I can still remember many mornings when I would lie in bed, thinking about how I was going to get Dave to do what I wanted him to do. I was wrapped up in myself, thinking all about what I wanted and what others could do for me.

Well, one morning, as I was formulating my plan for how I was going to get everyone to do what I wanted them to do that day, the Holy Spirit interrupted my thoughts and spoke something to my heart that I'll never forget. He said, "Joyce, sometimes you remind me of a toy robot that someone winds up every morning. Then, after you're wound up, you walk around all day long, saying, 'What about me? What about me? What about me?'"

That really got my attention! I realized then how selfish I was and began seeking God's help to change. As I started making progress, little by little, He showed me practical ways to be a blessing to my husband, Dave, rather than expecting him to always do something for me.

For example, a great place to start is learning your spouse's likes and dislikes. I discovered that Dave really values spending quality time together. So even though I'm more of a multi-tasker, it's important for me to give him my undivided attention when he wants to sit and talk about something.

Likewise, Dave has made an effort to learn what I like. Many times, he will clean up the kitchen in the evening just because he knows how much it blesses me. It may seem like a little thing, but it goes a long way toward sustaining a healthy relationship!

Remember Acts 20:35: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." For many years I could quote this scripture, but I obviously didn't believe it because I spent my time trying to be blessed rather than be a blessing. But God showed me that we don't even know what "happy" is until we forget about ourselves, start focusing on others, and become generous givers in every way.

I remember a few years ago when I planned a birthday party for Dave. I spent an entire day running errands, making plans, and consuming myself with how I could make it a great event. By the time his birthday arrived, I was absolutely filled with joy and couldn't wait to see his reaction.

I actually think I enjoyed his birthday more than he did! Why? Because I got my mind off myself and focused on being good to someone else.

The truth is we can never out-give God. Even if you feel right now like you're doing all the giving and your spouse is doing all the taking, rest assured that God will always take care of you and bless your obedience to His Word.

Galatians 6:7 says, "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows." I love this! When we decide to be givers and spend our time focusing on how we can be good to others, God says He will find ways to bless and take care of us.

I want to encourage you to begin taking a few minutes each morning to "set" your mind in the direction of giving instead of getting. Purposely think of something you can do for your spouse that will be a blessing.

As you choose to spend time making their life better, you'll begin experiencing more happiness yourself...and truly have a marriage you both enjoy!

Joyce Meyer is a New York Times bestselling author and founder of Joyce Meyer Ministries, Inc. She has authored more than 100 books, including *Battlefield of the Mind* and *Overload: How to Unplug, Unwind and Unleash Yourself from the Pressure of Stress* (Hachette). She hosts the *Enjoying Everyday Life* radio and TV programs, which air on hundreds of stations worldwide. For more information, visit www.joycemeyer.org.



The Lack of Resources

By Alice Horton
Burke County



Ruby Payne, a poverty scholar, defines poverty as, "the lack of resources". Resources, being considered as ranging from money to people. I've been thinking about this concept for years now and how the lack of emotional, relational, physical and spiritual resources leaves so many of us impoverished. ...as much as our brothers and sisters that we see every day at Burke United Christian Ministries. Understanding this concept, I ask you....do you not find yourselves impoverished in some area in your life?

This leads me to John 5:1-8 when the man is by the pool...waiting for years for healing and finally, God asks the man...Do you want to get well? Why does God ask this question? There are all kinds of reasons, but from my point of view today, I interpret that GOD's question is —do you want to change? Are you willing to do something different? Are you willing to make the changes in your life in order to see the change you would like to make happen?

These are questions we must ask the clients who come seeking services repeatedly at Burke United Christian Ministries. Do you want to get well? Often this leads to anger and frustration, because then if the response is yes, we must then say...pick up your mat and move on. (John 5: 7-9)

Sadly, just like the man at the pool, making these baby steps toward healing cannot be done alone and at times our clients will fail. They need encouragement and coaching. So often we hear at Burke United Christian Ministries, "these people need to just get a job, etc." but when is it that we just need help getting in the pool....the pool bubbles up (the opportunity comes) but we can't get in without help and when we miss the chance because we couldn't do it alone or need to be taught...then we must wait for the bubbling to happen again-the next wait line for services, the next funding to be available for power bills, housing etc.

So, the 21st Century question is...what does it mean to be well? Does it mean healthcare access, food, clothes, a job? What hasn't changed over all of these years is the need for Jesus Christ, "Who is the same yesterday and today." Saying "yes" to Jesus opens us to the opportunity for change. So, now I challenge you, how do we help our brothers/sisters to pick up their mats and move forward? Burke United Christian Ministries (BUCM) has served Burke County for fifty years through offering people nutritious meals at our Soup Kitchen, counseling neighbors in times of crisis, and providing families with food, clothing and financial assistance as well as providing educational opportunities to enhance our client's quality of life and ultimately leading them to become contributing members of society.

To learn more about Burke United Christian Ministries or to find out how you can get involved, please visit www.bucm.net or call 828-433-8075.

Alice Horton is the Executive Director of Burke United Christian Ministries. She is a graduate of Appalachian State University and has worked in the nonprofit field for the last 20 years. If you are interested in learning more about Burke United Christian Ministries or volunteering. Please call us at 828-433-8075.



Sudoku

Solution on page 14

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WAMY Announces Avery, Mitchell, and Yancey County Community Housing Coalitions

By April Beck

Avery, Mitchell and Yancey County



It is the mission of WAMY Community Action to partner with communities and families to provide the disadvantaged the tools and support they need to become self-sufficient. One of the ways that individuals can become self-sufficient is by having a safe, warm and healthy place to live. To tackle this critical issue, WAMY Community Action, with grant support from the AMY Wellness Foundation, is establishing Community Housing Coalitions in Avery, Mitchell, and Yancey counties. The Coalition's aim is to bring together agencies, churches, civic, and volunteer organizations to combine ideas and resources in order to improve the quality of housing for low-income populations and bridge the gaps in social service needs.

The Coalitions will work to streamline and coordinate the delivery of services to make households safer and more efficient while improving or maintaining the health of the family. Melissa Soto, Executive Director of WAMY states, "It is our belief that by coming together, we can serve the community more efficiently and effectively – saving everyone time and money and making the process easier for those needing help. WAMY has been providing housing repair in these counties for many years but often must turn away from jobs that are beyond the scope of our current programs. The Coalitions will give us all a network that we can turn to for shared solutions."

WAMY has hired April Beck as the Community Housing Coordinator to begin pulling together Coalition members to develop specific service delivery strategies. April has been a resident of Western North Carolina for 11 years. She studied Social Work in college and has dedicated most of her career to serving adults with intellectual disabilities. "Having grown up in an urban area, I never understood what the word 'community' truly meant. However, since moving here, I have been overwhelmed by the way folks come together to support one another," says Beck. The Coalitions are still accepting members. "We are looking for partners who have compassion for disadvantaged individuals living in these rural communities; many whose dwellings are unsuitable, unsafe and unhealthy. Many living in these conditions are those most vulnerable, such as the elderly, the disabled and the very young." If you or your organization would like to participate in this meaningful discussion, please contact April Beck at (828) 406-4705 or at april@wamymcommunityaction.org. Coalition meetings are scheduled as follows:

Mitchell: Thursday, Feb. 20 at 5 PM. United Methodist Church, Fellowship Hall.

11090 NC-226, Spruce Pine

Yancey: Monday, Feb. 24 at 5 PM. Ye Olde Country Store, 75 Main Street, Burnsville.

Avery: Tuesday, Feb. 25 at 5 PM. WAMY office, 723 Cranberry St, Newland.

April Beck is the Community Housing Coordinator for WAMY Community Action, Inc.

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Billy Graham Chaplains Available to Oregon Community After Severe Flooding

By Lizzy Long

The Billy Graham Rapid Response Team (RRT) is in Pendleton, Oregon, alongside Samaritan's Purse after severe flooding. Heavy rainfall and melting snow resulted in rushing floodwaters that caused one fatality and some residents to evacuate by helicopter. Hundreds of homes flooded as a large portion of the area went underwater.

Located in the northeastern part of the state, the historic farming and ranch town has faced flooding for more than a century, but the recent crisis was said to be the worst in decades. The geography of the Umatilla River running through Pendleton—along with steep hills surrounding it—makes the beautiful countryside a central spot for floods.

"Our hearts go out to people who have lost so much, and especially the family who is mourning the loss of life," said Josh Holland, assistant director of the RRT.

A team of approximately six crisis-trained chaplains

is ministering in the area. They're offering emotional and spiritual care to those who have lost homes, possessions, animals and jobs through the flood. In addition, the team's Mobile Ministry Center (MMC), a vehicle that serves as a safe haven for conversations, is available for locals to visit.

Just two years ago, Franklin Graham spoke in three cities in Oregon for his Decision America Pacific Northwest Tour, a series of one-day evangelistic events across California, Oregon, and Washington.

"Our prayers and thoughts are with the community, and we are blessed to be able to provide chaplains to listen and pray and talk to those whose lives have been changed as a result of this flooding," Holland said.

Do you have peace with God during hardships? Allow Him to be in your life today.



Billy Graham chaplains are in Pendleton, Oregon, following recent heavy flooding. Here, a woman watches as water floods her home in Thorn Hollow, near Adams, Oregon. (Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian via AP)

Out of town? You can still read the "Good News" on our new Website: www.brcnews.com And find us on Facebook

Faith

By Steve Williams
Mitchell County



We all run into things we don't understand in life. Paul is a great example of this. So, what did Paul do? The Bible tells us Paul had a thorn in the flesh, and it tells us Paul prayed three times for it to be removed. But the Lord didn't remove the thorn from Paul. So, what do you do when you don't understand what life is handing you? You must believe God is in control and that God will take care of whatever you are facing. Paul shows us our Faith in God is what helps us through whatever we are facing. Paul tells us in 2 Cor. 12:9 "And he said unto me (GOD), My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

Faith is a word easy to say but tuff to live by. It's so easy to tell people they will just have to have Faith in God or live by faith, in whatever they are facing. So how does someone live by faith then? Paul tells us in Romans 10:17 "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." And we see Paul was able to endure his thorn because he heard God's Words in 2 Cor 12:9.

Faith is an assurance convinced that God's promises are so trustworthy that we can base our lives upon them. It does not depend upon the circumstances one can see, but upon the certainty of God's truth that one believes. It has been said that true faith believes and receives. See Faith has Confidence, that every promise of God will be fulfilled. Faith has Courage, despite what we suffer in this world. Faith has a Conviction of spiritual things becoming reality even though there is no visible evidence at the time. Faith has a Comprehension of an invisible, spiritual world that is more real than the visible, natural world. Faith has a Commitment that shows you will not give up no matter how hard things may be. Faith has a Contentment that the future God has promised is so sure, we can patiently rest in His Presence.

Do you want a strong Faith? Learn to listen to God's voice through His Word as Paul did. Hear It, Believe It, Act on It. And watch that truth miraculously become reality. Also, remember Paul's Words in Philip. 4:13 "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Words of Wisdom:

- Faith is acting as if a thing is so, when it is not so, for it to be so. Manley Beasley
- When life becomes all snarled up, offer it to our Lord and let Him untie the knots. N/A
- A man who gets ahead is the one who does more than necessary—and keeps doing it. N/A
- If a man isn't willing to practice what he preaches, its time for him to give up preaching. N/A
- Too often, troubles start out being fun. N/A
- God never intended that we do as we please, but as He pleased. N/A

A Letter to the Pastor:

A pastor was openings mail one morning. Drawing a single sheet of paper from an envelope, he found written on it only one word: "FOOL."

The next Sunday he announced, "I have known many people who have written letters and forgot to sign their names. But this week I received a letter from someone who signed his name and had forgotten to write a letter."

Something to think about:

Wouldn't you rather be patient on the highway than a patient in the hospital?

Steve Williams is the Pastor of Berry Chapel Baptist Church in Spruce Pine.

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Why Should I Worry?

By Christy Young
Mitchell County



Worry, one of my biggest GIANTS! The definition of worry is feeling uneasy or troubled. I spend many restless nights with thoughts racing through my mind wondering, "what if". I constantly second guess myself, making it difficult to make decisions without doubting my choices. I have a hard time being at peace with the uncertainty that life throws at me. Being in a state of worry distracts my thoughts and disallows me to focus on the gifts of the present day. Worry is a lack of faith on my part. When we worry, we only torment ourselves, doing the devil's job for him! Too often I feel as if I can figure out my own problems without seeking God's guidance. Leaving me empty and unable to bring about a suitable solution. Matthew 6:34 says, "Therefore don't worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough troubles of its own." One of my favorite songs is "Why Should I Worry". The lyrics are as follows: "out on the water, the storms raging high, the waters around them, they were troubled that night. Fear filled their hearts, they felt they would die but they failed to remember that the Master was nigh. Then He spoke the words and the winds all stood still. You see even the waters; they obeyed His will. Now He calmed their storms just like he will mine if I just remember, He lives deep inside. So why should I worry? Why should I fear? When the very same Jesus, He is always so near." Only God knows our future. I must trust to overcome. Jeremiah 29:11 says "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." My experience proves that I serve a good, good God. He has great plans for my life, although sometimes I don't always see His path in front of me. I must have the faith that He will never lead me astray. He promises to calm my storms and give me peace if I will allow Him to. As the song says, I must call on Him until the storm passes by. I am learning that I must take it to the Father first rather than trying to figure it all out on my own. 1 Peter 5:6-7 says, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." So, the cure for worry is humbling ourselves before God, casting our cares upon Him, and trusting Him. Let go and Let God! Let our prayer be, Lord please help me to remember that you will gladly take my burdens, love me, and calm my soul. Lord help me to receive your perfect peace, serenity, and presence. With a God who loves me enough to send His only son to die for me, "Why should I worry"?

Christy Young is the blessed wife of Chris Young and proud mother of Hunter and Holden. She is a life-long resident of Mitchell County, bookkeeper at Young, Miller & Gillespie, PA, and a member of Bear Creek Baptist Church.

HE'S THE ONE

By Joy Baldwin
Madison County



*He's the one who made the rainbow
He's the one who lights the sky
No other gods can stand up to Him
He's my comforter at night.*

*He keeps me while I'm sleeping
He wakes me in the morn
He hears my praise in good times
My cry in time of storms.*

*He provides my every need
Tho angels I don't see
He assigns to them a job
While He's protecting me.*

*He's the one I write about
The one on whom I call
Creator of the universe
Who sent His Son for All.*

Joy is a resident of Madison County, where she now lives with her husband, Danny Joe Baldwin. She is currently a member of Mt Zion Baptist church in Marshall, NC. As a previous member, she calls Forks of Ivy Missionary Baptist Church in Weaverville, "home away from home". She is currently singing with the Gospel Group "Jonah's Voice" out of Mars Hill, NC. Her latest song "Homecoming" will soon be heard by many.



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Your Daughter will Thank You for Your Time and Tenderness

By James Dobson

The passion I feel for the subject at hand is related to the daughter who still calls me Dad. Danae is grown now, but I love her like I did when we were first introduced in the delivery room. Something electric occurred between us on that mystical night, and it endures today. I thank God for the privilege of being the father of this remarkable woman!

Being a father and a type-A personality myself, I look back on my parenting experiences and recall instances where I could have done a better job. I wish I could re-live some of those busy days at a slower pace. Unfortunately, none of us is allowed do-overs or mulligans. When our record is finally in the books, not a word or a deed can be altered.

Would it be self-serving to tell you that I also did some things right during my early days as a father and that the memories of some very special times with my kids rank at the top of my list of accomplishments today? Among my favorites are recollections of Danae when she was five years old. We used to take bike trips together to a nearby park on Saturday mornings and play in a sandbox with shovels and buckets. I taught her to build sandcastles, explained what a moat and a drawbridge were, and talked about anything else that seemed to interest her.

Then we would go to a nearby taco stand and have lunch before riding home. On the way back, we listened every week to a favorite recording of Rodgers and Hammerstein's Cinderella on a small Craig recorder, and we sang the songs together. Danae loved those outings, and she can tell you in detail about them today. And guess what? I loved them too.

From where I sit today, I can say that nothing and I mean nothing, from that era turned out to be more significant than the hours I spent with my little family. The relationships we enjoy today were nurtured during those years when it would have been very easy for me to chase every professional prize and ignore what mattered most at home.

Some years ago, I asked our radio listeners to call our organization and record a message for their dads. More than six hundred people participated, and not one caller focused on what their father did professionally. None of them said, "Thanks, Dad, for earning a lot of money" or "Thanks for the big house you provided for us." Instead, caller after a caller said, "Thanks, Dad, for loving me and for being there for me." Some said with strong emotion, "Thank you for letting me interrupt you, even when you were busy." Nearly all the calls coming from women mentioned the presence of tenderness in the relationship.

I address this specifically to dads who are still raising daughters and want to respond to the desires of their little hearts. My advice is also relevant to fathers whose daughters are grown. The woman who used to be "Dad's little princess" may still long for what she didn't receive when she was young. Even though these fathers can no longer play in the sandbox with their five-year-old, it is never too late for them to say, "You are precious to me."

From Dr. Dobson's book Dads and Daughters.



James Dobson, Jr. is an American evangelical Christian author, psychologist, and founder in 1977 of Focus on the Family

Students Help Lead Seminar on Vaping

By Jonelle Bobak
Burke County



Cadence Davis and Gillian Abree-Freeze started the Burke Youth Health Coalition when they were students at Heritage Middle School. Now juniors at Draughn High School, they continue to bring awareness to health issues facing teens including, most recently, vaping.

Cadence and Gillian helped organize and lead a PTO meeting at a high school in Asheville on the subject. They said the seminar was more of an informal Q&A session with parents wanting to know more about vaping, how to know if their children are involved and ways to prevent teens from starting in the first place.

Cadence said, "I didn't realize how much we knew and how much the parents didn't know." Gillian added the goal of the seminar was to get students, parents, and teachers talking about vaping and the health dangers it presents. Both said most parents are in denial about vaping and haven't accepted that it is an issue among teens.

Throughout their mission toward healthier lifestyles for their peers, Cadence and Gillian have focused on mental health, drugs, alcohol, nicotine and now vaping. They say most people recognize smoking as a bad habit but are still on the fence about vaping and need to be educated on its health risks and the fact that vaping can lead teens to take up smoking or use drugs.

Cadence and Gillian see themselves and the coalition as being a voice for young people and bridging gaps between teens and the community. They want parents to know what is going on with their school-aged children.

The Burke Youth Coalition was instrumental in getting "Tobacco-Free Campus" signs for Burke County Public Schools that include not only cigarettes and smokeless tobacco products but also vaping.

The students are working on a plan for a seminar in Burke County similar to the one in Asheville. They also invite 12 to 18-year-olds to enter the third annual Vocal Lens photo contest by taking a photo that represents a health and wellness challenge in Burke County and a possible solution to the challenge.

Burke County Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Larry Putnam said of Cadence and Gillian, "I applaud these students for taking on the cause of healthy youth. They are showing great leadership and community activism skills at a young age, and their actions show they truly have a passion for their peers. Often students, and even adults, have great ideas but never act on them. Cadence and Gillian continue to follow through with their goals and make a difference in the lives of others. I appreciate them for their desire to bring tough topics to the forefront and start difficult conversations about issues impacting our young people."

Jonelle Bobak is the Marketing and Communications Specialist for Burke County Public Schools. She is a graduate of Gardner-Webb University and Draughn High School and lives in Drexel. She has a background in journalism and enjoys traveling, crocheting and spending time with friends and family.



Cadence and Gillian

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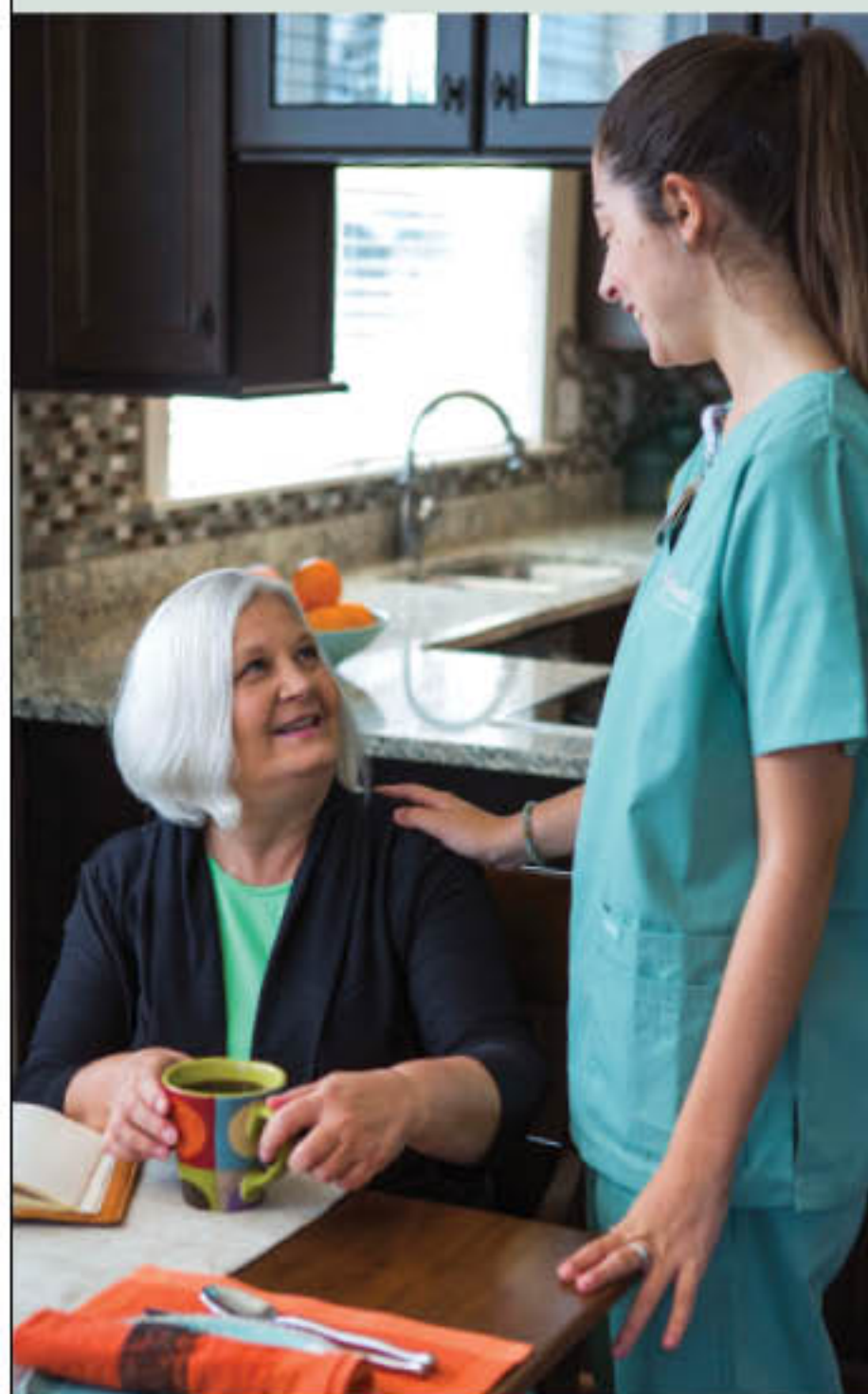
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