



BLUE RIDGE CHRISTIAN NEWS

He is Risen



Pause . . . and Consider

Forgiveness . . . a Sweet Fragrance

By Ken and Jan Merop
Avery County

We entered the sanctuary of the church and immediately breathed in the sweet fragrance of the Easter Lilies. Not only was the air scented, but even the graceful, pure white blossoms seemed to invite joyful praise.

While celebrating the glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ, we can't forget the forgiveness of Good Friday. Without the excruciating pain of Friday's betrayal and unforgiveness by the mobs, we wouldn't have the Sunday celebration of the empty tomb.

Forgiveness was the hallmark of Good Friday and made it 'good' for all who would believe in Jesus Christ's finished work on the cross; past, present, and future.

From the cross, Jesus cried, "Father forgive them for they don't know what they are doing." Luke 23: 34 NLT. As he shed his blood in our place, he opened the way to forgiveness and restoration; deliverance and hope.

Even the thief on the cross recognized him as the only way to eternal life and asked Jesus to remember him when he came into his kingdom. And Jesus replied (vs. 43), "I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise."

Forgiveness is its own reward.

Without it, the seeds of bitterness, resentment, and anger build and fester within the heart of the one withholding forgiveness. But once we realize that forgiveness is a decision, not a feeling, we take the first steps to embrace what God offers us. Now, we can be willing to forgive another and, when we do, the weight of unforgiveness is lifted.

It's not pretending you were not hurt. It's not rationalizing inappropriate behavior. It is getting my heart right with God and releasing the other person to his authority.

And then we come to the empty tomb.

It does not smell of death. It is pulsing with fragrant life. He who overcame sin and conquered death have burst forth offering us the gift of new life in him.

Forgiveness is costly. But in Colossians 3: 13 NLT we are reminded, "Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others."

A saying attributed to Mark Twain says it superbly. "Forgiveness is the fra-



grance the violet sheds on the heel that has crushed it."

I like to imagine deep purple violets and pure white lilies miraculously blooming as Jesus walked out of the tomb. With open hands and hearts, let's spread the fragrance of His forgiveness and joy.

Extravagantly given forgiveness results in joyful praise.

He has risen. He has risen indeed! Selah

PROMISE OF SPRING

Decaying mulch hardly seems the bed for beauty.

Nevertheless, it emerges from beneath the ground

Purple and white crocuses breaking through winter's harshness.

A cross, crown of thorns and a borrowed tomb

hardly seem the likely place to find a promise.

Till Jesus burst forth from the tomb...just as He said.

"Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here,

But is risen!"

Luke 24: 5 and 6



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.

When We Face Fear

By Terry Cheek Th.D.
McDowell County



Last month I introduced a new series about unlikely people that God chooses to use. For April I am going deviate from that series to address the fear that is gripping our world. I want you to realize I am not a final authority on viruses, financial markets or anything for that matter. I do have a personal relationship with God through His son Jesus Christ. Through that relationship, I have learned a great deal from His word, our Bible, regarding fear and how His children are directed to deal with it.

In the last thirty days, the Corona Virus has migrated from Wuhan China and infected every nation on the face of the earth. Bringing financial crises on a level not seen in America since the Great Depression. There is panic, fear, and delusion touching every home around me. Don't misunderstand me. I'm not taking this virus or the residual effects of it for granted. I accept it for what it is a devastating sickness that has killed untold numbers around the world and can continue.

I want to offer you peace of mind during the chaos that grips our lives today. The phrase "fear not" is mentioned 62 times in the King James Bible. One of the most encouraging verses containing this phrase is Daniel 10:19 KJV "And said, O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me." Daniel has a testimony that will touch the heart of anyone willing to read and study his life and Gods work through it. In the face of great adversity, God said, "fear not." With those words come the consolation of peace. God does not simply give us words He also gives us peace during adversity. I do not believe anyone would argue that we are not facing adversity today. The people of God have in front of them a fortress of peace that passes all understanding. I do not know what the future holds for me, but I assure you I have peace knowing God is in control of the Corona Virus, the stock market, banks, interest rates, gas prices, and supply lines. I know God is in control of my life.

From this peace, we are encouraged to be strong. Let's think about being strong! Being strong requires us to rely on the wisdom and there is no greater wisdom than God. I realize there are amazing men and women in science, medicine, and even government. But they do not hold a candle to God. Our strength must come from Him if we are to move forward with confidence. Being strong also requires us to be prepared for the battle that is in front of us. We are told by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 6 to put on the whole armor of God! The fear that grips the world around us comes from the evil of Satan. This armor is prayerfully applied and faithfully used. I am a firm believer that when we stand before the Lord our armor will either be polished and well protected, or battle scared and well mended. I believe God wants us to use the armor He has issued us to do battle and stand strong. Not against each other but against our common enemy, the devil. So,

let's find strength through prayer and faith to trust God through the days ahead. I know its easy to say I will but much more difficult to live it out. But, we have each other for encouragement and help and love.

Notice next what I think is the most important thing Daniel said about strength. It came from the word of the Lord. The strength Daniel found wasn't within his body, it was from his God. The word. We have strength waiting for us in the pages of our Bible. Some of us may not be able to meet with our church family but we can meet with our God through His word. From God's word we find the strength to get us through a family crisis, financial crisis, medical crisis, and any personal crisis. For a little while, every day turn off the news and shut down Facebook then pick up your Bible.

God's people can get through this and any of the residual fall out that comes from it if we find strength from God's word. We must also share that strength with those around us. I notice people with expressions of fear and delusion. When I do, I try to offer them words of love and encouragement from the grace of God's word. We are the salt and the light. Let's not lose our savor or be extinguished because of fear. There are many seeking the answer's that you and I have through a saving relationship with Jesus. Let's remember the words of God, "fear not."

Until we meet again in person or 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



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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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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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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.grassycreekbc.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

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
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Wednesday - 7:00pm

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Plumtree Presbyterian Church

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

Pastor Ryan Bridgeo
pastor@plumtreepresbyterian.org

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
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First Baptist Church of Spruce Pine

125 Tappan Street
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828-765-9411
www.sprucepinefbcc.com
www.sprucepinefbcc.blogspot.com

**Dr. Rocky Branch
Senior Pastor**

Sunday School - 9:45 am
Sunday Worship - 8:30 and 11:00 am
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Great Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church

2907d US Hwy 70 E
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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
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www.pinebranchbaptist.net

Reverend Bobby Joe Greene

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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
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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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Mine Creek Baptist Church

Fear Not!

By Chris Rathbone
Mitchell County

Wow! Things sure have changed since last month! Our nation has experienced a series of rapid changes from travel restrictions, gathering restrictions, foodservice has gone to take out and delivery only, and many grocery stores are out of stock on many things, etc. These new restrictions have caused many churches to cancel services and strive to minister through social media and online sources. Last night I was so restless with the decisions that needed to be made about my church. We want to minister to people's spiritual needs while at the same time honor our president's request to be sure we are doing our part to help stop the spread of this virus. My advice to you is to support these decisions that pastor's and church leaders have had to make. It's not an easy one and it is even harder when others are putting pressure on you one way or the other.

One thing that has stood out to me through all of these concerns and changes that have taken place is how people have reacted in fear and panic. Panic buying of food and supplies, to be honest, has taken me by surprise. Toilet paper is the big purchase, which I've not figured out yet. To me, if one was low on food, that would be the first thing to purchase. Cleaning supplies followed and then on to the food. The problem that arises from this panic purchasing is it makes it hard on everyone else, especially the elderly who only go shopping every so often and on those who may be less fortunate financially. When folks react this way out of fear, it makes it harder for everyone else. Imagine how smooth things would have gone for everyone had many not allowed the spirit of fear to control them, especially those who are Christians. This behavior shows that we are selfish and only looking out for ourselves. It breaks our Savior's command to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Fear has a way of causing us to make rash and chaotic decisions if we aren't careful. Fear can take control of people completely which leads to folks losing common sense! There's a verse that I've been sharing repeatedly since all this began that needs to be repeated, memorized, quoted, written down, and read over and over again! It's from 2 Timothy 1:7: "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

Paul was writing to young Timothy. This would be Paul's last letter before he would lose his life for preaching the Gospel of Jesus. Timothy would be left without his mentor and friend. No longer would he have Paul to encourage, teach, and challenge him in his walk with Christ and call to preach the Gospel of Jesus. He was exhorting Timothy to not allow the spirit of fear to control him. Obviously, this spirit of fear was not from God and was sent to hinder Timothy's ministry. You see, fear of what might happen will stop what should happen. How many times have we allowed this kind of fear to hinder us from doing what we should do? Not only that, but fear can cause people to do things out of panic that they shouldn't do (such as hoarding food & fighting at the supermarket). It causes people to react in ways that are not the way the Lord would want us to behave.

Paul reminded Timothy and us, that here is what God has given us through His Holy Spirit that indwells us who are believers. We need to remember these truths when we are faced with seasons in life that Satan uses to stir up the spirit of fear in us and keep us from trusting Jesus.

#1. We've been given the spirit of power. This is the power or strength to act, the freedom of action, or the right to act. Through Christ and the Holy Spirit, we have been given the freedom to act and do what God wants us to do. Fear tries to hinder us from that. Fear makes us weak spiritually, but God gives us the power to trust, to act, to serve, to behave, to speak the truth, etc.

#2. We've been given the spirit of love. I believe Paul is reminding us that when fear attacks, remember how much we are loved by God. Even during troubling times, His love for us does not change. Fear tries to strip us of that comfort. 1 John 4:18 states this: "There is no fear in love: but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." The weapon to combat fear is love. Reminding ourselves in scripture, prayer, worship, etc., that God loves us and commands us to love others. When we react in His love, love casts out fear!

#3. We've been given the spirit of a sound mind. The phrase "of a sound mind" here means "a calm and well-balanced mind with discipline and self-control". Basically, Paul is saying that the Holy Spirit gives us the wisdom to make sound decisions when circumstances come into our lives that the devil tries to use to stir up fear. The wisdom of God through the Holy Spirit will help us make wise choices during a time of trouble. Knowledge is what we know. Wisdom is how we use what we know to benefit ourselves, those around us, and most importantly, bring glory to our Savior Jesus! We can have a lot of knowledge but not have the wisdom to use it to our benefit. Imagine how different things would be now if people would have used a little wisdom during this time in our nation instead of allowing fear to cause confusion.

Some advice I would personally like to leave you with. Turn off the news! Get the info you need but don't sit in front of the TV for hours. The media counts on that to cause people to react in fear so they'll have even more stories to cover. Intentionally spend time in God's Word and prayer. This is something we all should have been doing already. If you haven't, it's a great time to start. Prayer and study will help stop fear from influencing our attitude and actions. Last, of all, let's do our part to help. Whether you agree with all the decisions that have been made that have caused us to have to change a lot of our plans, let us be seen by the world as Christians who are trying to help things get back on track. Our president and government are not asking us to stop believing, praying, preaching, worshipping, etc., they are simply asking us to do our part to help ourselves and those around us. Serve others, help the elderly, stop hoarding food (selfishness), stay calm, and make wise decisions to protect yourselves, your family, and those



around you. We may have to minister in different ways but that's ok. I will be preaching on my Facebook page. That's new to me but I'm going to use this opportunity to spread the hope of Jesus.

I believe that God will get us through this like He has other things we have faced before. When we react in fear as Christians, we are basically telling the world that WE don't even trust God! Let us have faith and not fear! Let us be a testimony to the world around us to "FEAR NOT!"

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

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. Jeremiah 29:11

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Evangelical Press Association

Could 'Social Distancing' Lead to the Greatest Harvest the US Has Ever Seen?

By Sean Dunn - Groundwire.net



The US is facing unusual times and unprecedented circumstances. Due to health concerns restaurants are closing, transportation options are being limited, and houses of worship remain empty. In an effort to protect the population, employers are encouraging their workers to work from home, governments are banning groups from gathering, the older generations lock their doors and avoid contact.

The paradigm of "Social Distancing" is being encouraged so that germs don't spread, but as isolation is urged, an opportunity is rising. If approached with compassion and understanding, those who are secluded are proving to be willing to consider and respond to the claims of Christ.

In 2017, Groundwire recognized that the digital space represented the next frontier in evangelism. As they adjusted their strategy from traditional media (TV, Radio, Billboard) to digital delivery only, they began to see a tremendous response. Last year alone, they saw 83,970 people (mostly Millennial and Gen Z) in the US place their trust in Jesus and they anticipate achieving their goal of 175,000 New Believers in 2020.

They have identified a few key factors that are driving this growth.

- They are never more than 10 feet away from their phones. We might not be able to get them to walk into a church, but we can't get them to put down their phones, so let's utilize that. Instead of giving all the screen space to the pornographers, politicians, and publicists, let's find ways to share Jesus.
- They may turn down an invitation, but it is possible to interrupt their entertainment. The younger generations have so many excuses as to why they don't want to attend church. They might be busy, tired, or just don't want to go, but using their mobile device we can interrupt their thoughts and share hope, peace, and Jesus.
- They are tired of the monologue they perceive coming from the church, but they are very open to a dialogue. The most powerful skill as it pertains to gaining their trust is the ability to listen. If they feel heard, they will listen. Our online volunteers don't just blurt out spiritual truth, they listen carefully, then connect it to their season of life.
- Crisis opens them up to having conversations about Christ. Lost and hurting people aren't asking theological questions. They aren't waking up and saying, "Oh no, I am going to hell." They are waking up and saying, "Oh no, I am going through hell." We don't ignore theology, but we have realized that it isn't the doorway to begin the discussions about Jesus. Start with felt need and introduce them to the One who can meet it.
- They are not asking the right questions, but you can help them: Most in the younger generations aren't "seekers." They aren't asking the right questions. But, with the right content, you can crawl behind their mask and encourage them to consider truly meaningful things.

Using these principles Groundwire is seeing hundreds (their metrics, definitions, and processes have been validated by third-party company's) of people in the US coming to faith every day. They aren't waiting for people to come looking for them and they aren't waiting for permission, they are permeating digital spaces with the message that "When Life Hurts, Jesus Cares" and inviting people into conversations about faith, pain, culture, and Jesus at www.JesusCares.com.

Sean Dunn, the founder and President of Groundwire shares, "72% of the young people in our nation believe that God is a real being and not just a concept. We don't need to convince them that He is real, we need to remind them that He is relevant. With God's help, we are doing that, and He is drawing hearts to Himself."

With the push of "Socially Distancing" people will be spending more time with their phones and the opportunities will continue to grow. This new trend could actually lead to the greatest harvest the US has ever seen.

To learn more, visit www.Groundwire.net or www.JesusCares.com.

Groundwire is a leading force in today's landscape. A generation often categorized as "lost" is responding by the thousands to a clear engaging message of truth. By utilizing well-produced commercials amid today's most relevant media and technology platforms, viewers are invited to have a no-holds-barred conversation with someone who understands. Twenty-four hours a day, online coaches direct young adults into salvation and towards a local church community. Discover more information about Groundwire's momentum by visiting www.groundwire.net.

If you would like more information about this topic, please contact Sean Dunn, Groundwire Founder, and President, at (303) 660-3582, or sdunn@groundwire.net.

Sean Dunn is the Groundwire Founder, and President.



The Potter And The Clay

By Glenda Ward
McDowell County

"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."

In Biblical days, back in the Old Testament, the people had one kind of container that served a host of purposes: it was a clay jar or pot. If they needed a different size, they simply made or purchased the size clay jar or pot needed. All were made of the same material dirt (clay), and water. The image of a potter and clay is recorded frequently in Scripture beginning in Genesis 1:7. God actually shaped and made Adam from the clay (dirt), the dust of the earth and breathed life into him. Adam became a living soul being a human.

Look at the Scripture, 2 Corinthians 4:7. Paul referred to our bodies as earthen vessels, made of the earth, shaped and molded similarly as a clay vessel may be shaped and molded. We are the clay in the hands of the Potter, acknowledging God's handiwork as the Master Potter, creator of our physical body. It is the authority of God to shape us inwardly, to spiritually fashion us into a vessel to be fit for His use in our servanthood and discipleship to His Glory. God wants to form us to be a vessel unto honor, sanctified and fit for our Master's use, and prepared for His good work (Reference 2 Timothy 2:21; also read Job 10:9 and Isaiah 29:16, 45:9). God is the Divine Potter and humanity is the clay. An expression of God's Sovereignty over all people and our need to yield to His divine plan to find a purpose for which we have been made.

Our life rests in God's hands! Like a skilled potter, God knows how to apply accurately the pressure, when to relax His grip, how to embrace and push gently – all of which gets our attention and increases our fitness as a vessel for His use. At times God, our Master Potter, places us in the kiln or furnace where the fires of life turn us into stronger vessels. God permits trials in life as a tool in the skillful hands of our Master Potter to mature, develop, and conform us into the image of Christ according to His purpose and plan (Reference Romans 8:28-29).

God, who is our Heavenly Father, uses the events we encounter each day as tools to shape and sculpt our life, to deepen our faith, to develop within us a quality of perseverance, and to make us containers of His love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control; which is, in reality, the fruit of the Spirit (Reference Galatians 5:22-23). Experiencing pressure, we can visualize the skillful hands of our Divine Potter using it for the good in life. Trusting our life to God, we can echo the prayer of Isaiah: 64:8; *"But now, O Lord, thou art our Father; we are the clay, and thou our Potter; and we are the work of thy hand."* Jeremiah 18:1-6

A Potter retrieves clay usually from a clay bank which sometimes is enclosed or covered with a structure. The bank is dirty, dark and smelly. In Bible times the potter felt for the right consistency of clay to be used with great care. He didn't just take any clay. He spent a great deal of time choosing the exact clay he wanted. Think of the time this took and the dirt he had to sift through to find the clay. Now think of the horrible pit from which we were drawn when our Master Potter came looking for us, He found us filthy with our sins. *"He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings"* (Psalms 40:2). God had to exercise endless love and patience with many of us as we resisted His Spirit's call to Salvation. His grace and mercy extended down into that horrible pit and gave us the gift of Salvation. He didn't turn away from the dirty, sinful place where He found us!

With infinite care, the potter kneads and molds the clay. He searches out and removes any impurities. This reminds us of our spiritual lives. God turns the spotlight of His Holy Spirit on our lives and points out areas of impurities that need to be removed. The process can be painful but is necessary for us to be useful to God's service. We must be open and receptive to the Holy Spirit as He instructs us in areas we need to remove from our life. (Reference John 14:21, 23-24). Only as we surrender to God and allow Him to clean out the impurities from our lives will we become vessels fit for our Master's use.

The potter forms the clay as he begins to turn it. As the lump spins on the potter's wheel his hands shape the clay. As the potter works the clay, he may push it down and start over. He will do this until the vessel is formed to his liking. And sometimes the potter will completely change direction and make the vessel quite different from what he started to make. The potter may take the broken piece of clay and make an exquisite vessel from it. As the masterpiece is finished, he looks upon it with great pleasure.

Sometimes we know the area God (the Potter) is trying to change in our lives, but because of our stubbornness, He is not able to make us useful in His service as He would like. We need to allow God's Spirit to work and shape our lives. We need to develop a sensitivity to the Spirit's voice in our lives. We need to listen for His direction and obey Him when He instructs us in His Will. God is a specialist in taking broken, ruined clay vessels and making precious vessels out of them. The secret lies in our confession, repentance, and submission to Him.

After the potter is finished the unfired vessel is placed on a shelf for drying. The vessel will break and be useless if it is fired before it has properly dried. In relation, sometimes we experience times of dryness in our spiritual lives. God can use these times to prepare us for greater service. It is important we rest and keep pursuing God's Will. If we persist, God can use our dry times to build maturity into us and increase our usefulness to Him. We should be patient and look forward too many wonderful blessings being prepared for us in our eternal life.

Today some of us are in God's furnace filled with trial and heartache. But God, the Master Potter, is perfecting and refining you into a beautiful vessel. (Reference 1 Corinthians 10:13). Allow Him to wrap His arms of comfort around you, as we all should, and lean on His everlasting arms of His mercy allowing Him to make you a vessel fit for His use. (Reference Isaiah 40:31).

After the firing of the vessel, it is ready for use. The potter makes the vessel as



he sees fit. The clay that yields to the potter's touch brings happiness and satisfaction, a source of joy to the potter. Just as those of us that yield to God allowing Him to cleanse the impurities from our lives, and surrender to His Will, will be a source of joy and pleasure to our Master Potter. God, the Master Potter, is calling each of us to yield to Him so He can shape us into beautiful vessels to be used in His Kingdom.

For we are a chosen potter's vessel unto God, a vessel made unto honor, sanctified and made worthy of God's use, and prepared by God that we may be thoroughly furnished to do His good works. Our wounds are healed and become scars that tell a story.

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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High Country Prison Ministry

By Jody Griffin
Avery and Mitchell County



"Also, I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me." (Isaiah 6:8, KJV)

I was privileged to serve for twenty-one years in the Army Reserves. Fifteen of those years as a member of the NC Army National Guard. At the ripe 'old age' of 17, my father drove me to the Recruiter's office and waited for me to "volunteer" for service. I had become part of what is known as the "All-Volunteer" Force. I admit that I was powerless in the face of my father's demand. "Volunteer" was what you might say was a "relative term" ...

The call to serve God is also often an irresistible force. (Just ask Jonah...) One might wonder what would compel someone to enter into the world of the incarcerated willfully. Yet every day, in correctional facilities around the state of North Carolina, that call is answered by those who come not for pay or financial benefit, but for the deep-seated satisfaction of having helped a fellow human being. They are known by the name, "Volunteer".

Some come to teach, some to preach, all to encourage. The Truth is that they come freely, giving of their time, talents and testimonies. They come in response to a call, and they come issuing a call. They challenge those they serve to grow and to become the very best versions of themselves. When one sees it happening, one can hardly resist being moved.

I have witnessed this reality many times. Volunteers are compelled to come and share their knowledge, their talents and their wisdom with those who are cut off from these opportunities as a result of their incarceration. These volunteers



arrive from a variety of places and bring a broad spectrum of experiences with them. They undergo training to gain access to the institutions they enter. They agree to operate within the guidelines of the Department of Corrections. They come knowing that they might have a room full of men to share with or just a few men. Still, they enter the gates seeking to offer hope and wisdom. And they exit each time having left an imprint on those whom they offer their efforts.

At Avery Mitchell Correctional Institution we are blessed beyond measure through the men and women who come volunteering their time and energies in so many ways! And each year the volunteers who serve are recognized at an event honoring them for their service. A highlight of our year, the Volunteer Appreciation Banquet includes a guest speaker, refreshments, music, and inspiring words from select offenders whose lives have been positively affected by our volunteers' service. It never fails to be a meaningful time.

It takes a unique person to volunteer inside prison walls, and there is a word that describes our volunteers at Avery Mitchell Correctional Institution very well. I use this space to say, "Special Thanks to Special People!"

If you would be interested in becoming a volunteer, please let me know and I will connect you with those who can assist you! May God Bless You for saying, "Here am I! Send me!"

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

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Faith for the Journey

By Doug Harrell
Mitchell County



What is your response when Jesus says, let us go over to the other side? Your first response is probably, what on earth are you talking about Doug! Well, I am talking about the parable of Jesus calming the seas when the storms of the sea were about to swamp the boat. Most folks focus on the all-powerful voice of the master of the seas when Jesus spoke, the winds obeyed, and that is powerful. To me, the underlying power is in the fact that He stated in the very beginning, let us go over to the other side of the sea!

When Jesus says to you, let us go over to the other side of life, do you lose faith in His ability to get you there? Do you fret and complain, give up on God, throw a tantrum, or do you trust and believe? We all face trials and tribulations almost daily, some serious and some kind of mundane, but we face them. Having faith to face the storms of life and knowing that all things work for good to those that love God and are called to His purpose, (Romans 8:28) is the essence of faith. When tossed upon the seas of life, have faith, the shore will appear shortly and the sun (Son) shall shine.

"And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side." Mark 4:35 KJV

Don't let the stress and fear cloud your mind but be resolute in your faith and belief, He is the Master of the Seas, He will calm the winds, and as He promised, you will arrive safely on the other side of the challenge!

"And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?" Mark 4:39-40 KJV

When you are facing life's challenges, and you will face them. Most folks I know are in the middle of a challenge, coming out of one, or getting ready for the next one. The good news is that if you are in God's hand and a child of His, the results can give glory. When you are entering a challenging season, if you look around you will always see others in a similar or worse situation. When Jesus told His disciples to get in the boat to go to the other side of the sea, many little boats went with them.

"And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships." Mark 4:36 KJV

When you are facing life's challenges, and you will face them, the good news is that if you are in God's hands and a child of His, the results can give glory.

Stop and take time to look away from yourself and look around you. Can you minister to a hurting soul that does not know Christ that is in a place alongside of you? Maybe this is a Devine appointment to change the direction of another life that could be reached for the Lord. Jesus looked around and until the very last hour before His death on the cross, He was in the life-saving business.

"And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." Luke 23:42-43 KJV

We cannot humanly understand all the things that go on around us, there is no way that we can see the future, but God can and does. What may seem to be a total disaster to us can be used to give glory to God in ways that are totally beyond our comprehension. When we are in the deepest depth of despair, God still has the reins. Maybe we, you and I, were born for such a time as this.

"For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this? Then Esther bade them return Mordecai this answer, Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish." Esther 4:14-16 KJV

Maybe today is your day to shine, your day to touch a life for eternity, your day to be a shining example of what God put you on this earth to do. Maybe a God-ordained meeting with someone that will change you and another person, open your mind and heart to the possibilities rather than the problems you may be facing. All things do work for good to those that love the Lord and are called to His purpose (Romans 8:28). Seek out the good and think on that, not the bad.

One day at a time, one life at a time and the willingness to be used as God sees fit is a critical part of being willing to serve. As many of you may know, and some may not, two years ago I was diagnosed with terminal leukemia and told I had months to live. Two weeks ago I went back to Duke to start my 24th round of chemo for three weeks, well past my projected life span. Now I cannot claim that this is a fun trip, but it is amazing how our God orchestrates things. Our first appointment was at 6:50 AM and we arrived at about 6:30 and set down to wait for the labs to open at 6:40 AM. We had just set down and another couple about our ages came in and set down beside us. In a few moments of conversation, we realized that they were in distress, their first trip after a serious diagnosis. To make a long story short, we were able to actually stand there in the lab and pray with them and share the gospel of Christ and His scriptures. Folks were looking at us kind of crazy but that was okay. Tears were streaming down all our faces. I say this to say that God has a purpose for each of us daily, I guess my purpose is to deal with chemo three weeks out of every five so I will be put in a spot to touch a life in some small way. Learning to rejoice in the trial is the greatest challenge, but the reward is so great. I tell you this not to bring glory to myself, but to make you aware of how God uses our situations to further His Kingdom if we are willing to be used. I have made the statement many times in the past two years that leukemia has been a life-changing blessing and I just pray that I am pliable enough to allow me to be molded to His purpose.

Now I am not suggesting that you pray for some critical illness to strike you, just that you be willing to accept His good and perfect will to equip you to better serve His purpose. We do not have to be pastor or Preacher, deacon or Sunday school

teacher, just be yourself and be conscious of the hurting folks around you. Be willing to unashamedly reach out and touch someone that is struggling in doubt and fear, be the voice of Jesus, and be the Bible that they may not have read.

As a side note, for the first time in two years all my blood levels came back in the normal range, some very low normal but normal any way, maybe, just maybe, God is honoring and thanking me for being willing to serve, not that he needs me to accomplish anything because he is all-powerful and can do it all, I sure don't know the answer to all those questions, and have no idea how long my days may be on this earth. I can only pray that He will say, well done good and faithful servant. Praying that I will have the courage to stand and be faithful in the face of adversity. I am telling you these things not to put me on a pedestal, but to hopefully give you faith that the Holy Spirit will give you the strength to say the right words and do the right things when you are presented with the opportunity, He promises us that he will.

When you are at your lowest point, search your mind, heart, and soul to find ways you can turn your challenges into an opportunity to serve, to make your challenge be a blessing to someone else, to lead another into the fold of everlasting life. Rather than having a pity party, throw a praise party

"And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Romans 8:27-28 KJV

"Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 KJV

Don't get angry with God over your challenges, trust His good and perfect will, search for a purpose to bring glory to Him through your struggles. Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you and show you the way, the truth and the life that is promised, you and those around you will be blessed!

Who is in your boat? The waves and storms will come, sickness, death, disappointment, and tragedy are a part of life. The comforting thing for us Christians is that when we have Jesus in our boat, then the Master of the seas has control, all you have to do is to call on him, wake him up as the disciples did, all you need to do is trust and turn things over to Him. I know this sounds simplistic, and the amazing thing is that it really is, the challenging part is to have faith rather than fear. There is no way that both faith and fear can dwell together in your mind, one or the other will rule, you decide.

"And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?" Mark 4:38-40 KJV

The song "You'll Never Walk Alone" says it this way:

When you walk through a storm
Hold your chin up high
And don't be afraid of the dark.
At the end of a storm
Is a golden sky
And the sweet, silver song of a lark.
Walk on, through the wind,
Walk on, through the rain,
Though your dreams be tossed and blown.
Walk on, walk on with hope in your heart,
And you'll never walk alone,
You'll never walk alone.

Don't try to walk alone, none of us are strong enough, remember another song, I am weak but Thou art strong, precious Savior lead me on.
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.

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Hope During Coronavirus

By Natalie Lindsey
Avery County

My husband and I recently returned from Europe during the current Coronavirus pandemic. While we were in the air heading to Europe, Trump announced banning travel to/from Europe. When we got settled in our hotel that afternoon in Barcelona, we did not know about his announcement but had received several emails and messages from loved ones worried about the fact that we had just arrived there. I must say that when I first saw one of the headlines in my email, I did feel a little panic but I also knew that I did not need to get too upset without knowing all of the facts. After prayer and some research, we knew that staying was the most logical plan for us at that time. We trust God for those answers and never felt that he was telling us, at any time, not to travel there or continue our journey.

We started out in Barcelona and stayed there for two nights. We enjoyed the city and went to a couple of museums. We also enjoyed a bus tour of the city with no Americans on the bus that second day. At the hotel our last night we met a young couple from England on the hotel rooftop. We enjoyed the beautiful weather and view of the city. Little did we know that those two days in Barcelona would be the only days that would include our own plans. God had other plans for us. We already had reservations to leave Barcelona by train that Saturday morning and made our way to a beach area on the west coast of France so my husband could enjoy some surfing. When we arrived in Lacanau, France we found out, by messages from the young English couple, that they could not go in the streets or even leave the hotel in Barcelona. Police were making everyone go back inside if they saw anyone out on the streets. This is one of the many and obvious places we saw God working in our journey. We left Barcelona and got into France just in time for Barcelona to close their borders.

After we got settled in our rental we went out for a meal and found a little restaurant where we met some local surfers. They let us know that at midnight that night France ordered that only necessary services/shops could stay open, like groceries, pharmacies, and doctors. We woke up each morning praying for guidance from God to let us know when needed to leave. That morning we left our rental to walk on the beach and saw people everywhere. Even though restaurants and shops were closed people were out enjoying life at the beach. It was a beautiful sunny day.

Because of the closings, surf shops were also closed. We went back to our rental and decided to do some organizing of our packed clothes and other things. While doing this my husband slid the closet door open and guess what was in there? A wetsuit, just his size. We were not sure about a surfboard so I decided to contact our renter and ask him if he knew anyone that would be willing to rent a board. He replied that he was a surfer and that my husband was more than welcome to use his board. See how God not only cares about our safety and protection but he also wants us to be happy. He provided what we needed and more than we could have ever imagined during this time.

Because of the shutdown, we could not enjoy the museums and sites we had planned to see on this trip so that afternoon we strived to contact our airline to change our return trip home to an earlier flight. I logged onto my account with the airline and they had canceled our trip home with no notice, not even an email. I sent a message to them online, which was their choice of communication during all of the hype. I received an email saying it would be 8-10 days before we would hear from them. We immediately prayed for guidance on this but felt a sense of peace despite what we had just seen online. We did not expect an answer right away but knew that when it was his time, we would know what to do. The next morning, we woke up and I started looking for flights from Paris. We could not go or fly back out of Barcelona, as planned. We found a good price on tickets, so we decided to go ahead and buy the tickets.

We went for a walk after we bought the tickets and I was once again reminded of God's goodness and the fact that he protects us every step of the way. I found rocks with crosses on them as solid reminders that I could see and hold. It was his way of letting us know that we could trust his path for us on this trip. We never felt threatened by the virus or our situation. Our preacher sent this message to us after learning about some of the things we had already experienced God doing for us. "Remember two things: he is always with you (the rocks remind you of that) and do not be afraid (even of death-the cross reminds us of that)."

It is amazing what God can do during times that seem uncertain. Our blessings did not end on the coast. The transportation lines in France were starting to get canceled. Once again God got us out of the small town just in time. We also obtained an early train to Paris. It was a good thing that we arrived in Paris early that day because something else would happen to test our faith. We got off of the train and walked straight to our hotel, which I had reserved the night before. When we arrived at the hotel there was a sign on the door stating that the government forced all hotels to close. As we stood there with our luggage in the street, we felt lost. We started walking down the small streets and saw very few people. We walked around a corner and saw another hotel. We saw people inside and the doors were open so we walked in. I asked the person who worked there if they had any rooms for the next two nights. He stated that he was sorry but that he was actually waiting for his last guests to leave, who were in the lobby, and that he had to close once they left. We walked back out into the street and had that small moment of fear that we might be sleeping on the streets that night. All of a sudden, a French man came around the corner and asked us if we were ok. My husband told him that we were not sure what to do because all of the hotels were closing. He spoke very good English and said, "Find a policeman, they will help you." My husband thanked him, and the man smiled and went on his way down the sidewalk. We walked toward the direction that the man had gone and found a fountain where we decided to sit and figure out our next step. We did not see the man again, he just



disappeared. We both know he was sent as a messenger from God.

Before our trip, I had a strong urge to buy a sim card for my iPhone so that I could use the hot spot if needed for work. I have never bought or used one overseas before. Little did I know that I would be using it next to find us a place to stay in Paris. Trust those intuitions when you feel him nudging you. As we sat on the fountain in this big city there were not many people around and a homeless man was sitting near us reading a book. Empty buses were constantly coming and going in this small square. I turned on the hot spot on my phone so that I could get on my Airbnb account. I found places that were only two blocks away from us and messaged the owners to make sure they could rent the rooms to us right away. I received messages from two of the three immediately. We decided on one of the places and the owner let me know that someone would call me with directions on how to get into her place. I had not used the phone number with the sim card because it was a French number but thankfully it worked when the person called me. My battery was low on my phone and here is a place where God also showed his sense of humor despite the stressful situation. We arrived at the address the owner gave me for the apartment. The person who would give me directions called and gave me a code to get into the outside door of the building AND then a different code to get into a second entrance. We would take an elevator up to the 5th floor where we had to find a lockbox behind a door and then type in another code to get a key out that would open another door in that hallway. Inside that room, we had to find another lockbox (with another code) that would give us the key to our apartment, which was up another flight of stairs. Four different codes later we couldn't help but laugh once we got into the cute little apartment with a great view of the city and Eiffel Tower.

We stayed there for two nights. Outside of the building, there was a large group of policemen watching the streets since there were restrictions for locals. After we got settled in our rental we went outside. My husband asked one of the policemen for directions to the market/grocery store. He told us how to get there and saluted my husband with a smile when we left. They stayed outside our building day and night, which made us feel safe. That is what the messenger was telling us earlier that day when we did not know where to go.

Sometimes things do not go as planned. Europe was closing all around us yet God guided us in uncertain situations. He is always there whether we recognize it or not. We could also feel the prayers of loved ones back home. We had good food, comfortable beds and rest, good exercise, rare views of empty cities, great weather and reminders everywhere of his love for us during this trip. We also came home healthy and happy!

During this crisis, we cannot fear to live the life God gave us. Are we fearful and hiding because of the fear of sickness or death? Only God knows the plan for each of our lives. It is not for us to know or understand. I am not saying to go out and be "unsocially distant" but we cannot let fear take over our faith, joy, and trust in God. What does his plan for your life look like during this time? Ask him. Prayer can heal. You can find joy in the midst of all of this. God is committed to taking what we perceive as bad and using it for good. Trust Him. His way is the only way to follow during these uncertain times. We have proof! (Psalm 91: 1-4)

Natalie Lindsey is an online Art History professor. She enjoys traveling, photography, and the outdoors. She attends Arbor Dale Presbyterian Church.



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By Dave Ramsey

Do we still owe?

Dear Dave,

Should you still pay debts that are in collections, even if they have been dropped from your credit report? The one in question is from 2011, and I assume it isn't showing on the credit report anymore because it's nine years old. Sam



Dear Sam,

There are two good reasons to go back and deal with this debt. One, even if it's off your credit report, you may still legally owe the money. Even if the statute of limitations has run its course, things like this have a habit of popping up and causing problems at the worst possible times. About the time you decide to buy a home, this is liable to raise its head again and mess things up. So, the fact that something doesn't appear on a credit report doesn't mean you're not legally liable, or that they won't bother you about it later.

The second thing to think about is a simple matter of fact—you owe the money. Regardless of what the legal system or credit report says, you morally owe the money. I'd contact the creditor and begin negotiations to settle the debt. You might be able to reach an agreement where they'd accept less than the original amount owed. Regardless, get any type of settlement offer in writing. That way, you're truly cleaning up your life and getting rid of any financial skeletons in your closet! —Dave

The simple thing is the right thing

Dear Dave,

I recently found out my former employer never stopped contributing to my health savings account (HSA). Apparently, this has been going on for about nine months, and they just sent me a form to sign so they can get the overpayment back. The amount totals a little over \$1,000, so should I sign the papers or is there another way to handle this? Ellie

Dear Ellie,

You know, if I were as incompetent as your former employer, I'd be too embarrassed to ask for the money back. But hey, the point is it's not your money. Sign the forms and let them take the money out. Keep an eye on your HSA balance, though, and make sure they take out the only amount they overpaid—not one penny more or less.

Keep it simple, Ellie. You didn't earn this money, and it wasn't expected or agreed upon. It was a mistake, so just do the right thing. Control the scenario and stay on top of this situation until everything is resolved correctly. —Dave

Protecting your assets

Dear Dave,

We live in Colorado, and we need some advice on protecting our assets. My wife is a teacher, and I'm a nurse. We make around \$180,000 a year combined, and we're set to pay off our home next month. We also have two teenagers who are both driving, so we were wondering about the best way to protect everything if one of them has an accident and we get sued, or something else tragic happens. Spencer

Dear Spencer,

With your income and the stage you're in when it comes to wealth building, I think it's time to add an umbrella policy. This is a liability policy, and you could

probably buy an extra million in liability coverage for around \$250 a year. It attaches to the liability policy that's already part of your homeowners and car insurance.

With a couple of teenage drivers in the house, it might run a little more than \$250, but I wouldn't think it would be much more if any. It would just add an extra million to the mix, just in case, someone decided they were going to come after you because of a bad situation.

As you continue building wealth later as if you get into real estate and start buying rental properties, make sure you put those in a limited liability company (LLC). You're not there quite yet, but it's always a good idea to plan ahead and do whatever you can to keep the size of the target on your back relatively small. —Dave

Control your own destiny

Dear Dave,

I have a pension plan that will pay me 80 percent of my top three highest years' income. Should I continue to invest 15 percent towards retirement? I will top out at \$79,000 yearly, and I plan on retiring in 28 years. Jordan

Dear Jordan,

You should always put 15 percent of your income into retirement once you reach Baby Step 4. I would never count on a pension as my only retirement income because the truth is many pension funds are very poorly managed.

You'll probably get the pension when the time comes. I'm not predicting it will go broke or anything like that, but there's no way I would leave the financial state of my retirement in other people's hands. That's exactly what you're doing when your plan is to count on a pension or Social Security. With Roth IRAs, 401(k)s and so forth, you're building wealth that you control.

You have to control the controllable, Jordan. There are plenty of things in our lives we have no control over whatsoever, but you have to take charge of the stuff you can control in order to win. Building wealth is one of those things! —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.

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The Resurrection

By John McCoury
Roan Mountain, Tennessee



"Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said." Matthew 28:5-6 The fact of Jesus' resurrection is the climax of redemptive history and the essential basis of the Christian faith. Without the Resurrection, our Christian faith would just be a lot of wishful thinking, no better than human philosophies and speculative religions. Our Savior's resurrection is truly of great importance in Christianity, so great that His being or not being the Messiah stands or falls with it. From its very early accounts, Scripture has contained the message of resurrection hope. Death has never been the end for the believer, but simply a gateway to eternal life in Heaven. Abraham was ready to sacrifice his only son Isaac because in faith "he considered that God is able to raise men from the dead" (Heb. 11:19). The Lord assured Daniel that believers "will awake ... to everlasting life" (Dan. 12:2). The Resurrection was the focal point of Christ's teaching to the disciples about His sufferings and death: "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again" (Mark 8:31). It is therefore completely understandable that Matthew and the other three Gospel writers all included a historical account of Jesus' resurrection in their narratives. Paul knew that without the Resurrection our salvation could not have been possible. He was also convinced that the truth of the Resurrection must be believed or else salvation cannot be received: "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved" (Rom. 10:9). It's no wonder that Paul, the other apostles, and every leader in the early church continually proclaimed Christ's resurrection as the culmination of His ministry. Those men were so captivated by the significance of the Resurrection that they could not help but preach it.

And that should be our attitude today. Thank God for the truth of John 1:1-25, which gives us the hope of resurrection in Jesus' own words. In 1 Corinthians 15, we have a living Lord (1-19). Jesus is alive, and the gospel message is true! Witnesses who saw Him have passed along their testimony to us. When you trust Him, you receive resurrection life, eternal life (John 5:24); death can hold you no more. We have a living hope (20-49). Jesus Christ will come again, and the dead in Christ will be raised. We will have glorified bodies like Christ's body (1 John 3:1-3). Keep in mind that resurrection is not reconstruction. God does not reassemble the original body that has turned to dust. Like flowers and fruit from the planted seed, the glorified body is related to the "planted" body but different from it. We have a living dynamic (50-58). We have no reason to give up because Jesus has conquered sin and death! If you believe in the resurrection and return of Jesus, verse 58 will characterize your life. The best is yet to come, so let us give Him our best now.

Do you want and need proof of Christ Resurrection? The Bible recorded fourteen appearing's of CHRIST after his Resurrection. We find there are no less than fourteen recorded appearing's of Christ before Paul wrote to the Church of Corinth, and fifteen if we include Christ's manifestation to John in the Isle of Patmos. The fourteen appearing's are as follows; 1. To Mary Magdalene (John 20:14; Mark 16:9). 2. To the other women (Matt. 28:9). 3. To Peter (1 Cor. 15:5; Luke 24:34). 4. To the two disciples on their way to Emmaus (Mark 16:12,13; Luke 24:13-32). 5. The day He appeared to the disciples, in the absence of Thomas (John 20:19-24). 6. To the disciples when Thomas was present (John 20:24-29). 7. To Galilee, at the sea of Tiberias, to Peter, John, Thomas, James, Nathanael, and two others (John 21:1-14). 8. To the disciples on a mount in Galilee (Matt. 28:16). 9. To more than five hundred brethren at once (1 Cor. 15:6). 10. To James the apostle (1 Cor. 15:7). 11. To all the apostles assembled together (1 Cor. 15:7). 12. To all the apostles at His ascension (Luke 24:50,51; Acts 1:9,10). 13. To Stephen, when he was being stoned to death (Acts 7:56). 14. To Paul (1 Cor. 15:8; Acts 9:3-5; 22:6-10). Such a mass of evidence attesting any given fact would be accepted as proof positive as to its validity in any court of justice. Phil 4:23

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

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God Is in Control!!!

By Christy Young
Mitchell County



Wow! How assuring to hear that help is on the way in times of disaster or distress? It's a sense of security, safety, and comfort to know that help will soon be arriving. These past few weeks have been difficult times for our country, churches, and families. We are facing times in this country that we have never faced before and are overwhelmed with emotions. As I have begun to pray and ask for God's guidance and comfort, He has revealed himself over and over. Reassuring me that He is still on the throne and in complete control. God is always good! As we travel through this life, it is often easy to focus on the trials we are faced with. But God often reminds me that our blessings way exceeds any hardship that we will ever face. Hebrews 4:16 says, "Let us, therefore, come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace in the time of need." The door to the throne is always WIDE open to us, God's children. We can come anytime; we don't need an appointment. Wow, that means that we can walk straight to the throne of grace when we need help. We have a direct line to the Father! I have realized that I am weak, and I am in such need of God's strength in both the good times and bad. But it is so great to know that in our time of despair that we serve a God that is always faithful, compassionate, and able to calm our storms. I don't know what the future will bring, but I do know with complete confidence that I serve a God that will hold my hand to the end. God promised that he will never leave us nor forsake us. The trials that we are facing in this country does not take God by surprise. If we as Christians will open our hearts and stay grounded in God's word, seek His presence; and dwell in the goodness of God we will overcome and become stronger Christians. So, no matter what storm, hardship, or trial that we may be facing... Our God is always near. Find your strength and refuge in HIM and believe in faith that God is in control! In the words of Stonewall Jackson "My religious beliefs teach me to feel as safe in battle as in a bed. God has fixed the time of my death. I do not concern myself with that, but to always be ready whenever it may overcome me. That is the way all men should live, and all men would be equally brave."

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.



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T	A	B	L	E		A	R	E	A		R	O	L	L
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Sudoku Solution

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



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Young Writers Corner

The Day I Heard Mamaw Sing

By Hannah Hensley
Erving, Tennessee



Sunday, we had the privilege to participate in an early birthday surprise and celebration for my great-Mamaw Atlas. This wasn't just any birthday celebration, but this was her ninetieth birthday. All her life, there have been four things that Mamaw has held on a pedestal and honored with her whole life, those things are home, family, church and most importantly our Lord. So, what better way to honor and celebrate her than to have her children and family surprise her and go to church with her? Her children and spouses, my brother and I piled into those old church pews of the little white church house that sits on the hill. When Mamaw saw us, she was shocked. We told her for her birthday, we wanted to come to worship Jesus with her. She cried. She took a tissue and wiped her tears. I looked at her and I winked, and I smiled. She smiled back. She gazed at her sons and daughters. They're all married with children and grandchildren. They're all very successful in their careers and trades. They're all happy. They all love Momma and each other. They all love Jesus, just like Mamaw. Sunday morning, I studied Mamaw. I saw her eyes beaming with joy, but I also noticed her humbleness. I saw her happy and it made me happy. I heard her prayers and her amens during the sermon. I saw Mamaw worship Jesus.

When the sermon had ended the preacher asked if anyone had something on their heart that they would like to share. Of course, Mamaw was one of those who spoke up, "This has been my worst winter yet. I've had every sickness out there; I've been down in my back and I know it's been that devil trying to keep from coming and worshipping God in here. But my God is mightier than the devil and I prayed this week that He would give me the strength to be here and He answered my prayers. And my children came and surprised me for my ninetieth birthday. But it's a good thing that not all my family came, or we wouldn't have enough room in this church." She laughed and then through her tears she said, "What a God I serve." Her voice began to crack, "He is so, so good to me. Thank you, Jesus." Everybody said "amen".

Other people spoke up and talked about how much they admired Mamaw.

"She's a good mother"

"She's raised, beautiful children."

"O what a wonderful woman is Atlas"

"She's been a wonderful example to me."

"She loves her Lord."

When thinking about Sunday, I've come to realize that I have so many wonderful memories of Mamaw, but what will always stick in my mind more than anything, is seeing Mamaw's love for Jesus. I noticed it Sunday and I thought about all the other times I've noticed it. For instance, one late summer day. I was at Mamaw Sharrol's, to help around the house and to help cook our Friday evening meal, and Mamaw Sharrol asked me...

"Hannah, could you go over and help Mama with some beans that she's trying to can? She's got a pinched nerve in her leg and she is laid up."

"Sure thing," I said

I made my way to Mamaw's little house. When I arrived, I walked up the steps and took notice of the sign nailed by the door and I read aloud to myself...

"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

I had seen that sign many times. After all, it had been there for as long as I could remember, and I was 19 at the time. But it still comforted me to read it every time I passed it.

I entered the house and found Mamaw lying on the couch, propped up on pillows. She was watching the birds out her window. On the floor was a large bag full of green beans, waiting to be strung, broke, washed and canned.

"Hello there Hannah." She said as she rose from the couch.

"How are you Mamaw?"

"Not too good, but I've been worse. Here's the beans. I'll get us some knives and bowls and then we'll start stringing them." She said with a sigh

"You lie down. I'll get 'em Mamaw."

"No, no I'm just fine. You want some diet soda or some diet tea? I don't know where they came from, I guess one of them kids brought them for me. Want something to eat? I'll cook you something. Or I have some oatmeal cr me pies or peanut butter crackers."

"No, Mamaw I'm good. Mamaw Sharrol just fed me lunch."

She came back to the living room with the bowls and knives. I scooted my chair next to her rocker. Then we began to string and break the beans together. We had almost a bushel to prepare, so we turned the TV on trying to help the time to pass. We watched the news, but just long enough to become to disgusted with it and then we turned it off. We turned on the radio and listen to a sermon, but then there was something said that evoked conversation, so off went the radio and the talking began. We talked about family and friends, her childhood, Papaw Charlie and we talked about the old overgrown tobacco field in front of the house. After what seemed like forever, we had finished the bag full of beans. I carried the bowls to the kitchen, and we dropped the beans in the sink to wash them and to pick out any bad spots. Mamaw got the water bath started and washed the rings and lids. After I had washed the beans, she brought a clean jar over and held it, while I filled it full of beans and a little salt. I wiped the top of the jar clean, placed the lid on and screwed on the ring. Mamaw placed it in the water bath.

"Are you still hurting Mamaw? Why don't you go lie down? I can do this."

"I'm hurting some, but I'll help you. I'll be fine." She said and gave me a little pat.

We continued with our canning and then Mamaw began singing softly to herself...

What a friend we have in Jesus

continued on page 44

The Rest of the Story:

It was never a dull day around Clint, you never knew what to expect. I have never seen pigs with as much of a “sugar high” as those poor pigs had. They had cleaned up the entire 5 gallons of scum and just laid down. With Clint, you had to be very specific in the instructions, and I must admit that I did not always do that to perfection. The surprising thing was that Clint had actually gotten in the pen with the pigs and poured the five gallons in their trough. I was not there, but knowing pigs the way I do, I am sure that they were all over him trying to get to the molasses scum. I don’t recall any dire tales of him being attacked or almost eaten alive, but I would not have been surprised if a few tales had derived from the feeding frenzy that I am sure took place!

Rest in peace, my friend.
Farmer Doug

Funny Farm

Dear friends,
When you’re me it’s hard to decide which story to share next with 50,000 of my closest friends @ . Oftentimes people are perplexed as to why I am willing to relay tales of my incompetence month after month. I tell them that I am a proof-positive that there is a merciful God Who looks after the fools of this world...and I am chief among them @ .

The Farmer’s Apprentice

It was early October 2010, and time for the Family Fun Festival at Harrell Hill Farms. This annual harvest celebration is truly a wonderful event highlighted by Gospel music, face-painting for children, hayrides, excellent BBQ pork, and other goodies, and the making of old-timey sorghum molasses. If you’ve never attended this country festival you should make plans to come this year on Saturday, October 4th! Anyway, back to the story.

When I came to Harrell Hill Farms in the Spring of 2010, A.D. “Daddy D” Harrell kind of adopted me as somewhat of a “project.” Day-to-day I was “in the custody” of Farmer Doug, as you know, but Daddy D. occasionally stepped-in when to provide me some special lessons. This was to be such a day as he pulled up to the barn and honked the horn of his Chevy pick-up truck. As always, I went running to see what was on his mind.

“Get in, I wanna show you something,” he said with a wry smile. I was usually tentative when summoned this way but knew I was not to question his commands. I climbed into the passenger seat having no idea what would come next.

We meandered up Byrd Road, weaving slightly from left to right (Daddy D’s eyesight wasn’t what it once was!) until we arrived at Farmer Doug and Barbara’s farmhouse and parked in the driveway. “Come on,” was my only instruction, and I went.

Daddy D. carried an old, oil-stained brown bag that appeared heavy in one hand. As we approached the front porch he began digging in the bag, first tossing me a couple of worm-riddled “sheep’s nose” apples (I think that’s what he called them), then he handed me some sticks and dried leaves, and finally unveiled a rusty contraption of some sort. I confess, I quickly identified the first three contents but couldn’t imagine what we would do with the ancient, rusty, medieval torture device. Soon I would know.

Setting The Steel Trap

Please understand, Daddy D’s hands were pretty gnarly... I don’t mind telling you the man didn’t have a single straight digit. I can only imagine how his hands had become so – Ummm, weathered would be a nice term but they were a mess. I once remember him threading his boots with a pair of pliers because his fingers couldn’t do it! At any rate, he said “I’m going to tell you what to do, but you have to follow my instructions. I would do this myself, but my fingers can’t manipulate the trap like they used to. Now, don’t do anything until I tell you.” Always the eager learner, I agreed to the challenge.

“Now look,” he began, “we’ve got a groundhog under the porch here and it’s digging tunnels all the way under the house. We’re going to set this trap to try and get rid of it.” By this time, I am getting pretty excited, just think – “Farmer Clint The Trapper” @ . It just had a certain ring to it, don’t you think?

Another thing you have to know about Daddy D, he was fun and mischievous much of the time I spent with him, BUT...he was VERY SERIOUS when teaching me things which might be considered dangerous... “Clint, don’t ever go into the woods with a chainsaw by yourself, be sure you have a partner!” ... or, “Son, you’ve gotta watch where you’re going with that tractor and hay rake, you’re running people off the road down there!” ... “Always check to make sure the power is off on the fence before you climb over!” The warnings were endless.

Daddy D was a long-time educator and was about to crank up his teaching voice. I’m not sure exactly what he planned to say but I have intimate recall of his next comment...to paraphrase, “DANG IT, BOY, YOU’RE GOING TO KILL YOURSELF!” (Oops, I think I made him mad) @ .

You see, in my mind, I already had graduated to “Farmer Clint the Trapper” and had the jaws of that steel monster wide open. As I went to put it on the ground it snapped with the force of a 500 lb. gator, narrowly missing my right hand. And I thought to myself, “Oh yeah, Daddy D said ‘you have to follow my instructions.’ Guess I failed that test.”

I wiped my brow and looked him in the eye as Daddy D “dressed me down” for a little while longer – a verbal whuppin’ I’d earned; then we went about the business of resetting the trap. He, with his very bent fingers actually did the “setting”;



I was allowed only to sprinkle a few leaves and twigs in the vicinity. Daddy D put those sheep’s head apples nearby as bait. “That’ll get the job done,” he said. And he winked at me – you know, that ‘wink’ we get from a parent which actually means, ‘it’s okay now, I still love you, let’s move on.’

Back At The Barn

While I was learning to be a groundhog trapper, Farmer Doug and Larry were busy boiling the juice from sorghum cane. This is a very tedious process which requires continuous skimming to remove the various impurities and proteins which rise to the surface. It forms greenish foam – similar to the slime used in Ghost Busters – and it must be scooped into buckets for disposal. Anyway, there were a couple of 5-gallon buckets of what I call “molasses scum” beside the pan.

“Hey, Farmer Clint, why don’t you take some of that up to the pigs? They will be your friends for life,” Farmer Doug laughed. Now that was rather funny since you may remember that I had some rather unpleasant encounters with these aggressive piggies earlier in my stay on the farm.

Obediently, dutifully, I grabbed a bucket of scum and walked to my truck. After having nearly chopped off my hand with a groundhog trap-thingamabob, I was “into” following directions to the letter. So, I left a 5-gallon bucket full of molasses drippings just inside the piggy fence. I looked forward to a new, improved relationship with the hogs after this little gift.

Too Much Of A Good Thing?

It has been said that too much of a good thing can be a bad thing. Apparently, that is true of molasses and piggies.

The next morning, as we enjoyed Doug’s patented buckwheat pancakes with molasses mixed with butter, it started:

Doug: “Hey, Clint...Ummm, did you give molasses to the pigs?”
Me: “Yeah, and they REALLY liked ‘em.”
Doug: “Well thanks for that. I wonder, how much did you give ‘em?”
Me: “Just one of the 5-gallon buckets full.”
Doug: “Oh, a WHOLE 5-gallon bucket full?”
Me: “Yeah, but it was a couple of inches from the top ‘cause the rest spilled out into the truck bed.”

Doug: “Hmmm,” – now that crooked, wily, half-cocked smile overtaking his face.

Me: “Now what? You tell me to give the pigs some molasses, I give the pigs molasses. Didn’t you want me to give them molasses?”

Doug: “Yes, I did. I was thinking more like a cupful in their evening feed. But you gave them 5 gallons, right?”

Me: “Yes I did. Are they okay?”

Doug: “Hmmm, not sure yet. When I drove by all 5 of them were lying on their backs with their feet straight up in the air.”

Me: “Dead, are the pig’s dead?”

Doug: “Naw, they aren’t dead. Not sure if they will be or not since I’ve never given 5 pigs a 5-gallon bucket of molasses.”

Me: “Damn it, Doug, I’m so sorry. I thought you meant...oh never mind @ .”

Doug: “Once again, it’s my fault, Clint. I forget that you’re still new to the farm; I need to communicate better; to let you know exactly what I’m saying.”

You must know that by now I’m feeling pretty much like the village idiot. I’d disappointed Daddy D by nearly severing my arm; now I may have killed Doug’s pigs. What next?

Doug: “There’s one thing about it, Pollard.”
Me: “Yeah, what’s that?”

Doug: “If they don’t die beforehand, that will be some mighty sweet-tasting BBQ next fall!”

I received that message...my second “wink” of the day. (And those pigs lived until the next October @).

Still humbled in the hills,
Farmer Clint



Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.
Isaiah 26:20

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Mysteries of the Bible

The Mystery of God is Jesus Christ

By Alan Griffin

A mystery in the Bible is something that at one time was hidden from view. A lot of times it was hidden in plain sight. The Old Testament promised a Messiah and at the beginning of Jesus's ministry, the Israelites were looking for a conquer. Someone who would free them from Roman rule.



When Jesus came into His own, they dismissed Him as a troublemaker and felt He threatened their authority, so they had Him put to death. Instead, Christ came to save that which was lost. He came not as a conquering general, but the sacrificial Lamb of God. He came, "So that we may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that we may know the mystery God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Colossians 2:2-3 NIV

It has always been God's plan that all of mankind should be heirs or partakers in God's kingdom. The Kingdom of Heaven was first offered to the lost sheep of Israel, and when they refused to listen, the Kingdom was set aside for a while and the Gospel of Jesus Christ was shared with the rest of mankind. We are now at the end of the church era and it will not be too many years from now that the news of the Kingdom will be preached just as John the Baptist did two thousand years ago. This mystery is given to those of us who believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. While Jesus walked this earth, He was God and man at the same time. "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power." Colossians 2:9-10 NKJV

Everything you see and hear Jesus Christ created. He is the glue that holds the universe together. Right now, He is in control of the all. When He puts everything under His subjection, He will return the all and all back to God the Father. "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist." Colossians 1:15-17 NKJV Can you just imagine the Creator of all things coming to earth and taking on a mortal body to be sacrificed on a tree for us? He paid the ultimate price so that our sins will be forgiven. He gave up everything so that we might regain a personal relationship with Him. How sad it is for us to ignore the gift of salvation. How wonderful it was that He paid such a price and offers it to us for free.

Now Godliness is restored to mankind. "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among all peoples, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory." Timothy 3:16 NKJV

The Mystery of the Church

The New Testament Church is the bride of Christ and one day there is going to be "the marriage supper of the Lamb." There, somewhere up in the sky, will be a wedding ceremony where the bride (the church), and Jesus Christ (the Groom) will marry. The fact is marriage here on earth was based on the marriage between Jesus and the church. He gave us this ceremony as an example for us to follow, knowing that one day we will be "the bride of Christ." The New Testament was written in ancient Greek. "Ecclesia" the church. It means "called out" a body of people called out by the power of God through the Holy Spirit to share with the wounded world the good news of Jesus Christ. "And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the pre-eminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell." Colossians 1:17-19 NKJV People that believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God believe, through faith, that Jesus Christ was born of a virgin, crucified as a living sacrifice so that our sins are forgiven, three days later was resurrected from the dead, and now sits at the right side of our Heavenly Father waiting for His enemies to become His footstool.

Many people confuse the building where people worship with the church. The church is made up of people who love the Lord and seek to serve Him. "For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building." 1 Corinthians 3:9 NASB and a person who is a member of God's building is empowered by the Holy Spirit. Our body is the temple of God. "Having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, in Whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit." Ephesians 2:21-22 It is the cornerstone that the builders did not allow, and we are the living stones joined to make a spiritual home. When our membership is completed the Body of Christ will be removed from this earth. "You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." 1 Peter 2:5 NASB Everyone has their own service to God. We are a living, breathing organism whose members work towards God's plan. We love everyone and always try to do what's right. We never think about ourselves, and we are always putting the needs of others first. Each of us has a specific service that we perform for our Heavenly Father. This service is revealed to us through our relationship with Jesus Christ.

"Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body; so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many." 1 Corinthians 12:12-14 NASB

The Mystery of Iniquity

Those who choose the life of lawlessness have been around for a long time. The

common ground of today is to lie, cheat, and steal. The way of the world has rejected the way of God and this state of anarchy will continue to get worst until the time of the end. The power of the Holy Spirit of God defends us until the time of our departure. When the Church has left the earth, the Holy Spirit will pull back and all hell will break loose. "And now you know what is holding him back, that he (the Anti - Christ) may be revealed at the proper time. For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth destroy by the splendor of his coming. The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan. He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders serve the lie, and all the ways that wickedness deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved." 2 Thessalonians 2:6-10 NKJV

There will be a time when a man walks upon this earth that will be the Devil incarnate just like Jesus Christ was God incarnate. Satan's Anti-Christ will work powers and wonders upon the people of this earth. Many will be given over to strong delusion and will follow the Anti-Christ to destruction. Even the elect will be fooled, and all the earth would be destroyed if Christ doesn't return to stop it. "For this reason, God sends them a powerful delusion that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness." 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12 NKJV Those of us who will receive the truth that light has come into the world, and Jesus Christ is the Son of God, will be saved. Those who by their own will reject the truth and refuse to walk in the light will become more confused and, in the end, will reject Him. I urge you with all great haste that if you have not accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior get down on your knees and do so now. Please say this prayer with me. Dear heavenly Father, I admit I am a sinner and need your forgiveness; I believe that Jesus Christ died in my place paying the penalty for my sins. I am willing right now to turn from my sin and accept Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. I commit myself to you and ask you to send the Holy Spirit into my life, to fill me and take control, and to help me become the type of person You want me to be. Thank you, Father, for loving me, in Jesus Christ name I pray. Amen.

The Mystery of Christ Within You

Through the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Spirit of Christ was made available to all mankind. If you can say, "Jesus Christ is Lord", then the Holy Spirit of God resides inside of your heart. He is there waiting to have a relationship with you just like a friend or family member. The only difference is He can't be seen. The Bible tells us, "There are three Persons in the Godhead: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory. They are one nature, the same in Their attributes, in Their will, and in Their purpose." Scofield Bible. He is inside of your heart because of the finished work of Jesus Christ and He is there to help us in our weakness and infirmities. When we simply no longer know how to pray, the Holy Spirit will cry out to God on our behalf. "And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you." Romans 8:10-11 NKJV

Each believer is a partaker of divine nature. "The mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." Colossians 1:26-27 NKJV We read in Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." So, it is very important that we do not say in our heart, "Who will ascend heaven?" because we bring down Christ from above through our lack of faith. The instant we believe there is no condemnation to those of us who are in Christ Jesus. We are freed from all sinful nature and death because of the "Law of the Spirit." The faith we receive through Bible study and prayer gives us God's unmerited righteousness. Because of our faith in Christ, we stand before God just as if we had never sinned. We are no longer under the "law of sin" and "the law of death." Our deliverance from sin has been paid for by the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

Our lifestyle determines the position of our hearts. Those of us who follow worldly lust such as "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life," are against the mind of God. Those of us who are indwelt in the Holy Spirit search after things of the Spirit and are not subject to the "Laws of God." Whosoever will come unto God, but everyone who comes to God must do it His way. That way is by faith through Bible study and prayer because without faith it is impossible to please God. Jesus said, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life; No man comes unto the Father, but by Me." John 14:6 NKJV

The Mystery of the Rapture of the True Church

The time of the dispensation of grace will soon be over. The opportunity to accept to receive salvation by grace through faith will come to an end when the true church is raptured up to heaven. After the church has left the Kingdom of Heaven will be offered as a way of salvation. This dispensation removes the opportunity to receive the free gift that Christ paid for our sins. The Kingdom of Heaven is spelled out in Matthew's in the sermon on the mount. There will be echoed throughout the earth, "Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." During the tribulation period, millions will turn to Christ and millions more will die for their faith. "For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him." Hebrews 2:2-3 NKJV

"Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the

continued on page 17

trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." 1 Corinthians 15:51-53 NKJV The very next thing on God's timeline is the removal of the true church from the earth. There is not one prophecy that needs to be fulfilled before the second greatest event on earth occurs. Only our Heavenly Father knows the date and time when Jesus Christ will meet us in the air and snatch us away. We could be waiting for you to surrender your life to Christ. We may be just a few decisions away. We just don't know for sure. We don't have to wonder what is required to qualify us for the greatest journey in the history of the universe.

All of us who refuse to obey God's word and surrender our hearts to God would be better off if we were born in the deepest, darkest jungle on earth, never hearing the gospel, because those of us who hear and refuse to submit to His will are condemned already. God is a righteous judge, and we will be judged by the light we have received and the opportunities we have had. "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." John 3:18-19 NKJV When we hear and refuse to obey, we are rejecting God and calling Him a liar. "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him – the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day."

The Word of God is what brings the good news of salvation. It is what the Holy Spirit uses to convict us of our sins. The Bible and the power within it produce the new birth. Through God's Holy Word we develop our service and ministry to others. Through daily Bible study and prayer, we grow in faith and we agree to the terms of our forgiveness. We boldly walk with confidence that we are servants of Jesus Christ and sons of God. Won't you stop this moment and reflect on your life and see what you are missing without a personal relationship with God. Time is running out. The church age is coming to an end and the mystery of the rapture of the true church will soon take place!

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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For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. John 3:16

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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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Unprecedented Times

By David Burleson
Burke County

We are certainly living in unprecedented times. During my lifetime, I have never known a time when all schools in North Carolina were closed by order of the Governor. I do remember the schools in Avery County being closed for a month due to snow during my senior year, but this is on another level.

Closing schools for at least two weeks due to executive order 117 leaves us with many questions and concerns as a community. Some information about schools in North Carolina was provided on March 14 by the Governor's office and the Department of Public Instruction. Here are some issues and information to consider:

1. Class Time – the requirement for NC Public Schools is to have a minimum of 1,025 instructional hours. At this time, New Dimensions would have 1,060 instructional hours which would take into account the half days we have in the calendar, the two days we missed for inclement weather, the projected two weeks we will be closed and the full 6-day spring break that is scheduled. Thankfully, our extended school day has placed us in a good position unless the mandated closure is extended.
2. Online Learning – plans are in place to provide opportunities for online learning for our students. We realize that this is not a perfect solution for all our students, but we will do the best we can. The primary objective will be to keep students actively engaged academically the best we can. Plans are being made to provide paper copies for students with no internet access. Also, for those that have access to Spectrum, families can get free internet access while school is closed. Work sent home must be practice exercises to help sustain academic achievement. At no time should home assignments be graded from a punitive approach and must only be used to help foster academic support. The staff at New Dimensions is using a variety of online platforms to reach students and their families.
3. Student Contact – The New Dimensions Faculty and Staff is making sure every student/parent is contacted personally each day. To assist with this and online learning, students have been allowed to check out a school Chromebook to use at home.
4. Field Trips and Athletics – Until April 6, all field trips and athletics have been canceled or postponed. We are working with our travel agent to reschedule our middle school Washington trip. Grade levels are also attempting to reschedule field trips.
5. Our custodians are doing a tremendous job cleaning and disinfecting our school. They have worked tirelessly since we first received word of the coronavirus.

It is important to understand that we all play a role in reducing the likelihood of a coronavirus outbreak in our school community. We encourage everyone to practice good habits, including:

- Wash your hands regularly, especially after using the restroom and before preparing or consuming food. Wash for 20 seconds, using soap and water.
- Avoid coughing or sneezing into your hands or in the air. Always try to cough or sneeze into a tissue, and then throw the tissue away. If you don't have a tissue, cough/sneeze into your arm.
- As much as you can, avoid touching your eyes, mouth, and nose.
- If children are feeling sick, please keep them home from school. Allow them some time to feel better so that they do not risk infecting others.

All North Carolinians can better prepare for COVID-19 by getting up-to-date information directly from reliable sources like NCDHHS and the CDC. The COVID-19 outbreak has been accompanied by a global flood of misinformation from unreliable sources. Be thoughtful about what you read or hear about the virus and make sure you are separating rumor from fact before you act.

For more information on COVID-19, please visit the CDC's website at [cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus). North Carolina resources can be found on the Division of Public Health website at [ncdhhs.gov/coronavirus](https://www.ncdhhs.gov/coronavirus). If you have questions or concerns, call the COVID-19 Helpline toll free at 1-866-462-3821. To submit questions online, go to www.ncpoisoncontrol.org and select "chat."

The New Dimensions staff have been phenomenal throughout this unparalleled time in history. With less than a day's notice, online lesson plans were developed, learning packets were produced, plans for technology distribution were made and a caring communication was made to each student. When our NDS family needed them the most, our staff was willing to do all that was asked of them.

New Dimensions will continue to communicate with our school community in the days and weeks to come. As always, the safety of our students, staff, and families remains our top priority. We will act out of an abundance of caution to protect everyone's health and wellbeing. We hope that you will never hesitate to contact the school when you have a question or problem concerning your child. If there is anything else that we can do, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Again, thank you for your spirit of cooperation and your concern for our students. We continue to pray for those impacted by the Coronavirus and for our entire community.

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

Blessed [be] the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 1 Peter 1:3

No Regrets - "Chariots of Fire"

By Dean Honeycutt
Mitchell County

As I write this article, we are in the middle of the Coronavirus Pandemic. It is Thursday, March 19, 2020, and all schools, restaurants, and events are shut down. We are still gathering at Snow Hill in faith trusting the Lord. Our numbers are down but people are still coming at their discretion and some of them are the most vulnerable to the disease. As of right now, we do not have a reported case of Covid-19 near us. The closest case is in Watauga county.

My faith has never been tested in this way before. I never dreamed I would be making decisions to consider canceling church services because of a virus. I never thought I would not be shaking hands with people I love and care for. We are social people created for relationships and social distancing is very difficult to practice. My heart breaks for people who cannot go see their loved ones in our nursing homes. I heard of a man who went to the nursing home every day to feed his wife and left at night but is now separated from her. Another dear friend whose daughter was on a cruise ship headed for Italy was having trouble finding a place to port. Many people on the ship were getting sick. Oh, how this father and mother long for their daughter.

Matthew 24:7-8 has really hit home during this time of sorrow and suffering. "7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. 8 All these are the beginning of sorrows." A pestilence is a disease and Jesus told us to expect things like this, however, we really do not think about this that much until suffering hits home. We are as Jesus told us experiencing the birth pains before the Great Tribulation. According to scripture Covid-19 is just a drop in the bucket to what is ahead of us. Famines, wars, disease, and earthquakes will get worse as we near the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

I hope and pray by the time you are reading this article Covid-19 has subsided and we have experienced the grace and mercy of God. But whatever happens and wherever you find yourself in life we must remain faithful and trust God. These recent events are a test for the church and God's people. The Church is not immune to suffering. The early church experienced great suffering for the cause of Christ, and through her faithfulness and prayer experienced great growth during times of adversity. Many founding churches in America were established as Christians fled religious persecution and suffering.

As the church we need to look up because our "redemption draws near," praise the Lord. Jesus arose from the dead praise the Lord. "My hope is built on nothing less Than Jesus' blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly trust in Jesus' Name. When darkness seems to hide His lovely face, I rest on His unchanging grace. In every high and stormy gale, my anchor holds within the veil. On Christ the solid Rock I stand; all other ground is sinking sand; All other ground is sinking sand." Edward Mote

Folks may we be found faithful and may our light shine the brightest in dark days. May our eyes be open to the glory of heaven and Her King. In 2 Kings chapter six Elisha is in a town called Dothan. He and his servant have been staying there. It is a small town surrounded by hills. The king of Syria is at war with Israel and every time they try an attack on Israel their plans are foiled because Elisha warns the king of Israel what the king of Syria is planning. God tells Elisha where the Syrian army is camped that they are preparing an ambush against Israel. The king of Syria is furious that he could not ambush the Israeli army and he believes one of his own men is a traitor. But one of his servants tells the king it is not one of us, but it is Elisha the prophet who is telling the king of Israel your plans. So, during the night the army of Syria surrounds Dothan in hopes of killing Elisha. Elisha's servant wakes up and sees they are surrounded by the Syrian army and is scared to death and he tells Elisha. Elisha says "do not be afraid because they that be with us are more than they that be with them" praise the Lord. At that moment Elisha prayed and asked God to open the eyes of his young servant. The young man's eyes were opened, and he saw the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha. Praise the Lord God's army was there to protect God's people.

I pray that God would open our eyes and let us see God's divine hand of protection and deliverance. Church God is present. He is with us, and He will help us. Jesus told us we would go through hard times but will never forsake us. My dear friends remember "they that be with us are more than they that be with them."

God bless you in His Great love.

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.



Is God the Great Provider?

By Christy Lowman
Burke County

Are there times in your life that you wonder will God truly provide for you in a time of need?

We're going to have a look at another animal that God provided and continues to provide for.

Sparrows are mentioned in the Bible. There are many types of sparrows, but we are going to take a look at the House Sparrow because they are very common and you more than likely have them around your house. I'm sure you have seen them before because they like people!

The house sparrow was brought to Brooklyn, New York in 1851 from Europe. They can be found all over North America except in upper Canada and Alaska. House sparrows live wherever there are people, you will not find them anywhere else (except for the group of house sparrows that live in the Central Asian Steppes who are more cautious around people). House sparrows are a small fat bird with a short tail along with a big head. These sparrows grow up to 16cm long and normally live up to 3 years except for a female that lived almost 16 yrs. in Texas.

This widespread songbird makes a shrill monotone chirp. They are very noisy despite their tiny size. The house sparrow hops when not flying instead of walking on the ground and they love to take frequent dirt baths.

House sparrows have a large variety of things they like to eat: grain, seed, livestock feed, ragweed, crabgrass, buckwheat, people food, especially pizza! Except for the house sparrows that live in Central Asia, house sparrows have special genes that allow them to be able to eat starchy grains, that is why they love people food so much. In the summer they enjoy snacking on insects. The adult birds will also catch insects and feed them to their young in these months. Close to dark, you can see them hanging around lights hunting for bugs. They will also jump on insects in the air or behind mowers.

House sparrows build their nests out of rough dry vegetation, also grass, weeds, twigs, and trash. On the inside, they are lined with soft feathers or other soft materials such as paper or string. They will often reuse their nests and sometimes make small bird communities by building their nests beside each other. House sparrows will also make homes in birdhouses meant for other birds such as bluebirds. They will build nests in holes and cracks in houses and buildings.

These birds can have anywhere between 1-8 eggs at a time and up to 4 times a year. Their small eggs are white, bluish-white, or greenish-white with gray or brown spots. It takes 10-14 days for the babies to hatch. Both parents will take turns taking care of their young until they leave the nest in approximately 2 weeks.

In Bible days, there were a lot of sparrows in Israel. So many that you could buy them very cheaply. But God loved them so much that He made sure they had what they need to survive. He provides them with food, water, and shelter. *"Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care."* Matthew 10:29 NIV

We are even more cared for by God. If He is willing to care so much for a small bird that is common and doesn't mean much to people, how much do you think He cares for us? *"Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows."* Luke 12:6-7 NIV.

We are made in God's image, He loves us so much that He knows our every move, and even how many hairs we have on our head. Do you know how many hairs you have? There's no way! See if you can count them! I have tried but have lost count so many times!

God is omnipresent, meaning that He is everywhere at once. He can be with you when you are sick and at the same time be with a mother who is giving birth, who lives on the other side of the world!

God provided for the Israelites when they wandered in the desert for forty years. Did you know that their shoes and clothes never wore out? He sent them more than enough food to eat from heaven every day called manna and provided them water to drink. Do you think God loved them more than us? Or that He no longer cares for His people? Of course not! *"So don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?'"* 32 *These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs."* Matthew 6:31-32 NLT

There are many more examples and stories in the Bible of how God provided for his children over and over again. The biggest thing we can do is trust in God. Have faith that He will do the exact same thing for us because He loves us too. Do not be scared of what is going on around us and, in the world, today. If you are troubled, scared or need God to provide something for you, pray and ask God for it. *"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened."* Matthew 7:7-8.

Did you know that God tells us not to be afraid in the Bible 365 times? That is one time for each day of the year. God wants you to know every day that He is in control and He will take care of you regardless of what is going on.

I want you to go outside when you wake up in the morning and watch for spar-



rows and other birds. What you will notice is this. The first thing birds do when they get up is singing to God, they are happy and thankful for each new morning, and don't have a care in the world. They are thankful for another day. You will also see them finding more than enough food to eat and water to drink. Last but not least, you will see many places for them to find shelter in the storm. There is a lot we can learn from birds.

So next time when you feel scared or wonder if God will provide for you remember that God said, *"so don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows"* Matthew 10:31 NIV He loves all the sparrows and provides for them, and He loves all of us even more.

Dear Lord, I pray that you will be with each one of us. Help us cast all of our fears on You and trust that you will take care of what is worrying us. I pray that each one of us will have faith that You are our great provider who performs miracles, raises people from the dead, can feed and take care of the common sparrow, and who even knows everything about us down to the number of hairs on our head! I pray that we will solely rely on You for our every need! In Jesus's name, I pray, Amen!

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them." Matthew 6:25-34 NIV Biography

https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/House_Sparrow/overview
<https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/house-sparrow>
<https://www.christianpost.com/news/rick-warren-why-god-encourages-christians-to-fear-not-365-times-in-the-bible.htm>
<https://celebrateurbanbirds.org/learn/birds/focal-species/house-sparrow-panama/>
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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 HCL. 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.

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Anyone Thirsty?
By Tracy Jessup

"Jesus said to her, 'Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.'" — John 4:13-14

After Haiti's 2010 earthquake, a man survived for 14 days in the rubble thanks in part to a two-gallon jug of water nearby.

On May 10, 2013, rescuers pulled out a female survivor 16 days after a factory collapsed in Bangladesh. In the last two days, she had nothing but water and drank only a limited quantity to save it.

In May 2019, a woman survived after being lost in the Hawaiian jungle for 17 days. The 35-year-old physical therapist and yoga instructor hiked for seven days until she reached a waterfall, living on insects, wild berries, and stream water.

According to Randall Packer, an expert on the body's water balance at George Washington University, "Under extreme conditions, an adult can lose 1 to 1.5 liters of sweat per hour. If that loss is not replaced by drinking, the total volume of body fluid can fall quickly and, most dangerously, blood volume drops" (Maggie Fox, "Pulled from rubble after 16 days: Water secret to survival," nbcnews.com, 5/10/13).

Water is the best fluid for survival. And water is at the heart of today's text. The disciples have gone into the city to buy food, and Jesus, tired from his journey, stop to rest at Jacob's well, where he encounters a Samaritan woman who comes to the well to draw water. In contrast to the social norms of the day, Jesus initiates a conversation with her — a conversation about water. Unlike Nicodemus who comes to Jesus at night, this conversation takes place in the middle of the day for anyone to see.

Jesus is thirsty, so he asks the woman for a drink. She is confused and responds, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans)" (John 4:9). At this point in the story, Jesus turns the conversation to the living water gushing up to eternal life that he will offer her and for which she will ask.

Jesus is offering more than water. He is offering himself. Later in John's Gospel on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus cries out, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, 'Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water.' Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive..." (John 7:37-39). This living water is mentioned yet again in Revelation as Jesus is pictured as the Lamb at the center of the throne - a shepherd guiding believers to springs of the water of life (7:17). Then in Revelation 21:6, Jesus, the Alpha, and Omega, issues a proclamation reminiscent of the one extended to the Samaritan woman at the well: "To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life."

Prayer: Lord, help us to drink deeply of the living water of your Spirit, and may we point others, who are thirsty for your grace, to your eternal spring.

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.



April Showers
By Bruce Cannon
Mitchell County

April Showers Bring May Flowers (Boy, I am looking forward to Spring!)

What a glorious time is Spring! Flowers are blooming. Temperatures rising. Gardens will be planted, and these beautiful mountains turn green. Won't that be a blessed time!

My wife reminds me regularly to remember to look at God's creation here in Western North Carolina. I hate to admit that I get so focused on the tasks at hand that the beauty around me gets lost in the details. She will direct my attention to a rock formation, a babbling stream cascading over rocks or to a few deer grazing in a pasture. There is so much aesthetic value in beholding what God has created instead of focusing on the creations of my own mind!

Take time to witness the unfolding of the amazing creativity of our Lord as Spring comes. Remember there is a God behind all of that who could have created a black and white world only. Revelation 4:11 states, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure, they are and were created." He created all of this for His pleasure, but we get to take joy in it also.

And, take heart in the fact that the God who does all of these things can easily help us in our time of need. There are several reasons this is true. First, He is not limited in His understanding. He has all the knowledge. Isaiah writes of the Lord in Chapter 28 saying, "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?" He knows how to help us in our time of need! Second, He is not limited in His power. In that same chapter, Isaiah says, "Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him:" He is our defender, our mighty warrior, our God, and our King. He has never lost a battle and never came close. He will win every battle for us! Lastly, He is for us! He loves us! Going back in the 28th Chapter of Isaiah, he writes, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." When we need Him to do so, He will carry us in His arm as He would a lamb. He will carry us in His bosom—safe from all harm and danger.

The next time you are driving around these mountains pause to reflect the love and greatness of the God we serve. After all, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." (Psalm 24:1) And, "The heavens declare the glory of God." (Psalm 19:1)

Enjoy Spring. Remember there is a loving God who created it all and whose heart is for us. Remember also the depths of His love for us. That He would give His only begotten Son as the perfect sacrifice for our sins AND that the tomb is empty.

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.



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Nothing Like God's Book

By Dr. Tom Walker
McDowell County



2 Timothy 3:16 says, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

The greatest book in the whole world, past, present, and future is the Word of God. It has much to say about itself. There are three significant words we use in reference to the Scriptures. Those words are inspired, inerrant, and infallible.

The word "inspired" comes from the Greek New Testament word which simply means "God-breathed." Thus, the Scriptures are the very breath and the exhaling of divine truth to holy men of God as they penned down God's mind to men.

The word "inerrant" means the Bible is not a book of error. It is accurate in all it speaks about to men; it is fully trustworthy. It is not a book of science but what it says concerning science is all right and true. It is not merely a book of philosophy, but what it says about life is spot-on. If the Bible were plagued with errors, how could we believe it? I believe the Bible to be the Word of God without any taint of error. If someone said there are errors in the Bible, they have failed to interpret the Bible accurately.

The word "infallible" means not capable of erring, to be entirely exempt to make a mistake, not liable to deceive or betray a confidence. You might argue that men wrote the Bible, but they did so "moved" by the Holy Ghost. 2 Peter 1:21 declares, "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." That word "moved" is a nautical term. It can refer to the sails of a ship being moved in the direction which the wind blows. God's Spirit so moved these men to the point they wrote without error.

On what basis do we say there is nothing like God's Book the Bible?

Its Principles Are Unchanging

Psalms 119:89 tells us, "Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven." Times are changing around us, and not necessarily for the better, but for the worse. Though that be true we have a book whose principles are unchanging, fixed and invariable. The Bible stands with principles that will never be outdated or irrelevant.

Its Reliability Cannot Be Rivalled

When you pick up a book and read from it, you do not know if all the information contained therein is all trustworthy and reliable. There may be an error in stating a number of statistics or a host of other areas, but that is not the case when you look toward the Scriptures. If you read it, you do not have to determine what part of it is trustworthy and what is not trustworthy. You can trust all of it or you cannot trust any of it. It is one way or the other with no middle ground.

It is Invaluable to Educate The Mind

Today in our educational system, there has been a movement to eliminate the Bible from our public education. William Lyon Phelps of Yale, one of America's highly esteemed professors, said, "I thoroughly believe in a university education for both men and women, but I believe a knowledge of the Bible without a college education is more valuable than a college course without the Bible."

I think I should repeat what Phelps said, "A knowledge of the Bible without a college education is more valuable than a college course without the Bible." What a good statement from a public educator! He obviously realizes the importance of the Bible in enlightening the mind.

It Adds Sweetness to the Soul

Psalms 119:103 informs us of, "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" The people who are sweet in spirit are those who spend much time with God's truth. To neglect or refuse God's truth through His written word is to invite bitterness and sourness into one's life.

Someone asked George Mueller, "How many times have you read the Bible through?" Mueller responded by saying, "I have read it through sixty-six times and now I am going through it the sixty-seventh time. It gets more interesting and sweeter every time I read it."

If you want to be sweet in spirit and soul as the senior years come, spend a great deal of time with God's Word when you are young.

It Is Miraculous in Its Conception

The Bible is a collection of sixty-six books, written by forty different authors, on three different continents, in three different languages, over a period of 1500 years. Yet, all sixty-six books have a marvelous unity. Forty men have never written with more unity and agreement than these men. The Bible has proven itself to be from God scientifically, historically, and archeologically. It is truly a miracle! No other book with forty authors could produce the unity the Bible possesses throughout its pages.

It Is A Most Effective Tool Against The Devil

The Psalmist said, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psalm 119:111). Satan endeavors to lead us into sin, while the Lord seeks to draw us away from sin.

In Ephesians 6, the Bible is likened to a sword. A sword is an offensive weapon. When it comes to Satan, we must go on the offensive and not just the defensive. Ephesians 6:17 says, "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

If you recall, when the Lord Jesus was being tempted in the wilderness (Matthew 4), he responded to Satan's temptations by using the Word of God. He used the statement "It is written" and quoted Scripture each time Satan sought to make Jesus sin. That is a pattern for us to follow. We should quote the Bible to Satan when he tempts you and me to sin against God, repelling him with it.

It Is Not Just A Book- It Is A Mirror

It shows us as we really are. Since men are born sinners (Rom. 5:12), it reveals us as we really are before salvation. Before our new birth, according to Ephesians 2, we were dead, depraved, detoured, disobedient, and doomed. "Children of

wrath" is what the lost man is referred to before a salvation experience.

You may think you are real good looking, but all it takes is to look into a mirror and the truth comes out. A standard mirror does not lie; it will reveal you as you actually look.

How frightful is the reflected image of the unregenerate man as he sees himself in God's mirror, the Bible! The Bible is the only Book present which depicts accurately the true condition of mankind in his lostness: Isaiah 1:5-6 declares: "Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment."

It Changes Lives Like No Other Book

2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." There is a transformation takes place when a person repents of sin and trusts the Lord Jesus Christ that nothing else can cause but the Bible.

Through the Scriptures, people become new creatures or new creations. It is because when we are born again or born of God, we become partakers of a new nature. Peter puts things this way in 2 Peter 1:4, "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." The verb "escaped" is an aorist verb, which means it points to a particular time in the past. We escaped the corruption that is in the world by God giving us a new nature, new desires, and new impulses that would change us completely.

The Bible says, "Old things are passed away." Again, the verb tense for "passed away" is an aorist verb. Things began to change in the past when we were saved by God's marvelous grace.

It also says, "All things become new." The verb for "are become" is in the perfect tense, which means at that pointed time in the past, when we were saved, all things became new and results from that experience continue in the future with ongoing results.

There is nothing like God's book divine. Cherish your Bible.

Tom Walker is President of Foothills Baptist Bible College and Pastor of Zion Hill Baptist Church in Marion, NC.

Spiritual Health

continued from page 45

counselor and laser therapist/trainer and she works with me in our office. I bring this up because the Bible tells us that "the two shall become one" yet many relationships may be living together but are very separated. And this shows up in their health as well. So, to summarize all this rambling, at the end of the day what can you do?

- Have Faith, remember that God is in control. You still have to do your part with wise preparation, but please don't panic and cause others to panic.
- Take control of your health. Don't wait for a crisis to get your attention. Having a stronger immune system will enable quicker recovery when you do get sick. If you don't know where to start to contact a health care practitioner who can guide you.
- Follow the CDC guidelines, for now, to prevent further spreading of disease.
- Work on your relationship with your spouse, a good and loving relationship will help just about everything be better. If needed I recommend you find a faith-based marriage counselor.
- Below is a list of clinically tested natural remedies that we recommend to our patients and I and my family use personally. They DO NOT claim to cure anything, they simply help make the body stronger so it can do what God intended our bodies to do... heal themselves!

Probiotics: Help give your immune system a boost and inhibit the growth of harmful gut bacteria. It can help promote the production of natural antibodies in the body.

Echinacea: Comes in liquid or capsule. I prefer liquid, follow directions on the bottle or 1 dropper in the mouth 3x per day.

Biocidin: Potent broad-spectrum botanical compound designed to support the entire immune system 1-5 drops in the mouth 3x per day

Vitamin D3 + K2: Vitamin D is important to many functions in the body including immunity. 5000 units per day

Lauricidin: Supports a healthy and hearty immune system. Helps your body maintain a healthy balance of bacteria and yeast that helps your body create a strong defense against pathogens in your body. Follow directions on the bottle.

Vitamin C: Everyone knows about vitamin C, take as much as you can tolerate throughout the day in intervals. For prevention, the dose should be between 2,000-3,000mg daily. If you get loose stools, your taking too much.

Argentyn 23, silver hydrosol: Silver has natural anti-viral and anti-microbial properties. This is a professionally formulated liquid that is safe for children and adults and will NOT turn you blue. 1 tablespoon 3x per day for an adult. It also comes in a spray that works great for a sore throat.

Quercetin: Is known for its antioxidant activity in radical scavenging and anti-allergic properties. Stimulates the immune system, antiviral activity inhibits histamine release & decreases inflammation, good for bronchial infection. 500mg 3x a day.

Elderberry: Studies indicate it works as good as Tamiflu

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.

Discipleship & Social Distancing:
When My Small Group Can't Meet

By Brian Upshaw



"How do I disciple our small group when we can't meet?"
That was the question that went through my mind when I received yesterday's news that our church was putting our groups on "hiatus" due to COVID-19. This is the right call since our government leaders have asked us to keep our distance.

Many are saying this is new territory for the church. But is it?
We are not the first generation to have to disciple over a distance. After all, the New Testament epistles were written to churches or church leaders to discipline them even over a long distance.

Just because we cannot be in the same room does not mean our group has to stop. Here are some tips to help you keep leading while your group is on hiatus.

1. Keep caring.
Group leader, you are on the front line of pastoral care in your church. Check-in with group members frequently during the crisis. Ask how they are doing and how you can pray for them. Make sure they have their needs met. Personal touches, even by text message, are priceless in uncertain times.

2. Keep teaching.
People need the encouragement of the Word of God now more than anything else. Your group can still meet for Bible study virtually. Use Google Hangouts, Zoom or another meeting platform to meet at your scheduled time via video.

3. Keep reaching.
Encourage your group members to serve their neighbors. Suggest that they reach out to at-risk or elderly neighbors to see if they can run errands for them. They can also offer to help via their neighborhood's Facebook or Nextdoor groups. Encourage them to use these times to verbally share the gospel as they are meeting needs.

4. Keep praying.
Invite your group to pray together virtually throughout the week using the platforms already mentioned. Host a virtual meetup and pray through the Psalms, interceding for the power of God. You can also pray missionally for your neighbors using an app like Bless Every Home.

5. Finally, keep your group informed.
Group messaging apps like Band or GroupMe enable you to check-in, share prayer requests and give information about what's happening. You could also start a private Facebook group.

Keeping your distance doesn't have to keep you from disciplining. You can leverage technology to stay in each other's lives and stay in the Word!

Brian Upshaw is team leader of the Disciple-Making Team for the BSCNC. He also serves as an adjunct faculty member at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. Prior to coming to North Carolina, Brian served local churches in Georgia, Louisiana and Mississippi.

Getting What You Really Want in Life

By Joyce Meyer



The things we pursue in life have everything to do with our joy and fulfillment. While it's certainly not wrong to desire success, a better paying job, or a higher standard of living, the Bible tells us that seeking after "things" and making them our priority will make us miserable in the end!

Seek is a strong word. It means "to crave, pursue, to make sacrifices to get, to go after with all of your strength and all of your heart."

I encourage you to take a moment and ask yourself, "What am I seeking? What am I spending most of my time talking about? Where do I invest the majority of my energy?"

Romans 14:17 (NIV) says, "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit."

In other words, the Kingdom of God is not about us simply trying to get what we want. Instead, it's about seeking a relationship with God and experiencing true Kingdom benefits. It's about having a greater understanding of His righteousness (our right standing with Him through Jesus Christ), His peace and His joy in our lives. Only then will we find what we are truly looking for.

In the beginning of our relationship with God, it's all about us...and for a while, this is fine. I believe this is where we all start. We come to Him with our list of needs and desires. We bring Him our problems and want Him to fix everything. But eventually, the time comes for us to grow and mature.

I remember coming to a point in my life when I had a lot of "things" but realized I simply wasn't happy. After praying and asking the Lord what was wrong, He spoke to my heart and said, "Joyce, you are too shallow—it's time to go out into the deep."

That was difficult to hear, but I knew exactly what He meant. It was time for me to start living the "deeper life"—to begin seeking God for who He is and not just what He can do for me.

You see, shallow Christians want the fruit, but they are not concerned about the roots. I love Isaiah 37:31. It says, "...Take root below and bear fruit above." Just look at nature. Large trees with thick, full branches have a massive underground root system that spreads both deep and wide. Without this support system, the tree could never weather a storm.

In the same way, we must develop deep spiritual roots before we can truly enjoy the big, full life God has intended for us. This includes cultivating a relationship with the Lord, finding out what He says about us in His Word, and becoming rooted and grounded in His love.

Many times, we come at it the wrong way. We want to have all of the benefits—more privileges, more influence, more "stuff"—before we ever establish our roots. But without a strong foundation in God, these things can actually hurt us more than they can help. And without deep roots, we'll never endure the storms of life. The truth is, the Lord is more concerned about your inner life than your outer life. He knows that when you are spiritually strong on the inside, then you can handle any situation that arises in your life on the outside.

I think sometimes we're afraid that if we stop chasing after all of the "things," we'll never get what we want in life. But the exact opposite is true...

Psalm 37:4 says, "Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart."

As we place our focus on God, we not only begin to experience His righteousness, peace, and joy...but He even causes our desires to be in line with His plan and what's best for our lives.

Years ago, while I was praying (probably for something I wanted), the Lord spoke a life-changing truth to my heart. He said, "Joyce, seek My face and not My hand. If you seek My face, My hand will always be open."

Matthew 6:33 says it this way: "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

I can tell you from experience that when you make God your number-one priority, He not only fills your life with His amazing peace, joy, and satisfaction, but He also gives you the desires of your heart.

Decide today to pursue the One who matters most. Seek God for who He is and make your relationship with Him a priority. As you do, I believe you'll discover what you've been looking for all along.

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.

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Pleasant Hill Baptist Church

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

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



If followers of Jesus Christ are to grow into the likeness of Christ, a deep commitment to grow spiritually and practice spiritual disciplines is essential. I am sharing twelve biblically based Spiritual Disciplines throughout this year's BRCN monthly publications. These "Habits of the Heart" are drawn from Richard Foster's book, Celebration of Discipline. [Note: You can look back at previous publications to catch up. You may also go to the Pleasant Hill Baptist Church website (www.pleasanthillbc.church) to watch a more in-depth presentation of each of these studies]. So far in this series, I have shared about the first three of four "Internal" disciplines: meditation, prayer, and fasting. Today, look with me at the spiritual discipline of "study."

Paul wrote this powerful instruction to young Timothy, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15)

There is, perhaps, no more important or essential spiritual discipline than the study of and intake of God's Word. Nothing can substitute for constant and disciplined Bible study. For us to strengthen ourselves for the daily spiritual battles that we face and for us to bulk up and tone our spiritual muscles—we must seek to hear God speak to us through His Word. And we must practice the daily exercise of studying what God is saying to us. What is so powerful about hearing from God through His Word is that we experience and understand that: (1) God does want to and will communicate with us; (2) we do take in and receive a "pure breath" of truth (e.g., taking in oxygen); and (3) we are set free from our debilitating thoughts and habits.

Unfortunately, a large portion of Christians, for various reasons, neglect daily hearing from God's Word. Why? Perhaps the answer is found in two things—busyness and laziness. John Grezlak says, "Reading the Bible is work and studying it even more so. Yet it is a labor with the sweetest of payment." Take a look at a 2019 graph from Barna and the American Bible Society which defines and depicts five different segments of Bible engagement which measure Frequency (how often people interact with the Bible), Centrality (how the Bible shapes their choices) and Impact (how the Bible transforms their relationships).

N.T. Wright asks some probing questions concerning the Bible, "How do we understand the narrative, the real-life story of God in the New Testament? How should we view the story which reached its ultimate climax in Jesus of Nazareth and which then flows out, in the power of the Spirit, to transform the world with his love and justice? How do we let the poetry of the early Christians, whether it's the short and dense poems we find in Paul or the complex imagery of the book of Revelation, transform our imaginations so we can start to think in new ways about God and the world, about the powers that still threaten darkness and death, and about our role in implementing the victory of Jesus? How do we make the New Testament matter? How do we study the New Testament for all its worth?" The answer is—we study this living Word of God! We study it intending to make it matter in our lives, our churches, and our communities. We study it to hear God speak. We study it to see and understand the character of God. We study it to learn!

There are many different models and techniques that have guided sojourners into and through the powerful words that God has used throughout the centuries to speak and guide His people into right relationship with Him. Study can take on several forms: individual Bible reading, group Bible study, preaching, and/or teaching.

Richard Foster argues that the spiritual discipline of Bible study includes the study of verbal (books and lectures) and nonverbal messages (nature, events, actions, etc.) in God's world. He outlines four steps in acquiring wisdom through study:

- 1. Repetition—a way of channeling the mind in a specific direction, thus ingrain-ing habit of thought.
- 2. Concentration—the second step in a study that requires that the person focus or concentrate on what is being studied.
- 3. Comprehension—the third step leads to insight and discernment. It "provides the basis for a true perception of reality," argues Foster.
- 4. Reflection—as we understand and comprehend what we are reading and study-ing, the final step involves reflection. Reflection brings us to see things from God's perspective. We see both God for who He really is and ourselves for who we really are. That, of course, is God's ultimate design and desire for communi-cating with His creation—so that we will: (1) know Him (He is Almighty God, Creator, Sovereign and powerful in all things; He is Love, Grace, Mercy; He is redemptive, forgiving; He is long-suffering and patience, etc.); and (2) know

who we are (His wonderful creation built for an eternal relationship; made in His image—so we have the capacity to love, forgive, create, and be in an intimate relationship with Him and others). If we haven't completed these four steps, we haven't really done the discipline of study. It is time to sink into God's Word and meet our glorious Savior in and through every page of scripture. God is serious about meeting you there—so if you are serious about meeting Him there, then get ready and prepare yourselves for Bible study. It doesn't just happen! Satan will try every trick to keep you from going deeper into knowing and experiencing God in Christ. But when we practice the spiritual discipline of the study of God's Word, we can join Grezlak in proclaiming that it is a "labor of the sweetest payment."

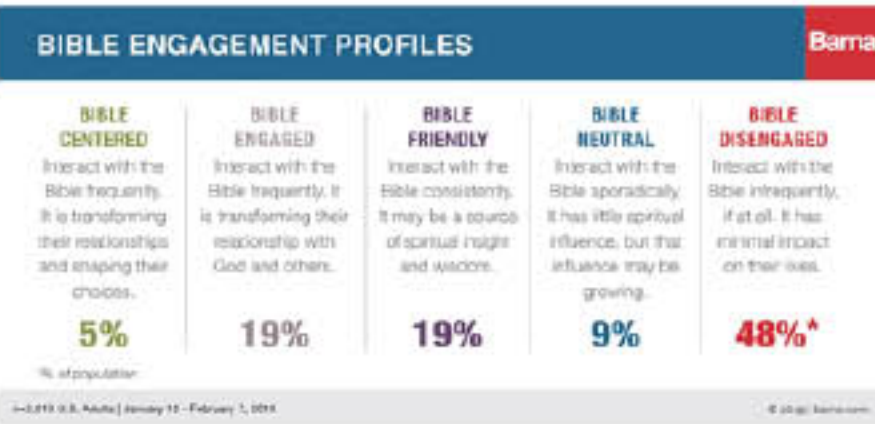
Dr. Jack R. Hodges, Jr. is the Senior Pastor at Pleasant Hill Baptist Church in Morganton, Burke County. He has served as a pastor, a biblical counselor and a International Mission Board missionary.

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Marlene's Meditations

The Template of Trust

By Marlene Houk
Burke County



The green plastic template teased me with its hidden meanings as I stared at the instructor. Its blank look and meaningless holes glared back at me, daring me to discover the mysteries of shaped holes and an unknown process. How could this inexpensive guide give me the power to make an A in my computer programming class?

I found a place for that valuable rectangle, secured inside my notebook and available at a moment's notice. And I did get that A. The programming template I used decades ago reminds me that templates prove to be powerful tools to reach upwards towards something greater than our current position.

A template can be a concrete object made of wood, plastic, or metal that produces a practical tool for building projects such as a stencil, building marketable products. They can be a plan, process, or program to help others recognize a brand or product. Many software programs create templates that reduce the time needed to produce sales fliers, memes for social media, and email newsletters. Templates cross the broad spectrum of all layers of society, improving our lives.

My past and current use of templates remind me of the importance of choosing a spiritual template. My friend's Christian counselor advised that she adopt a plan (a template) for coping and even emerging as a stronger Christian when life overwhelms her. His included templates found in the Bible that offer rich resources for handling the unknowns, for making decisions in uncertain times, for focusing on the Lord rather than the worry or fear, and for tracking God.

One of my favorite templates for surviving any crisis is tucked into 2 Chronicles 20:12 which says, "We have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee." A great multitude of enemies was advancing toward the kingdom of Judah, and King Jehoshaphat reacted in fear: a normal reaction, to impending doom. But I love his template (both before and after his crisis) for transforming terror to trust. When he filled in the spaces with his needs, God empowered him to win over his most critical enemy: his own fear.

If you read chapters 19 and 20 of 2 Chronicles, you will see how the king used this powerful spiritual template to emerge victoriously. Through its use, God granted triumph to the king over his enemies. These two chapters reveal the king's spiritual template:

1. He took away the things that prevented him from seeking the Lord. (See 19:3)
2. He prepared his heart to seek the LORD. (See 19:3)
3. He set his spiritual house in order, commanding those under his authority and influence to focus on the LORD in their work. (See 19:6)
4. Finally, the king gathered together the whole country to ask the LORD for help and to seek Him. He led this corporate gathering of prayers and reminded them and himself of God's omnipotent power and might, His incredible ability to help them, and the sanctuary that they created to cry out to Him in time of need. He reminds himself of God's larger template for the nation of Judah. (See 20:4-11)
5. He admits his own insufficiency and commits to keeping his eyes upon the LORD. (See 20:12)
6. He worships. (See 20:18)
7. He appoints singers, specifically to praise the beauty of holiness and to praise the LORD for his mercy. (See 20:21)

And, that's when the LORD moved in power and strength. He made Judah's enemies to turn on each other and kill themselves. King Jehoshaphat and his soldiers didn't fight at all; they simply took the jewels and other treasures.

What is my template in times of trouble? I plan to use the same one that King Jehoshaphat and a host of other Bible heroes used. Filling in the designated spaces from his 7-step template with my unique situation, I rest assured that the Lord will bring victory over my enemies of worry and fear. And then I'll watch as the Lord uses my completed template to unveil the beauty of His holiness!

Marlene Houk is an author and teacher of Bible studies. She may be reached at Bible167@gmail.com To receive helpful insight from the Bible, sign up for her newsletter at <http://www.MarleneHouk.com> or connect with her on other social media.

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First Baptist Church Nebo

Revive Us Again

By Cody Penland
McDowell County

"Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?" — Psalm 85:6

At church, I am one of two tenors in the church choir. I am not sure that I am a natural tenor, but I observed a man in my church named Jamie—one that I hold high regard for and look up to—doing it by himself, and so I felt compelled to sing tenor with him. The Lord is funny that way. As often happens, I nonetheless find myself crooning loudly in the back row, unsure of whether or not I get anywhere close to what the songwriter had in mind. I suppose that it was a couple of Sundays ago when we sang W.P. Mackay's "Revive Us Again." It stirred a short season of deep thought that has culminated in the writing of this article. Our church has been praying for revival, and I believe without a doubt that it is coming. I am not sure about anyone else, as I cannot speak for them, but I am ready for a fire to course through our communities for Jesus! For this to happen, we must be revived; we must get excited and fall in love with Him again.

What I am most happy about, however, is the way that current events have occurred to direct us to this mindset. Much of our congregation—as well as our communities here—are North Carolina basketball fans. As has been seen by Tar Heel faithful all around, the team has been dreadful this year (I am a Duke fan, so this fails to hurt my feelings), and I have not heard much about college basketball this year as a result. Another man in my church, Roger—whom I also hold high regard for and look up to, brought this point to my attention. To paraphrase, Roger (a faithful North Carolina fan) said after church one morning that it's a good thing that the team is not doing well because people can focus more on the things we ought to focus on. I believe he was alluding to Christ and revival, and I agree wholeheartedly with Roger.

In our hustle and bustle world, it is easy to lose sight of what truly matters. We get tied into the political world, the sports world, and every other world that we put before God and therefore idolize. I did this with youth basketball this year, as I worshipped my competitiveness over the true calling of why I decided to coach sports. The Lord, as he often does, uniquely illustrated to me; this time through listening to SonicFlood's "Heart of Worship." Covered by many groups over the years, the song's chorus stays the same: "I'm coming back to the heart of worship, and it's all about you; it's all about you, Jesus. I'm sorry Lord for the thing I've made it when it's all about you; all about you, Jesus."

You see, friend, before we are to be revived, we must center our hearts and minds toward Him, and not the things of this world! When you got saved, all of your focus was on Him. When you were last excited about Jesus, all of your focus was on Him. Remember that.

Back to Mackay's hymn. If you open your hymn book and find that song (or Google it, you know), you will find that every verse is deliberately addressed to Christ. The first two verses start with "We praise thee, O God" and the third starts on "All glory and praise to the Lamb that was slain." THEN, we sing the fourth: "Revive us again—fill each heart with thy love; may each soul be rekindled with fire from above." We must direct our thoughts and efforts to Him, engaged in fervent prayer, and then we must direct our praise to Him before we are to be revived. It is all well and good—and oftentimes necessary—to engage in conversation about the political, economic, and social temperatures of our country, but at the core of it all, the Lord commands your full attention.

My last point is in the scripture I've shared with you. When we look at Psalm 85:1-5, we see the Psalmist first writes on the favor that the Lord has shown to his land, saving them from captivity. Then we see that the Psalmist has recognized that the people (including self) have turned away and he is attempting to act as an intercessor for the people to be revived. Much could be said about our own country, our church that has fallen away and has become lethargic in their walk with Jesus. Have you noticed this? Is the Lord nudging you to be that Psalmist today? We need revival now. Read and sing Mackay's "Revive Us Again." Talk about it constantly in your church and fall in love with Jesus again yourself. Read the Gospel and read about the wonderful things He did. Spend a great deal of your time reflecting on everything that He has done for you and your family. He is a mighty and wonderful God that loves us unconditionally who sent his Son to die for us that we may spend eternity with Him in the Kingdom, and we need to share that with the world that we live in! Brothers and sisters, my prayer for you is that you see the need, and that you fervently pray alongside with me for revival, that a lasting, inconsumable fire for Jesus spreads across our country. Amen.

"Hallelujah, Thine the glory; Hallelujah, Amen! Hallelujah, Thine the glory; Revive us again."

Cody Penland is a Youth Leader at First Baptist Church of Nebo. I have my Bachelor of Science in History from Montreat College ('17), and currently attend Fruitland Baptist Bible College in pursuing a call to Pastoral Ministry. I coach boys' basketball for the McDowell County Recreation Department.



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Glenwood Baptist Church

Something to Think About - "What Does God Want Most?"

By Dennis Love
McDowell County

The Bible says in 1 John 4:16; *"We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in His love. God is love, and all who live in love, live in God, and God lives in them."*

Let me ask you a question. Why did God make us? Most Christians would answer this question by saying that He made us to serve Him. But that's not true! Think about it folks. If God really wanted servants, He could have used His angels, or He could have used any animal on this planet and they would be doing a much better job serving Him than we mere mortals are doing.

Do you recall in Mark 12:29-30 when the scribes asked Jesus what's the first commandment, that He responded by saying; *"The first of all the commandments is, Hear O Israel; the Lord our God is one God. And you shall love the Lord your God with all of your heart, and with all of your soul, and with all of your mind and with all of your strength; this is the first commandment."* So, the first commandment is not for the us to do something for God. The first commandment is for the us to simply LOVE God. He made you and He made me in His own likeness and His own image so that we could have sweet fellowship with Him, and so that we could praise Him for who He is! SO, what does God want most from us? He simply wants us to love Him. Now, if you are truly loving Him, other things are going to be evident in your life. If you are truly loving Him, you will have a desire to serve Him. You will have a desire to be in His house. You will have a desire to pray. You will have a desire to have a quiet time with Him in the mornings. You will have a desire to reach out to others with His love. And you will have a desire to be in His Word.

But the thing that God wants most from you and me today, and every day, is to simply LOVE Him! How about spending some time today and in the days to come meditating on this wonderful thought? It's something for each of us to think about.

What God wants most from each of us is to LOVE Him! Let's spend some time today doing what God wants each of us to do most!

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.

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8



Mountain Community Health Partnership to Open

Dental Clinic in Bakersville Mitchell County

Mountain Community Health Partnership (MCHP) is pleased to announce plans to open a dental clinic in Bakersville with a spring 2020 opening date. Renovations are currently underway in the Bakersville Community Health Center Annex located directly across the street from the health center. Funding from the NC Department of Commerce, the NC Office of Rural Health, The Cannon Foundation, and the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation has made the opening of this dental clinic possible.

Bakersville Dental Clinic will offer comprehensive dental services for patients of all ages, which may include but are not limited to, cleanings, deep cleanings, fillings, extractions, partials, dentures, crowns, bridges, and root canals. The clinic will accept commercial insurance, Medicaid, and NC Health Choice. We also accept patients without dental insurance. MCHP offers a sliding fee scale for patients who qualify.

Dental Director, Dr. Alex Green, is a native of Spruce Pine. He received a BA in Psychology from UNC Asheville, his Doctor of Dental Medicine (DMD) from the ECU School of Dental Medicine and is currently a Master of Public Health student at the UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health. Alex says that "[as] a Mitchell County native, opening this dental clinic is a dream come true. I truly believe MCHP is doing great things for the wellbeing of our community and I am thrilled to be a part of such a wonderful organization. I am very excited to begin seeing patients soon and working with the folks to better their oral and overall health."

The dental clinic will be located at 89 N. Mitchell Avenue, Bakersville. MCHP is currently hiring for all dental clinic positions. Dental clinic contact information and opening date to be determined and announced later.

For more information about Mountain Community Health Partnership, visit our website, (www.mchp.care) or call 828-688-6621.



Alex Greene

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By Caron Cline
Burke County



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.

By Monica Hensley-Kirtz
Mitchell County



Mrs. Monica Henley-Kritz County Coordinator for the National Day of Prayer Associational Prayer Coordinator Monica is a member of Crabtree Chapel Baptist Church, where Jason is the pastor.



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Bits 'n Pieces

We have listed events in Bits 'n Pieces as planned before the Coronavirus Pandemic. Events may be canceled or postponed as of the date of publication. Thank you for your understanding.

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)

Avery County

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

Burke County

Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church Event - The Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church would like to invite EVERYONE to tune into our On-line Live Stream on our YouTube Channel, Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church, each Saturday morning at 11:00 a.m. You will also be able to find the link on our Facebook page, @MorgantonSeventhdayAdventistChurch

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

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

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. (headcount 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

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 judgment.

The National Day of Prayer The 2020 National Day of Prayer in Mitchell County, Thursday, May 7th -Also, Saturday, May 2nd will be a Day of Prayer & Repentance

Shoal Creek Baptist Church. - Easter Sunday, April 12, Sunrise service 7:00 am, followed by fellowship breakfast Worship service 9:00 am. Easter Extravaganza for the kids Sunday, April 5 at 3:00 pm.

Tipton Hill community Foundation (Tipton Hill) - Country Breakfast, the first Saturday each month, 7:30 - 10:00 M, 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 the church office at 828-764-4633 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 Commerical Share Kitchen!

We've realized there's a gap that needs to be filled between the production of local food and their consumption. That's why we started YaYa Village Commerical 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 it 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 and Nancy Watkins at 828-675-5467.

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Too Young, Too Smart,
Too Rich to be an Alcoholic

By Lawrence Traylor
Jacksonville Beach, Fla.

It's like a Jeopardy game show question: "What are the three reasons oftentimes given as to why Christians with a drinking problem cannot get sober?"

What is too Young, as "I'm only () fill in the blank, years old. How can I possibly be an alcoholic, I'm too young?" "Yes, my mother and father drink too much and probably alcoholics but they are in their mid-seventies." "Not me, I'm much too young to be an alcoholic." The undeniable truth is that alcoholism affects both Christian men and women of all ages.

What is too Smart, as "I have an MBA from a very good school and have received excellent grades throughout my entire academic career. I believe only high school and college dropouts can be alcoholics. Not me, I'm much too smart to be an alcoholic.

"Besides, I have a great work history and a promising career." The undeniable truth is intelligence is no more a factor as who may be an alcoholic than the day of the week they were born on.

What is too Rich, as "I don't live outdoors, I didn't spend last night under a bridge. I have an excellent paying job, a home in a nice neighborhood and a BMW in my garage. No. I'm definitely too well off financially to be an alcoholic." The undeniable truth is that money and an individual's wealth play no role as to who may or may not be an alcoholic.

My personal and professional experience in the rehab, recovery and treatment world suggests strongly that it is either one, a combination of all three of these reasons why Christians believe they cannot have a drinking problem.

In my case, it was all three reasons, "the trifecta" as I like to refer to it, as to why I could not possibly be an alcoholic.

I was 38 years old, a college graduate and a successful, small business owner who attended Church each Sunday. How could I possibly be an alcoholic? Besides, I had a lot of friends and especially relatives that spilled more than I drank. I used to say, 'I only had a problem when there was nothing to drink.'

The craving started most weekdays between 2:00p and 3:00 p.m. It was at this time each day that I would start romancing the idea of having a few cold, "Tall Boys" on the drive home. Winter or summer, hot or cold, it made no difference. Stopping each late afternoon at the local convenience store or "packy" as we say in New England and purchasing what I considered my just reward for completing yet another day at work became a ritual.

I had become like Norm on Cheers. How else was I supposed to make my way home through the late afternoon Boston traffic? Besides, I worked hard each day and deserved a few beers on my way home, didn't I?

I had always believed alcoholics were dirty, lived outdoors, and people who drank cheap wine from screw-top bottles.

Arriving at home each day before taking my winter or suit jacket off, I would routinely reach into the fridge for another of my trusted friends, my Buds.

Oftentimes I would proceed to have several additional ice-cold beers in arm's reach while taking a hot bath or sitting in a bubbling jacuzzi.

Just one or two more before supper and I'd have captured once again that elusive beer buzz that I so craved at the end of each day.

I thought I could stop drinking at any time if it became necessary. The simple truth was I was living a lie and had a secret I could not share with anyone. I knew deep down inside I was not able to stop or control my drinking.

I began to worry that it was just a matter of time before I too hit what I had heard referred to as a "bottom" and lost everything. I discovered there are two "bottoms" an alcoholic will experience. There are what are referred to as High bottoms and Low Bottoms.

Examples of an alcohol addict's Low bottom oftentimes includes DUI's, divorce, bankruptcy, job loss, hospitalization, house arrest or jail.

But again, how could I be an alcoholic? I was only 38 years old, a Christian, a college graduate, and owner of a sailboat and a BMW.

It wasn't until a Sunday afternoon after Church in 1992 my wife gave the ultimatum and choice between continuing to drink or losing my marriage and children. I finally surrendered and sought relief. I was desperate and sick and tired of being sick and tired.

It was in taking another Christian's advice and attending twelve-step meetings that allowed me to come to grips with the fact that I had become powerless over my alcohol consumption and that the loss of my life, health and family were truly at risk.

I proceeded to attend ninety meetings in ninety days. In hindsight, this saved my life. The gratitude I have today stems from the fact that I didn't have to lose everything as so many others had before I succumbed, surrendered and acknowledged my alcoholic disease.

Today, with 28 years of continuous sobriety I chuckle to myself and oftentimes cannot help but laugh out loud when I hear another Christian say they are too young, too smart or too rich to be an alcoholic. As now I know better.

Lawrence (Laurie) Traylor lives in Jacksonville Beach, Florida — a member of the recovery community and volunteers his time free of charge in helping addicts and alcoholics, their loved ones and their families locate drug and alcohol assistance resources, (904) 553-1600

O give thanks unto the LORD; for [he is] good: for his mercy [endureth] for ever. Psalms 136:1 - 127:26

What Do You Do in Times Like These?

By Steve Williams
Mitchell County

The Bible tells us in 1 Cor. 9:24 "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain". And then in Philip. 3:14 "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

We are living in uncertain times. Things are looking bleaker as the days go on. People are getting discouraged, facing the fear of not knowing what to do. But Paul tells the Child of God what to do and that is to keep on going or press on. Life is not always a joy ride, many times it is a rough ride. We will face death, loss of health, aging, sickness, loss of jobs, etc... Right now, people are letting themselves be overtaken with fear and anxiety. People are asking questions like these: What am I to do, it feels like my world is falling apart around me? Am I going to get this dreaded Coronavirus? What has happened to my 401K? What in the World is the Lord doing? What am I to do? Is there a secret that I need to know about? I don't know if you would call it a secret it just a fact of life, Paul tells us in these 2 verses that we just need to press on or keep going. You cannot give up when hard times come. Why not you say? When you give up you make the God you say you believe in smaller than you are. How do you press on then you ask? Well, Paul gives us four great truths in these two verses.

1st We must understand there are things we must face in life, and the day that we are living in is one of those things. There's Uncertainty, Fear, Doubt, Anxiety. Paul's describes the Christian life as a race, (they which run 1 Cor 9:24.) The question we need to ask ourselves is Am I Running? Am I In the Race? See life is one hurdle after another, you cross one hurdle then you go to the next until the course is completed. People who stop in life, and never cross their next hurdle will never see what they are missing. Remember you have already crossed others hurdles in life and you can cross this one too.

2nd Paul tells us that there are goals we must set. Paul says: (run that you may obtain. 1 Cor 9:24) What is life without setting goals? It is our goals that help us make it over the hurdles of life. We need to stay focused on the goal or goals we have set. One goal that Christians need to set is not to let fear overcome them. People are charging the grocery store, running to the banks to get their money, gun shops to buy guns and ammo, to shoot the person who is going to come to try and take their hamburger or toilet paper away from them. Christians my Bible says in Joshua 1:9 "Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." Hey God's people need to quit loading up on the things of this world and start stocking up on the things of God. His Presence, His Protection, His Peace, His Power, and His Word. Christians seem to have lost sight of their goal Heaven, and have focused more on this old world that we are going to leave behind.

3rd Paul tells us that there are disciplines that need to be practiced in our lives. Paul says: (I press toward the mark Phil 3:14.) Discipline is one of the most heated terms of our time, it goes right along with patience. But have you ever noticed how many times discipline is part of a winner's life and a faithful Christian's life? Paul was not able to accomplish what he did in life without discipline in his life. Understand if our mind is not disciplined it won't be long till the body is following your mind. If you keep your mind on something long enough it's not very long till you have done it or figure out a way to justify whatever you want to. If you expect to make it in times like these, you are going to have to be disciplined. It's been said, "The undisciplined is a headache to themselves, and a heartache to others, and is unprepared to face, the stern realities of life. Folks that's where we are today, we are living in real-world, not a fantasy world. So, discipline yourself to pray and study God's Word and be more Committed to God instead of to yourself.

4th Paul tells us that there are prizes to be won. Paul says (I press toward the mark for the prize Phil 3:14) It's never a bad thing to remind ourselves of the prize awaiting those who live to please God. I believe Paul often did this so he could keep on going. The Christian prize that awaits them on the other side of this World Heaven. Remember God didn't make us to sit in this world but to come out of this world.

Words of Wisdom: In Times Like These

- Trust in the LORD with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding. 6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Proverbs 3:5-6
- 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
- I can do all things through Christ that strengthen me. Phil 4:13
- Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. Isaiah 41:10

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



Celebrating In The Shire!

By Nancy Malik
Avery County

Avery County, the Shire, is celebrating the most wonderful season of the year, Resurrection Day! As spring, which began in March, really shows itself, we are looking forward to the day of remembrance for what Jesus did for us. Palm Sunday celebrates the wonderful day when Jesus rode a donkey with her foal on the road into Jerusalem. The people laid palms and their robes down on the road to honor Him, The King. It was a tradition at the time for kings to ride into their towns on a donkey! The people of Jerusalem recognized Him and His kingly status! That was Monday morning of Passover Week. The wonderful air of joy, respect, expectations, and hope truly flowed through the city! This was Jesus' last time to come to Jerusalem, and even though He had told His disciples His time had come, the atmosphere of Jesus' triumphal entry was electric! The selection of the Upper Room was where Jesus and His 12 disciples ate their last meal together. Jesus even told the 12 that He would be betrayed and sent Judas to do what He had chosen to do. He asked the 11 to come to the Garden of Gethsemane and pray with Him during the hardest prayer ever written where He bled drops of blood as He prepared to die a horrible death for every sin ever committed by you, me and everyone ever born! After the last meal together, at the Garden, Judas betrayed the Lord for 30 pieces of silver. Jesus was taken to the Pharisees, the Jewish leaders of the time. He was declared guilty of blasphemy and given the death sentence. He was beaten, humiliated and died a horrible death on a cross.

During the time on that cross, He bore every sin ever committed before, during and after His walk on the earth as a human. He did this for you and for me and all peoples of all times! He did die, He did rise again, He did ascend to the right hand of the Father, in heaven and He is coming again! Fifty days after His ascension into a cloud, He sent the Holy Spirit, as tongues of fire, to the disciples and 3000 people in Jerusalem accepted Him as their Lord that day, Pentecost! Dear Avery County, we are loved! Avery County is a safe place in God's eye. The believing people of this county need to reach out to the non-believing. Most of you know this story well, but there are still many here that do not know Him personally. Please reach out to those who haven't made that decision. We are in the season of reflection and recommitment to the one who gave His life for us, so we could live eternally. That is the greatest gift of all! Happy Resurrection Day and may you and your family rejoice for what He did for us. It is good!

Nancy Malik has lived 3 years in Avery County. She is a member of Heaton Christian Church. She has taught creation 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.



President Trump Shook Hands With A Man Who Had Contact With An Infected Person: Three Ways Jesus Responds To Fear

By Jim Denison



President Trump shook hands on February 29 with a man who had direct contact with a person who later tested positive for COVID-19. The White House states that the president had no direct contact with the infected person and has no symptoms. However, Sen. Ted Cruz and Rep. Paul Gosar are under self-quarantine after interaction with the infected person.

In related news, Christ Church Georgetown suspended services last Sunday after its rector, Rev. Thomas Cole, was diagnosed with coronavirus at the hospital Saturday evening. This is the first time the church has closed since a fire in the 1800s. Health officials are asking hundreds of people who had potential contact with Rev. Cole to self-quarantine.

Closer to home for me, the county where I live now apparently has its first case of coronavirus. A man in his thirties traveled to California and is self-quarantined at home with his family while additional testing is done.

The president and the White House coronavirus task force held a press conference yesterday evening in which they announced economic steps intended to assist those who are at financial risk, especially those who cannot afford to miss work. They also announced practical ways Americans can protect themselves and others from the spread of the disease.

Three ways Jesus responds to fear

As the epidemic spreads across the US and the world, fear is spreading as well. This is a new disease to humans (thus the "novel" coronavirus description). As a result, we have no acquired immunity such as we have developed to existing flu strains. There are also no approved vaccines or therapies for coronavirus as there are for flu. And its death rate at present stands at 3.4 percent, compared with far less than 1 percent for those infected by the flu.

Since anyone can get COVID-19, everyone can get COVID-19.

One-way Christianity is different from other religions and worldviews centers in Jesus' redemptive response to fear. Consider three lessons he offers his followers.

One: We should live in the present and trust the future to God.

Jesus taught us, "Do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble" (Matthew 6:34). This day is the only day there is.

Someday there will be a global crisis that seems frightening and unmanageable, but before it accelerates, Jesus will return for us or you or I will go to him. This could be that crisis. That's why "now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2). We are one day closer to eternity than ever before, and we have only today to be ready. So, live in this day and trust tomorrow to the providence of your Father. Two: Worry is fruitless.

Jesus asks us, "Which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? If you then are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest?" (Luke 12:25-26).

Worry provides the sense that we are doing something about our fear, but this is an illusion. Rather than worry about the future, we should prepare by doing what we can do and trust God with what we cannot.

Three: Our Father is Lord of the universe.

He asks: "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore" (Matthew 10:29-31).

The virus is one nine-hundredth the width of a human hair. Our Father measures the universe with the palm of his hand (Isaiah 40:12). He is on the throne of the world. Let's be sure he is on the throne of our hearts today.

How John Newton found God's amazing grace

On this day in 1748, John Newton converted to Christianity during a huge storm at sea. (Due to calendar adjustments in 1752, the date was later reconfigured to March 21.)

Newton was born in 1725, the son of a ship commander. He went to sea at the age of eleven and eventually became the captain of a slave ship.

He had received religious instruction from his godly mother, but she died when he was a child and he gave up any religious convictions. However, during a violent storm, he called out, "Lord, have mercy upon us." He believed that God addressed him through the storm and that his grace had begun to work on his life. He called March 10, 1748, his "great deliverance."

Newton eventually became a disciple of George Whitefield and came to admire John Wesley. He taught himself Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, and surrendered to a call to ministry. He eventually wrote 280 hymns for the church, of which the most famous is "Amazing Grace."

John Newton later moved to pastor a church in London, where he influenced William Wilberforce. Though he lost his sight in his later years, he continued preaching until his death in 1807.

I visited his gravesite several years ago, where I found these words: "John Newton, Clerk, Once an infidel and libertine, a servant of slaves in Africa, was by the rich mercy of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ preserved, restored, pardoned, and appointed to preach the faith he had long labored to destroy."

Jesus used a storm to bring his amazing grace to a lost soul, and through him, to the world.

What fears would you trust to that grace 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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For Such a Time as This

By Dan Qurollo
Burke County

As I write this, the pandemic of Covid-19 has caused mass panic and confusion globally. The stock market has taken a significant hit, causing some to speculate that a recession is inevitable. Schools have been canceled, leaving working parents in a precarious position. Churches have been forced to adjust their services to live stream only. Widespread panic is witnessed across the retail world as people have begun hoarding various supplies, regardless of the legitimate needs of others. What should a time such as this prompt in us today?

A time such as this reminds us of the uncertainty of life. Humans naturally desire that which is certain. When we are experiencing certainty, we often develop a false sense of security in those things that are perceived to produce security. When those things are removed, we are suddenly faced with the reality of a life that is extremely uncertain. Beyond the uncertainty, we are also struck by the reality that these events are beyond our control. While we can take certain preemptive measures, the reality is that much of this lies beyond our control.

A time such as this also reminds us of the necessity of biblical, God-honoring faith. Man's greatest need is to place his trust in Jesus Christ as Savior so that he might have eternal life. The well-known verse John 3:16 states, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." If you have not placed your trust in Jesus Christ, I urge you to do so today. The chances of your getting Covid-19 are slim; the reality that you will stand before God is certain.

Far too many believers have been truly shaken by the events that have transpired over the last few weeks. Fear is a natural response to the loss of an individual's sense of security. This loss of security may come in a variety of ways, including but not limited to, the stock market, provision, and job security. The question for us as believers is in what or in whom do we trust? Consider just some of the many passages that necessitate believers place unwavering confidence in God:

- Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God – Psalm 20:7
- Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. 6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. – Proverbs 3:5-6
- Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. 7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. – Philippians 4:6-7

If one's security is Christ, is it possible for a believer to lose Christ? Romans 8:35-39 teaches no circumstance can enter the life of the believer that will result in his being separated from God and His love. Is it possible for Christ to lose the believer? John 10:27-30 teaches no circumstance can cause Christ to lose the believer. Inasmuch as the believer cannot lose Christ and Christ cannot lose the believer, logically necessitates that a believer whose confidence is correctly placed in Christ has nothing to fear. Fear enters the heart of the believer the moment he takes his eyes off the Lord.

Psalm 46:10 reminds us, "Be still, and know that I am God." In spite of all the uncertainty, He's still God! Rest in Him, even in a time such as this.

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

Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, [and] rivers in the desert. Isaiah 43:19



Love and Unity

by Phillip Greene
Avery County

Over the past few days/weeks I have had a scripture that has echoed through my soul in such a way that I just can't seem to shake it no matter what I try to do...that scripture comes from John 17:20-23.

I feel that this word is truly the heart of our Savior for us in this world...in His words...from His heart...

I ask that you prayerfully consider this today:

"I pray not only for these but also for those who believe in me through their word. May they all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us, so that the world may believe you sent me. I have given them the glory you have given me, so that they may be one as we are one. I am in them and you are in me, so that they may be made completely one, that the world may know you have sent me and have loved them as you have loved me."

It has left me speechless.

I have found myself broken, but so full, completely blown away by what we seem to have missed as the Church today.

Christ, in the final moments of his earthly ministry, prayed for his disciples-and then for those who would hear their message.

He then prayed for unity...that we would all be ONE, unified, joined together for a common cause...that cause? To show the world His glory. Wait for it that HE placed in the US! How have we missed this? How have we as the church missed that Jesus prayer wasn't for this program or that program in the Church...he simply prayed that we would be unified...together...

What does this mean? It means that Christ knew we are stronger as one cohesive unit rather than divided along denominational or party lines...maybe we should truly stop (which shouldn't be too hard given current events) and reflect, repent, and renew your dedication to the one who gave His life for you! Come together and stop arguing over the small things....

Why? Because this unity that Christ prayed for...(the coming together of the Church)...that is what will show the world who Christ is. That God sent him. And ultimately that He loves them as much as He did Jesus. Us. and any who would come.

Because, "God is Love." – 1 John 4:8

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





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YOUR GOVERNMENT PAGES

US House of Representatives NC District 11

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Rep. Mark Meadows (NC-11) released the following statement:



Congressman
Mark Meadows
202-225-6401
www.meadows.house.gov

"It's an honor to be selected by President Trump to serve alongside him and his team. This President and his administration have a long list of incredible victories they've delivered to the country during this first term, with the best yet to come—and I look forward to helping build on that success and staying in the fight for the forgotten men and women of America.

In particular, I want to recognize my friend Mick Mulvaney. Mick is smart, principled, and as tough a fighter you'll find in Washington, D.C. He did a great job leading the President's team through a tremendous period of accomplishment over the last year-plus.

Lastly, I want to thank the people of western North Carolina. Serving you in Congress has been the honor of my life. It may be in a different role, but I'll continue working every day to deliver results for you—and main street Americans all over the country—in the months and years to come."

NC Senate District 47



Sen. Ralph Hise
Ralph.Hise@ncleg.net
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Following the action in February of a three-judge panel that issued an injunction to indefinitely suspend our state's voter ID law, I, in my official capacity as chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Elections, joined Senate President Pro Tempore Phil Berger, House Speaker Tim Moore, and Rep. David Lewis, chairman of the House Select Committee on Elections in filing a motion for an "en banc rehearing," which would have all 15 judges on the Court of Appeals hear the case and vote on whether to permit Constitutionally-required voter ID. The vote to amend our Constitution to require voter ID passed with support from over 55% of North Carolinians voting in the 2018 election.

In our court filing, we outlined the errors, flaws, and lack of legal basis in the decision issued by the three-judge panel against our state's Constitutional requirement for voter ID. The all-Democrat panel ignored binding legal precedent and exculpatory expert testimony and absurdly concluded that it is unconstitutional for the legislature to enact Constitutionally required voter ID legislation until some Republican legislators retire. The all-Democrat panel also bizarrely concluded that a law mandated by the voters and sponsored by an African American Democrat was motivated by racially discriminatory intent against other African Americans.

In 2018, two of the three judges, John Arrowood and Toby Hampson, responded to the People's Alliance PAC 2018 Questionnaire for North Carolina Appellate Division Judicial Candidates. Arrowood and Hampson each stated their intention to vote against the Voter ID amendment on the November 2018 ballot. Obviously, these two judges were not unbiased and should have recused themselves from this case.

Along with Arrowood and Hampson, the third judge on the panel, Allegra Collins, was elected in the 2018 election. These three judges will not be up for reelection until 2026; however, five other seats are on the ballot in the upcoming general election in November.

In addition to filing a motion for the en banc rehearing, we also filed a motion for another Court of Appeals judge, Chris Brook, appointed last year by Gov. Cooper, to be recused from the case. Brook previously worked against a 2013 voter ID when he was employed as a lawyer by the ACLU. Following our motion, Brook did recuse himself, so when the case is reheard it will be before the remaining 14 judges.

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

NC House District 118

Interim Committees are now in full swing – with committee assignments completed by the Speaker, many are traveling to Raleigh to attend. Most recently, Rep. Presnell was here on March 5 for the Joint Transportation Oversight Committee and the Global Engagement Committee. She serves on both of these committees in addition to the House Select Committee on Strategic Transportation Planning and the House Appropriations Committee that will be meeting on March 30. These committees are packed full of information requested by the members and reporting of statistical data required by the various agencies in the state government. These meetings are generally held jointly with House and Senate members participating. There are no votes taken during the Interim meetings.

Voter ID Case twists and turns – A three-judge trial court panel found that the plaintiffs in *Holmes v. Moore* were unlikely to succeed on their challenge to North Carolina's voter ID law, but an "error-ridden decision that took a one-sided look at the record" from an appeals court panel reversed the ruling.

"This liberal, activist appeals court panel was wrong to reverse a bipartisan trial court's ruling and tread on the will of voters in this state. The Court of Appeals must grant the request for a full hearing on voter ID given the people's voice in the democratic process is at stake in this litigation," stated Speaker Moore.

North Carolina's voter ID law was passed pursuant to a constitutional amendment approved by the voters, was vetoed by Governor Roy Cooper, but enacted by the state legislature in SB 824 Implementation of Voter ID Constitutional Amendment. North Carolina is the last state in the Southeast not to have some form of voter ID.

Sanctuary Cities – A court ruling has put President Trump in the position of being able to withhold funds from sanctuary cities. North Carolina sheriffs refusing to cooperate with federal detainers can put the public at risk and threaten the risk of federal funds.

Coronavirus Update- The NC Department of Health and Human Services along with the NC Emergency Management are working closely with the CDC, local health departments, and health care providers across the state to quickly identify and respond to any potential isolated cases that might occur in the state and prepare North Carolinians to be ready in the event of more widespread, COVID-19 transmissions.



Rep. Michele D. Presnell
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YOUR GOVERNMENT PAGES

NC House District 86



Rep. Hugh Blackwell
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The stock market's recent, dramatic drop has caused concerns among investors generally and all whose financial well-being may be linked to how the economy is doing. Those concerned certainly include retired North Carolinians who have pension funds in the North Carolina retirement system. The North Carolina retirement system is currently the ninth-largest public pension fund in the country. It was recently valued at around one hundred billion dollars. The North Carolina system provides retirement benefits for more than 950,000 North Carolinians, including current and retired state employees, teachers, and local government employees. Recently, North Carolina Treasurer Dale Folwell released a statement indicating that the stock market's activities will have no effect on pension payments. Folwell noted that North Carolina's state pension plans are down much less than the overall stock market because of his conservative and responsible management as well as under previous state treasurers going back as far as fifty years.

Treasurer Folwell also cites a report from Moody's Investors Service, a leading, national credit rating agency. Moody's found that North Carolina's retirement system is the best-funded in the nation when considering its "Adjusted Net Pension Liability". In addition, The Pew Charitable Trust, nonprofit and nonpartisan research and policy organization, conducted "stress tests" on state pension plans. According to Pew, a "stress test" evaluates the potential impact of investment risk and contribution risk on both pension balance sheets and government budgets. "Investment risk" is risk associated with ups and downs in the value of the pension funds' investments. "Contribution risk" is the risk associated with whether those contributing to the pension funds will continue to do so at levels needed to maintain the promised payouts. The Pew Charitable Trust found that North Carolina's "stress test" results come out especially well, due to "strong funding policy and funding levels."

NC Senate District 46



Sen. Warren Daniel
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For many people in our country, Easter has become a lot like Christmas - gourmet dinner with family; extended time away from work; special seasonal outfits; many smiles for the children; Happy Easter greetings and maybe even a vacation. As we celebrate Easter, many Christians will attend 'Good Friday' services. But what is "good" about a day on which an innocent man was mocked, tried, and then beaten until unrecognizable? What is "happy" about Easter where the man, who many thought would bring hope to Israel, suffered violent and cruel beatings only to be nailed to a cross to die by asphyxiation? What was happy or good about a mother and friends having to watch their innocent loved one die a terrible death, worse than anything ever conceived by man?

The truth is, if the Easter story ended on that Friday with Jesus' death on a cross, there would be nothing good or happy about it. Thankfully it didn't. If it had, Jesus' death would merely be another example of human persecution, injustice, cruelty, and barbarism. I can only imagine that all hope was lost for Mary, the mother of Jesus, and His friends and disciples. It is still difficult today for me to look back on history and understand why this amount of suffering was part of God's plan. Perhaps there is a correlation to Joseph's statement in Egypt to his brothers, "You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good." Yes, some good came on that crucifixion day almost 2000 years ago. One of the thieves hanging on a nearby cross called out to Jesus defended him from a scoffer and asked Jesus to remember him when he came into His Kingdom. This thief had likely led an evil life, but at that moment the thief knew deep inside his heart that Jesus was a kind man who had done no wrong. God had allowed the thief to recognize Jesus' deity. Still, the good continued when the veil in the Temple was ripped in half, a sign that the perfect sacrifice for sin had finally been paid. But- there is still more to the story.

Shortly after Jesus breathed His last breath, wealthy disciples prepared His body for burial in a fashion that they could afford. In an effort to ensure that the body of Jesus would stay entombed, the Romans placed armed guards at the entrance of Jesus' grave. Can you imagine what it was like for Jesus' followers on that Sabbath? A day that was meant for worship, joy and rest, had turned into mourning, sorrow, fear, and despair. As the context of all these events begins to sink in, one of the disciples- probably John- had a sudden flood of memories of all the times that Jesus tried to tell them that 'good Friday' and 'resurrection Sunday' would come. Jesus had said, "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." (John 13:7); and, "Destroy the temple and I will raise it again in three days." (John 2:19). Soon after His resurrection, Jesus appeared to the disciples and had the exchange with "Doubting Thomas" that we know so well. "Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." (John 20:29). In the days that followed, the resurrected Jesus appeared to over 500 people, out of death-life, out of despair-hope, out of sacrifice-redemption.

I hope that this Easter you and your family will pause to reflect on the unending love that Christ had for us, love that led Him to the cross, where He fulfilled the truths of John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

And that is why it's Happy Easter.

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Palm Branches

By Joy Baldwin
Madison County

*I stood among a lively crowd
As Jesus passed that day
His mission to accomplish
The King would come our way*

*The people spread their garments
Palm branches from trees so green
They placed them in His pathway
In honor of The King.*

*He came riding on a donkey
Palm branches made a way it's true
For the Awesome One to ride
His robe of purple, white and blue.*

*Hosanna to The Son of David
Praises rang out to The Highest
His face shined like the brightest sun
Jesus of Nazareth, he was The Christ.*



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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Death in the Pot

By Kurt Bomar
Avery County



A Word to Parents (and Grandparents) of Young Children:

As a parent of five children, I was always trying to reach that right balance of protecting my children from the influence of a corrupt world, while at the same time, preparing them for the day when they would have to make their way into that same world.

To make matters worse, I found that the internet had a way of violating many of the protective hedges that I had planted around them. I concluded that even with my best efforts, they would be unduly influenced by a sinful world at a much earlier age than I wanted.

There is a short story in the Bible that gave me comfort and also provided an answer for me. You can find it in 2 Kings 4:38-41. I call it the "Death in the Pot" story.

Here we see Elisha ordering a banquet for a company of prophets visiting him. One of his servants accidentally put some poisonous gourds in the stew that was being prepared. No one knew about it until they had eaten some of the stew and were starting to feel the effects of the poison. They cried out to Elisha, "there is death in the pot!"

That's the way parents feel sometimes. We do the best to protect our children, but we simply cannot filter out all the gourds that will make their way into our children's stew. Therefore, their little formative minds are poisoned. What do we do?

We do what Elisha did. "Get some flour," he said. And he mixed the flour into the stew. The story says that the flour neutralized the poison and the prophets were able to finish and enjoy the stew.

Our flour is the word of God. We may not be able to stop the evil influences of the world, but we can give our children a daily dose of flour to neutralize the effects of the world.

2 Tim. 3:16 "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness."

We have an anti-dote much more powerful than the poison! Have devotions daily with your children!

Selah (think about it)

Kurt Bomar is pastor of Walnut Grove Church.

The first [day] of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.
John 20:1-18



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Will Graham's Daughter Shares Nashville
Tornado Experience, Helps Others
By Lizzy Long

It had been a regular day for Will Graham's daughter, Christine Jane—better known as "C.J."—when she went to sleep Monday, March 2, in her Nashville dorm. However, that night was far from normal. At 12:45 a.m.—just hours before early morning weight training—the Lipscomb University soccer player and nursing student slept through tornado alarms until she was awakened by a friend. Quickly, the university evacuated students to a basement where they waited out the storm. Ravaging a 145-mile stretch of Central Tennessee, the weather system spun off six tornadoes and killed 25 people. Dozens more were injured as their homes were leveled or destroyed. C.J. Graham and her friends remained safe through the storm, but several faculty and students from her university lost their homes. "Here's it like, 'Wow, this is 10 minutes down the road from me, and it's like watching the news and seeing that's my community that needs help,'" C.J. Graham said. "It's totally different than anything I've ever been through."

On Saturday, she met her dad, Will Graham, and uncle, Edward Graham, along with their family friend and musician Michael W. Smith, at a devastated apartment complex that was condemned following the storm. They served alongside Billy Graham Rapid Response Team and Samaritan's Purse volunteers to comfort discouraged residents and help put their belongings in moving trucks.

"Here, I have the opportunity to invest in other people's lives. I can actually witness and be a testimony to those who have absolutely nothing and help them find everything," she said. "I have the opportunity to be a light when it's dark for someone else. Maybe I can use some of my stories from my past that may not directly involve the storm, but maybe they're going through a hard time at school, having a hard time with just their image, there are so many different things I can relate on."

Nearly the whole time, C.J. Graham was just a step behind her father, quickly offering to help. For years, she's watched her dad share the Gospel during evangelistic events called Celebrations, so this was a special moment of hands-on ministry for them to share.

On Sunday, she again returned to help her tornado-ravaged community. This time, she served as a Samaritan's Purse volunteer, bringing several friends from her soccer team.

C.J. Graham enjoyed serving her Nashville community with friends. "During school, I've always been taught the ways of Jesus and so here, I have a way to implement that. It's really scary ... I'm scared a lot. I don't want to say the wrong thing to the wrong person and then have them not see the Lord through this," she said. "So, my heart is for these people because they are suffering. When I see people suffering, it disheartens me to see their pain."

"I decided to help them and show that there is a purpose to their pain—and by finding the purpose to your pain, you'll be at peace," C.J. continued. "And the purpose is to bring God glory, and even though it's hard and you may not see it for a while, there is a purpose to it. Maybe it's just for one person to come to know the Lord—it would be worth it."

Over the past few days, crisis-trained Billy Graham chaplains have been working alongside Samaritan's Purse volunteers to emotionally and spiritually help tornado survivors. They have seen several people across three Tennessee towns come to know the Lord.

And even though C.J. Graham was serving as a Samaritan's Purse volunteer, her desire was ultimately the same as the chaplains—for people to know God. "Not only are we working with the homeowner with his physical needs, but we are also loving on him and showing him the love of Jesus," she said.

Over Christmas break, the 18-year-old went and saw the destruction in the Bahamas months after Hurricane Dorian hit, but this has affected her differently. "My heart has always been to help people and I've [gotten] to witness that a lot, especially traveling with my grandfather [Franklin Graham] and even my father [Will Graham]," C.J. explained. "But I felt like I've always been in the shadows behind them and so today especially, I've been able to be on the front lines."



Will Graham and his 18-year-old daughter, C.J., pray with Nashville resident Holly Hood as Billy Graham chaplains and Samaritan's Purse volunteers serve Hood's neighbors.



Humor
By Buddy Freeman
Madison County

"LAUGHTER IS HEALTHY FOR YOU"

A school teacher asked her class to write an article on the subject of baseball. "You have 30 minutes to complete it," she told the class. Sara handed in her paper after writing for less than a minute. The teacher asked, "You can't be finished already?" "Yes, I am," said Sara. The teacher looked at her paper and read, "Game called off on account of rain."

A wise man said, "There are two times in a man's life that he cannot understand women – before marriage and after marriage."

A teacher told her class, "You have my assurance that if you repeat a word eight or ten times, it will be yours for life." In the back row, an attractive young girl sighed and closed her eyes, whispering softly to herself, "Tom, Tom, Tom."

A Sunday School teacher asked, "Now, Harold, what can you tell me about Goliath?" Harold said, "He was the man, David rocked to sleep."

Dr. Buddy Freeman is now a retired Baptist pastor.



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West Africa

By George Patton, Jr.
Burke County

I would have never imagined when I came to West Africa that the Lord was going to do all that He has. I knew that He had something great in store. Even before I left the USA, the Lord had pressed upon my heart to take 1,000 baptismal certificates with me. I have been in 87 countries now but this by far beats all I have ever seen. In less than 4 weeks we have seen 155 people baptized, 28 leaders trained and ordained and 12 churches brought into one association in two countries. This week the association will plant its first church. Between Liberia and Sierra Leone, the Lord is really moving. I am not sure if it is because they are so familiar with death, as these two countries were the hardest hit by the Ebola virus, or if it is that they just have a hunger for the things of God. Pastors are craving teaching and church members sit eagerly listening to the Word of God. I have never seen such. Just yesterday I was leaving a church that I had been ministering to where 5 people came committing their life to Jesus. We were coming down the road when a young man in his twenties came up to us. He began sharing with me how he used to be a slave to drugs and alcohol. I shared with him how I too, as

a young man was in the same bondage but how the Lord Jesus had delivered me and now, I was traveling the world preaching Jesus. He said that the drug dealers here keep people in bondage. He shared with me how he had been delivered from the drugs and alcohol but that he had not been saved. I ask him if he had ever repented of his sins and been baptized. He said, "no but pastor, but I want to. By this time, we are standing beside the road. I ask him "Do you want to repent and turn from your sins today trusting in Jesus?" "Yes, pastor, I do." Right there on the side of the road, we knelt in the dirt and this young man committed his life to Jesus Christ. This Sunday he will be getting baptized. He asked me, "pastor, will you please come back to this village?" He said "I have so many friends who are still in bondage and Jesus can set them free too." I told him that we would definitely come back. In so many places the people are coming to us hearing we have the good news of Jesus. Truly revival is breaking out here. So far, we have been working primarily in the capital of Monrovia in Liberia and Freetown in Sierra Leone. Next week we will be going to the remote areas. We have already sent scouts ahead to inform the people we are coming. Please continue to pray. The jungles here are so vast. They still practice a lot of the ancestral voodoo practices, but I know that the Lord can break this. Also, the roads are so difficult back in the bush so please pray for the vehicles that we will be traveling on. One great praise report is that the Corona Virus that seems to be causing such a stir around the rest of the world but has not come here yet. Truly after battling Ebola, the last thing they need is this virus too. I love you folks so much. I will be back in the USA on May 20. If you would like us to come and share more or if you would like to be part of what God is doing in West Africa please email me at rev.gpattonjr@gmail.com. God bless each of you so much. By the way, the Lord is truly using my wife here as well. She has gotten to do several women's conferences. She is truly a mighty missionary for Jesus.

My name is Rev. George Patton Jr. I am married to Rebecca Patton. Together we have 6 sons and 6 daughters and 23 grandchildren. We are active members of the First Apostolic Church in Morganton NC. I have spent time over the years planting churches, pastoring churches, establishing ministries and doing missions. At present, I have 18 books written which can be found on Amazon.



Forget-Me-Not

By Steve Bietz
Burke County

As I came out of the Wal-Mart store and into their parking lot, I quickly came up beside an elderly couple. The man was using a cane while the woman had the grocery cart and I noticed her cane was hanging on the cart handle. Right as I zoomed by them, I heard the elderly woman say, "young man." Now, I am of the age that no one should be calling me a young man. So, I felt that it was not possible that she was referring to me. However, I didn't feel as though anyone else was nearby, so I turned more directly to her and asked if she was talking to me. The elderly woman quickly smiled and said: "yes, I wonder if you could help us." I replied that "I will try, what can I do for you?" The woman said, "I hate to admit it, but we have forgotten where we parked our car." It was then that I walked over to them and said, "well let's see if we can find it for you" and I added, "what color is your car." For the first time, the elderly gentleman spoke and said, "it's blue." Quickly, the elderly woman said, "honey" (and I now felt certain that honey meant that he was her husband) "it is not blue, it's silver." I thought to myself, finding their car may be more challenging than I had imagined."

But I smiled at the color dilemma and said, "no problem, is the key to your car a key fob." To which the elderly woman responded, "what's a key fob." Rather than trying to explain what a key fob is, I simply asked them to show me their keys. The woman said, "sweetheart, show him the keys." But sweetheart responded, "I don't have the keys, you took them and put them in your purse." For a few moments, the woman insisted that she did not have the keys, but would admit soon enough that yes, here they are in her purse.

Their car key was indeed a key fob, so I proceeded to push the unlock the door button on the key fob, and just 3 cars down the row from where the three of us were standing, the taillights flashed. We had found their lost car. I proceeded to continue giving aid to the elderly couple, for they both seemed a bit traumatized by the lost car ordeal. We got their purchases placed in the back seat and I told them that I would return the grocery cart to the proper place.

As I finished with their cart, still holding the small bag that contained the couple of items I had purchased, I watched the elderly couple slowly back out of their parking space as I now made my way to my car. I must admit that I chuckled out loud when I noticed, their car was not blue or silver, but beige.

Now I do not walk with a cane and I'm relatively certain I know without a doubt, the colors of both of my vehicles. And yes, they both have key fobs. I am glad they have key fobs because I also have pushed a button on my key fob so that I could find my own car in a parking lot. Forgetting and remembering are constant harassment of our routines. Thankfully, we have a God who never forgets where we are parked. He tells us: "Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion for the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, Yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands." Isaiah 49:15,16.

We are nearing the time of year when Christians spend time celebrating when Christ had us inscribed on His hands. Of course, it would be horribly unthoughtful of us, to only remember the blood Christ shed on our behalf just at Easter. Christ actually left in place a memorial service, that as we participate in the Celebration of the Lord's Supper, we can recall with vivid illustrations, the cost of our redemption. Paul reminds us that Jesus said: "This cup is the new covenant of my blood, this do as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." 1 Corinthians 11: 25

Jesus evidently knows how forgetful we can be, so He gave us ways that help us remember. It is as if our Lord has given us a flower called a Forget-Me-Not. I hope each of us, although we might not always remember where we parked our car, we will always remember with great joy, the sacrifice of Christ. May we never cease to give our sincere gratitude for the Lord inscribing us on His hands, as He never fails to remember us and our need of His blood.

Steve Bietz, Pastor, Morganton Seventh day Adventist Church.



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Socialism: Lipstick on a Pig
By Dr. Mark H. Creech

During the 1980s, North Carolina's U.S. Senator, the late Jesse Helms, wrote an interesting article about America's drift from her religious and political moorings. Helms wrote at that time something powerfully astute. He said, "It is debatable at just what point the United States began to drift away... But I think we reached that point when many Americans turned away from the idea of salvation through Christ to that of salvation through technology or science or material affluence or the welfare state."

Helms' statement is at the heart of the legitimate assertion that Socialism is anti-Christian. As early as 1917, Charles R. Erdman, a professor at Princeton Theological Seminary, said that Socialism is defective in that it places the physical above the spiritual needs of humanity. Erdman wrote: "It insists that better social conditions will produce better men; Christianity teaches that better men are needed to produce better conditions. Socialism seeks to elevate individuals by elevating society; Christianity contends that society can be elevated only by the regeneration of individuals. To secure such regeneration is the supreme effort and function of the Church, and its chief message to Socialism is that 'life is more than meat and raiment.' To those who are crying for equality and opportunity and improved material conditions and fondly dreaming of a new age of universal plenty and comfort and happiness, the Church repeats the divine message, 'Ye must be born-again.'"

Last summer, Julie Roys, who is the host of a national talk show on the Moody Radio Network called "Up for Debate," wrote an op-ed piece for the Christian Post, rightly arguing that Socialism is based on a completely materialistic worldview.

"To socialists, suffering is caused by the unequal distribution of stuff – and salvation is achieved by the re-distribution of stuff. There's no acknowledgment of spiritual issues. There's just an assumption that if everyone is given equal stuff, all the problems in society will somehow dissolve."

"This worldview contradicts Christianity, which affirms the existence of both a material and non-material world – and teaches that mankind's greatest problems are spiritual. The Bible says the cause of suffering is sin, and salvation is found in the Cross of Christ, which liberates us from sin. Because of sin, though, there will always be inequalities in wealth. As the parable of the talents [by Christ] shows, those with good character tend to accumulate more; those with bad character [are more subject to] lose everything they have. Yet, even if we are unable to accumulate wealth [especially in situations beyond our control], Christianity teaches that we can still have an abundant life. That's because the quality of life is not determined by how much stuff we have, but by our relationship to Christ."

The late world-renowned evangelist, Dr. Billy Graham, in discussing man's hopes of self-salvation used to say that you can scrub a pig, sprinkle Chanel No. 5 on him, put a ribbon around his neck, and take him into the most exquisite palace in the land. But when you turn him loose, he will jump into the first mud puddle he sees. Why? Because even though he may be wearing lipstick, he is still a pig. That's the pig's nature.

You may think this is a pessimistic way to look at life or the prospect of self-improvement. But it's not at all. Christians are not pessimists. It's just that we know where real hope is found. We understand that every effort, whether it be personal or corporate, that leaves out the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ, that doesn't make God central to the need, is no solution but just lipstick on a pig. Whether it be education, or science, or psychology, or any kind of social planning pursued that is without the redeeming and regulatory touch of a benevolent and gracious God, it is nothing but lipstick on a pig.

And that is why, I say, Socialism is just lipstick on a pig. We should beware of earthly utopian visions. The Scriptures reject them as untenable because of the brokenness of humankind's sinful nature. The Bible resoundingly declares that Christ, and Christ alone, is the Savior of the world and not the government.

Some who embrace Socialism and promote it may be well-intended, but by nature, it is thoroughly anti-Christian and will bankrupt body, soul, and country. This editorial is developed from a few excerpts of a speech by Dr. Mark H. Creech, titled: "Socialism: Lipstick on a Pig."

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



The Joy of What God has Done
By Rev. John B. Sorensen

Take a moment. Pause. Reflect on this past year. How did God use you? Did you experience the joy of leading someone (or many people) to Jesus? Great! Then celebrate what God has done.

In Luke 15, Jesus told us three stories about a lost sheep, a lost coin, and a lost son. In each one, a great celebration was held when the lost was found. He tells us in verse 10, "In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (NIV).

That joy is contagious. When Julie joined a team to witness in her community, she literally felt sick. She had never shared her faith and didn't believe she could do it. But that changed when she personally watched someone turn to Jesus. The joy of that moment overcame her fear, and her confidence in what God could do began to grow. Today, she is excited at every opportunity to share her faith and trains, other believers, how to overcome their fear of witnessing.

Zephaniah 3:17 says that "the LORD your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves." (NIV). We must remember that God goes with us when we share His love with others. He speaks to the hearts of those who hear His Word. Our job is simply to share what He has done for us. But we also get to join the celebration when someone prays to accept Him. Every soul that enters His Kingdom is worth celebrating!

Joy drives us forward. It breaks our hearts for those who are lost and gives us the momentum to keep sharing the Gospel even when people reject it.

Earlier this year, Brian had the opportunity to pray with someone to accept Jesus. He could not contain his excitement. "I was able to stand and look at another individual who has gone through the same things I had and show him the goodness of God and what He's done in my life, and God moved... This was my first time going out, but I'm going to keep going."

The Apostle Paul urges us to keep going. He says in Galatians 6:9, "Let us not grow weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up" (NIV).

So, don't stop. Let the joy of celebrating salvation propel you to keep sharing your faith today and into next year so that others might come to know Him. If you haven't shared your faith recently, or maybe you've never shared it, I have good news for you. It's not too late. You can start today. The next person you meet may be desperate to find some hope – the hope that can only be offered through Jesus Christ. May God be with you as you go out and share His love.

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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Crossword

Crossword 253 and Solution

Across

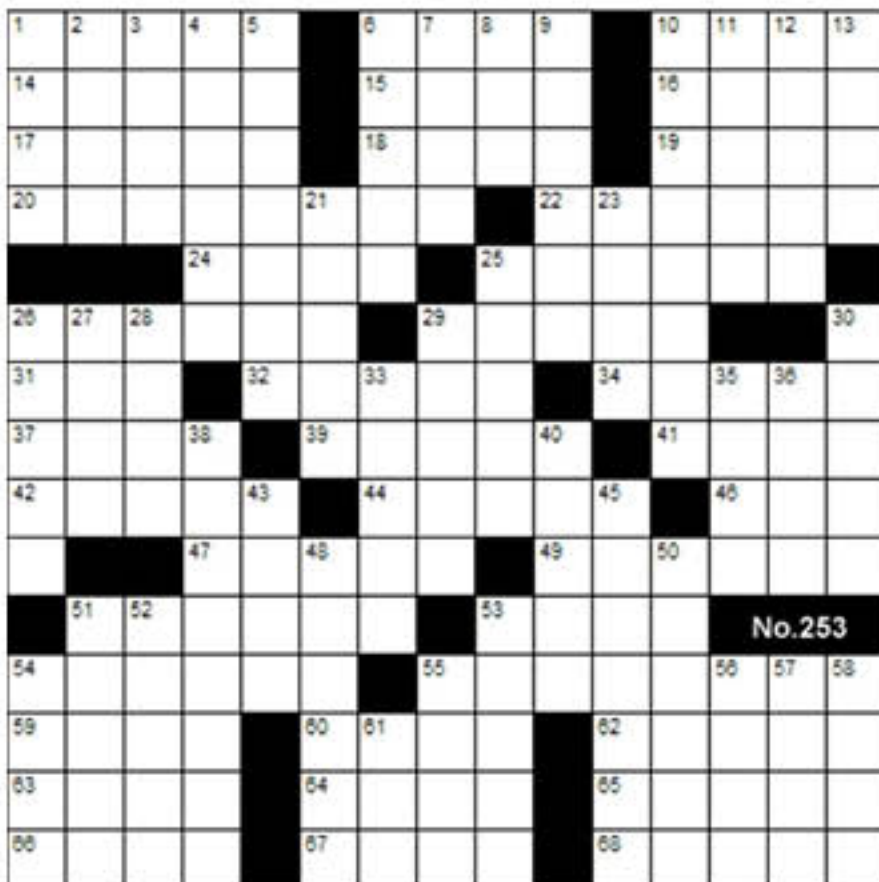
1 Take your ____ and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt (Exod 7:19)
 6 his eyes are like the ____ of dawn (Job 41:18)
 10 Jezebel's husband (IKing 21:7)
 14 You prepare a ____ before me in the presence of my enemies (Ps 23:5)
 15 He traveled through that ____, speaking many words of (Acts 20:2)
 16 O my people, put on sackcloth and ____ in ashes (Jer 6:26)
 17 I will besiege ____; she will mourn and lament (Isa 29:2)
 18 the sixth angel poured out his ____ upon the great river (Rev 16:12) KJV
 19 beast of burden (Psm 32:9)
 20 The LORD is righteous, yet I ____ against his command (Lam 1:18)
 22 On the ____, as they went on their journey (Acts 10:9) KJV
 24 Show me the ____ used for paying the tax (Matt 22:19)
 25 But when you are invited, take the ____ place (Luke 14:10)
 26 they found the whole road ____ with the clothing (2 Kings 7:15)
 29 Zoan and their envoys have arrived in ____ (Isa 30:4)
 31 material taken from King Solomon's mines
 32 they ____ fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves (Gen 3:7)
 34 reconsider, for my integrity is at ____ (Job 6:29)
 37 that anointing is ____, not counterfeit (1 John 2:27)
 39 lies down, like a lioness who ____ to rouse him? (Gen 49:9)
 41 Rescue me from the mire, do not let me ____ (Ps 69:14)
 42 It is mine to avenge; I will _____. In due time (Deut 32:35)
 44 they will ____ the ruined cities that have been devastated (Isa 61:4)
 46 opposite to windward side (naut.)
 47 Long ago you broke off your yoke and tore off your ____ (Jer 2:20)
 49 for every trading ship and every stately ____ (Isa 2:16)
 51 the axles, rims, ____ and hubs were all of cast metal (1 Kings 7:33)
 53 made the hearts of the people ____ with fear (Josh 14:8)
 54 The LORD reigns, let the earth be glad; let the distant ____ rejoice (Ps 97:1)
 55 the LORD ____ the language of the whole world

(Gen 11:9)

59 be in rest and at ____, and none shall make him afraid (Jer 46:27)
 60 I commanded thee, saying, ____ shalt not eat of it: (Gen 3:17) (KJV)
 62 Keep me as the ____ of your eye (Ps 17:8)
 63 But the word of the Lord endureth for ____ (1 Pet 1:25) KJV
 64 to settle down and ____ the bread they eat. (II Th 3:12)
 65 Prepare for war! ____ the warriors (Joel 3:9)
 66 Benjamin's ____ was five times so much as any of theirs (Gen 43:34) KJV
 67 for the tent a covering of ram skins ____ red (Ex 36:19)
 68 Surely I have acted like a fool and have ____ greatly (1 Sam 26:21)

Down

1 we have seen his ____ in the east, and are come to worship him (Matt 2:2)
 2 the devil threw him down, and ____ him (Luke 9:42)
 3 First month in the Hebrew calendar (Exod 23:15)
 4 I will place a wool ____ on the threshing floor (Judg 6:37)
 5 let's go over to the outpost of those uncircumcised ____ (1 Sam 14:6)
 6 he sent forth a ____, which went forth to and fro (Gen 8:7)
 7 it goes through ____ places seeking rest (Luke 11:24)
 8 positive reply (Luke 11:28) KJV
 9 the father of Boaz (Ruth 4:21)
 10 On both sides of the seat were ____ (1 Kings 10:19)
 11 Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve ____ of daylight? (John 11:9)
 12 You are to ____ it as an inheritance for yourselves (Ezek 47:22)
 13 the winds ____ and beat against that house (Matt 7:27)
 21 He ____ its interior walls with cedar boards (Kings 6:15)
 23 you must cancel any debt your brother ____ you (Deut 15:3)
 25 He brought out Israel, ____ with silver and gold (Ps 105:37)
 26 He was crying, and she felt ____ for him (Ex 2:6)
 27 part of the garden of Eden (Gen 2:16)
 28 gather, collect (Gal 6:9)
 29 ____ the bridegroom Come out to meet him (Matt 25:6)
 30 inscription that was written:



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MENE, MENE, ____,
 PARSIN (Dan 5:25)

33 appointed the ____ of the priests and the Levites (Neh 13:30) KJV
 35 What ____ you that you keep on arguing? (Job 16:3)
 36 at the name of Jesus every ____ should bow, in heaven and on earth (Phil 2:10)
 38 against those who defraud ____ of their wages (Mal 3:5)
 40 He is able to open the scroll and its ____ seals (Rev 5:5)
 43 For my ____ is easy, and my burden is light. (Matt 11:30)
 45 and spoke up for the ____ of all the Jews (Est 10:3)
 48 All the birds of the air ____ in its boughs (Ezek 31:6)
 50 as from sleep, as a man wakes from the ____ of wine (Ps 78:65)
 51 take a sharp sword and use it as a barber's razor to ____ your head (Ezek 5:1)
 52 Jeremiah from Anathoth, who ____ as a prophet among you (Jer 29:27)
 53 Rabbah of the Ammonites; it will become a ____ of ruins (Jer 49:2)
 54 All a man's ways ____ right to him, but the LORD weighs the heart (Prov 21:2)

55 Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of ____ (Jude 11) KJV
 56 let us consider how we may ____ one another on toward love (Heb 10:24)
 57 Or ____ let them come to me for refuge (Isa 27:5)
 58 He was a prophet, powerful in word and ____ before God (Luke 4:19)
 61 for the ____ is withered away, the grass faileth (Isaiah 15:6) KJV

Solution on page 14

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Obedient Heart Fellowship

Surely That is in the Bible

By Jim Huskins
McDowell County

"God helps those who help themselves." I heard this stated so often and so confidently that I was sure it was scripture. It is not. The concept is traceable to both Euripides and Sophocles, but the modern wording is credited to English political writer, Algernon Sidney. Benjamin Franklin did not coin the phrase.

The only way to know what the Bible says is to read it. My campaign for the Year of Perfect Vision is to encourage every believer to read the Bible start to finish over twelve months. If you do that, you will discover that God's Word does not instruct His people to observe an event that most Christians hold dear: Easter. Some of the background of Easter is mentioned in scripture. Genesis chapter 10 tells the story of Noah's great-grandson, Nimrod. Verses 10-12 list the cities he established. One of them was Babel. The next chapter tells how a famous tower in Babel was a direct affront to God. Babel was the beginning of the nation of Babylon, and Babylon was the source of polytheism. The Babylonians were particularly fond of worshipping the sun.

After God confounded the languages and dispersed the people of Babel, they carried sun god worship across the earth: Ra in Egypt, Zeus in Greece, Mithra in Rome. Sun worship is universal. The Babylonians called their sun god Tammuz. Their legends tell that Nimrod married Semiramis. When Nimrod died, he was taken to heaven and turned into the actual sun. After Nimrod's death, his widow was impregnated by the rays of the sun. On December 25th, she gave birth to a boy which she named Tammuz. At the age of forty, Tammuz was killed by a wild boar. He was taken to heaven and became the sun god.

Those same legends say that when Semiramis, Tammuz's mother, eventually died; the gods sent her back to earth in a giant egg. It landed in the Euphrates River at sunrise on the first Sunday following the vernal equinox. When she burst from her egg, she proved her divinity by changing a bird into an egg-laying rabbit. Semiramis, the wife of Nimrod, mother of Tammuz, became the naked fertility goddess of Babylonian sun-god worship. Following her rebirth, her name was Ishtar. The name later changed to Estra.

Every spring, Babylonian sun-worshippers set aside forty days of mourning for Tammuz—one day for each year of his life. This period culminated on Ishtar Sunday. On that day, they avenged the death of Tammuz by killing a wild boar and eating ham. The priests of Ishtar made a ritual of impregnating virgins during her celebration. One year later, they sacrificed the three-month-old babies and dyed eggs in the infant's blood.

The fact that so many of these pagan rituals have come to be considered "normal" aspects of Christian worship is testimony to the tenacity and influence of political and ecclesiastical power centered in fourth-century Rome. Roman society of that age was built on sun worship. The thin veneer of Christianity implemented by Constantine I was a political ploy. The adoption of sun god festivals and practices made it easier for the Roman church to appeal to that culture.

The net result is that many centuries later, most Christians enthusiastically engage in the rituals of sun god worship convinced that they are actually worshipping the Creator of the universe. When confronted with the origins of those rituals, they typically respond, "Well, that's not what it means to me." I have yet to find any passage of scripture where God gives us the right to redefine worship as we see fit.

On the other hand, the Bible is packed with accounts of how God hates pagan worship. He called Abraham out of Babylonian sun-worship so that He could begin His chosen nation. He rescued His chosen nation from Egyptian sun god culture so He could lead them to Canaan. He commanded His chosen nation to eliminate entire Canaanite nations partly because they were devoted to the practices of sun god worship. He referred to those practices using the strongest Hebrew word. That word is typically translated into English as "abomination."

Deuteronomy 12 gives God's perspective on pagan worship. The entire chapter is sobering. Verses 30 and 31 tell us that we must not worship Him in the same way that the pagans worship their gods. Many Christians tell me that Christ has "redeemed" pagan worship practices, but the Bible teaches that we should flee from them. Israel did not learn this lesson until their pagan worship finally led them into captivity in Babylon, the source of those abominable acts of worship. Scripture specifically mentions practices we associate with Easter. In Ezekiel 8:14-17, the prophet tells of seeing Israelite women weeping for Tammuz at the entrance of the Temple and Israelite men in that same location facing the east and worshipping the sun. "Weeping for Tammuz" involved ritual prostitution. God tells Ezekiel that these practices are abominations.

This year, the threat of viral pandemic will keep many Christians from holding up their hands to the sun as it rises, sharing the ham dinner, and hiding colored eggs; but most will wish they were doing those things. They would tell me that "God knows their heart." Indeed, He does. His clearly-stated position is that pagan worship rituals are still an abomination, and that a heart which deliberately disobeys Him is not attuned to His ways.

Do not take my word for any of these things. Please study and discover for yourself.

Obedient Heart Fellowship believes that the entire Bible is true and relevant. We accept salvation by grace through faith in Jesus, and we attempt to love and serve Him by keeping his commandments. See Revelation 14:12. We will resume meeting each Sabbath—Seventh Day—in Marion after present health concerns are resolved. Email to receive weekly teaching. lostranger@mindspring.com

Jim & Beverly Huskins are members of Obedient Heart Fellowship.

Therefore if any man [be] in Christ, [he is] a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. 2 Corinthians 5:17



NC Baptist Aging

NCBAM Seeks Volunteers for Rampin' Up 2020

By Carol Layton



North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry (NCBAM) will hold its 5th Rampin' Up! on April 25 and May 2. The event, held in conjunction with NC Operation Inasmuch, connects volunteer ramp builders with aging adults in need all across North Carolina.

Reduced mobility and the lack of a safe way to exit their homes leave many frail aging adults trapped. This enforced isolation can lead to loneliness, depression and other adverse health effects.

Volunteer ramp builders provide the road to hope! -- improving quality of life for those who rely on wheelchairs or walkers, or who have difficulty navigating steps. Ramps help to reduce fall risk and allow easier and more frequent access to the church, healthcare, and social activities.

Builders are needed statewide! NCBAM can put you in touch with an aging adult in your community! Put someone on the road to hope today! Call NCBAM at 877.506.2226.

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



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Prepare for Tomorrow

By Tim Tron
Burke County

The mist hung on the mountain like the memory of an old friend that you didn't want to forget. Walking amongst the towering Poplars and Pines, one couldn't help feeling the sense of majesty afforded to one who took the time to implore this realm. Mighty columns that seemed to reach to the sky held the empty canopy above, shrouded in the fog. Drops of dew-like moisture pitter-pattered upon the still winter landscape. Looking out upon the edge of a pasture, on what would be a vista on a clear day, there was nothing but an empty void of whiteness, the mystery of the unknown. God had a purpose for me being here on this trail today.

God's purpose is in everything we do, whether we realize it or not.

My mind thought about all that was transpiring in our world and the fear that has overwhelmed our country. That mystery of not knowing has people literally held captive. Some fear to leave their homes, while others self-quarantine in the commendable effort to thwart the spread of illness.

Those who are consumed with fright cling to every word being spewed by the media. Much like those disciples who cowered in the upper room after the crucifixion of Jesus. Their world had collapsed, and at that moment, all hope was lost. While most feared what would happen next, some knelt in prayer and sought guidance for what was to come. Their prayers would soon be answered on the third day. They had not given up hope, but instead kept on, praying and fasting for the preparation of what was to come.

Today, even though many have seemingly given in to the hype, there yet again some are taking the time to turn inward and seek His guidance in this troubled world. The latter is, in essence, preparing for the future and what is yet to come. The thought of mountain trails and springtime began to creep into my bones this past week. On the mountain, the snows have all but melted. That still small voice seemed to whisper to me, "Now is the time to prepare..." That being said, I soon found myself - thanks to the help of my IT colleague, Shawn Whitener - in the bowels of the Varsity Gymnasium on the campus of App. State University.

The wall in front of the treadmill was made of cream-colored, painted cinder-blocks. To the left, hung a flat panel TV which was turned off, its blank screen a reflection of a modern-day torture chamber in which I stood. To find this place, you have to traverse a series of doors, hallways, and stairwells, continually spiraling downward, like seeking the depths of an ancient dungeon. I was in the newly renovated staff exercise center, better known as the basement of the Varsity Gym. To the right of where I stood, hung a chart describing the various parts of the body that were being rewarded by all of the implements of torture lining both walls of the room. Below the treadmill, just to the right, was a wire, metal fan blowing with all its might, an attempt to give one the impression of being in the real world. Slowly, after reading over the various mechanisms necessary to safely operate the machine, my legs began to move on the magic carpet beneath my feet. The "Rolling Hills" workout option caught my eye, so when the button was selected, immediately, little red LEDs indicating the intensity of the incline that was about to kick in began blinking.

As my eyes remained transfixed upon the blinking dots, a pulsating echo of time washed through my being.

Beneath me, my legs started to churn a familiar pattern. Before long, without even knowing it, the road of yesteryear began to appear. It's funny how the body can fall so far behind what the mind remembers. Some call it muscles memory. I prefer to think of it as the countless miles of training etched into your soul. Whatever it is, before I knew it, my stride had returned to shadow of the former self, and as it did, the pace began to pick up until there was a smoothness. It was then the mind started to find its niche. No longer was there a blank wall before me, but rather, the open road of my youth, the asphalt-covered country roads that ran like veins through the patchwork land of cornfields in the southern Indiana countryside.

Ahead of me, ran the bronzed figure of my friend and training buddy, Scott Kearns. He was at least six-feet tall and had a natural stride. He was half Cherokee and often teased me that it made him a natural runner. His long black hair bounced off his shoulders as he slowly pulled away. He made it look easy as I fought to try to stay near him. The heat of the summer was on my back. My body drank it in, thirsting for the warmth of radiant energy. The air was heavy with the rich smell of the cornfields that lined both sides of the road. The sound of the wind rustled through the multitude of leaves that formed the canyon walls of corn stalks that seemed to reach to the sky. There were no cars, no hubbub of life other than the sound Scott's fading footsteps, and that of my heartbeat matching the pace of my feet upon the road. Off in the distance, I could hear an old grain truck rattling down a nearby highway. We were on the three-mile circle that started and stopped on our road that connected to the loop. It was the first time I had ever run any length of distance. It would be the length to which my life would be measured. Scott had assured me that if we could run this "country mile," we could easily make the Castle High School Cross Country team.

Sweat began to trickle down my temples as my body worked to cool itself. In that former image, my entire being was already swathed in a thick layer of perspiration. This present workout, much like that of before, was preparation. Now, it was to find where I was physically and to see if I might be ready for the open road. Then, it was to see if my body was capable of trying out for the team. My Biology teacher, Mr. Edwardson, had invited me to try out, and so when I had mentioned to Scott, he suggested we prepare so that when we showed up, we wouldn't be blown away. Little did we know back then what it would take to endure a season of training and racing in order to compete. It would take far more than a simple three-mile run. Now, much like then, there was much to consider.



The difference was time and age, both excellent teachers. Yes, there was another difference as well; I was alone. There was no Scott to push me anymore, just the longing to return to an "ability." But it was more than that. There was a feeling of a purpose in this as in the Proverbs passage, *"The horse [is] prepared against the day of battle: but safety [is] of the LORD."*

One might say, that what started today in the gym was the preparation to go out beyond the four walls of the Varsity Gym and out into the roads and by-ways of Boone, which, if the plan would allow, to find myself running the trails along the parkway when the weather improved; to once more return to that feeling of being one with God. To those who know, there is a uniqueness when running when your body can achieve a certain level of fitness where there is little to no exertion. It is then that my mind seems to be more able to listen to God than at any other time. The preparation reminded me of more than just the physical training, but also that which we should work toward every day: reading and sharing God's Word.

Set in the remote valleys of the Cottian Alps, the tiny enclave of stone structures lay hidden upon the Alpine mountainside. Their inhabitants, students of the Gospels and their teachers known only as "Barbi," which they were called in the ancient language of the valleys, which meant Uncle. There, through the long brutal winters, the students studied the Word, memorizing scriptures and testing one another. As the Bible says, *"Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend."* Just like my friend pushed me in my youth to obtain a greater level of strength, so too did these Theological warriors, as they prepared for what lay beyond the four walls of their granite college. It was the turn of the first millennium, and the Roman Catholic Church wanted to control the souls of humanity. To do so, they chained their Bibles to the Church pulpits, disallowing anyone to read or hold in their possession a copy thereof.

This cluster of stone rooms became known as the "Barba College," and from it, the people of the valleys, known as Waldensians, would go forth across Europe, evangelizing the Word of God nearly 600 years before the Reformation. They knew from what others had discovered, that their lives depended upon knowing the Word beyond just being able to simply read the Hebrew and Greek scrolls, but that they would also have to know it in their hearts. Paul tells us, in his letter to Timothy, *"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."* The penalty for being caught with the written Word of God was death.

It was a desperate time. Fear could have kept them hostage within those four walls, but they knew that there was a purpose in all that they did, and because God had given them the Word, it was their duty to share it with all of mankind. As the young men trained through those harsh Alpine winters, they grew stronger not only in their abilities to survive physically but also in the defense of their faith. Capable of hiking for miles in the arduous Alpine terrain, their bodies became as hardened as their faith became emboldened. They didn't just know their Bible; they lived it. When the spring thaws began to break open the heretofore hidden passes, they would leave the safety of the valleys. It was their duty. As Jesus had commanded, *"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."*

It is said that the seeds of the Reformation were planted with the blood of the Waldensian martyrs.

Today, as we train to go forth, both physically and mentally, let us not be blinded for reasons that offer a little reward, but rather strive to seek a purpose for which is much more profitable. Awaken to what purpose you were made and prepare for what is to come. We know not what tomorrow may bring, so in all things ready yourselves. *"And that, knowing the time, that now [it is] high time to awake out of sleep: for now [is] our salvation nearer than when we believed."*

The little red dots are blinking, one heartbeat at a time. Can't you hear those mountain pathways calling?

Turn off the TV, and the media's relentless pursuit of pandemonium, and think of what you can do to prepare for what is next. Don't let the fog of society's fear keep you frozen.

There is a purpose in everything we do. You have been afforded this time for a reason. Don't waste it.

Time is short.

Are you ready to run?

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



For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. John 3:16

Dogwood Health Trust Awards More Than \$3.7 Million in Immediate Opportunities and Needs (ION) Grants to 259 WNC Organizations

Asheville, N.C. – Dogwood Health Trust has awarded more than \$3.7 million to a diverse range of 259 nonprofit and government agencies from every county and the Qualla Boundary in Western North Carolina through its Immediate Opportunities and Needs (ION) grant program. Of the 492 applicants, 53% were awarded a grant, with the average award amount totaling \$14,600. Of those funded, 34% of requests will advance equity or reduce disparities.

“Originally, we planned to begin funding in fall 2020, but the board was eager to begin investing in the community at the start of the year,” said Janice Brumit, chair of the Dogwood Health Trust board of directors. “The purpose of this round of funding was to meet immediate needs and build initial relationships throughout our region. We plan to use what we learned from this round of funding to inform the work we’re doing now to design our strategic initiatives. Meeting immediate needs is one thing, but what we really want to do is move the needle on key issues and make lasting change.”

An initial budget of \$2.5 million was allocated to the ION grant program. “Our goal throughout the ION grantmaking process focused on awarding grants to a diverse representation and on inclusion in our 18 counties and Qualla Boundary region,” said Jackie Simms, chair of the programs and grants committee. “We gave particular attention to smaller nonprofits headquartered in the counties and tribe served by Dogwood and to organizations led by people of color. Choosing recipients was a challenging and awe-inspiring task; so many organizations are doing such important work in our region.”

ION grants awarded will support affordable housing development, dependable cars for working families, cybersecurity improvements, roof repairs, and a portable X-ray device, to name a few. The Hendersonville Rescue Mission located just off Seventh Avenue in downtown Hendersonville received a grant to offset unforeseen costs associated with their Day Center expansion project. This expansion project will take the current Day Center space from 788 square feet to 2700 square feet, providing much-needed space for personal hygiene and health needs, resources for job seekers, and a charging station for its clients. Once complete, the Day Center expects triple the number of client visits, dramatically impacting the disparities associated with people who face extreme poverty, including those who are homeless or have inadequate housing conditions, have limited access to sanitation facilities, or access to community resources. “We are so grateful to Dogwood Health Trust for walking alongside us to address this growing need in our community,” said Anthony McMinn, CEO of the Hendersonville Rescue Mission. “This additional funding will allow us to address unexpected costs and complete the Day Center expansion.”

ION grants awarded were in alignment with Dogwood’s work to improve health and wellness and address the social determinants of health in the region. To see a full list of award recipients or to learn more about Dogwood Health Trust’s grant opportunities, including the Leverage Fund, visit www.dht.org.

Dogwood Health Trust is a North Carolina nonprofit corporation with the sole purpose of dramatically improving the health and well-being of all people and communities of Western North Carolina. Dogwood Health Trust became operational upon the sale of Mission Health’s assets to HCA Healthcare and is the recipient of the net proceeds of the sale. To learn more, please visit www.dht.org.

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Windows Of Heaven

By Patricia Jackson
McDowell County



In 2 Kings, Chapter 6, a serious famine was in Samaria, resulting in starvation and even cannibalism. King Jehoram, ruler over the southern kingdom tribes of Judah and Benjamin, blamed Elisha and planned to have him killed. However, in Chapter 7, God revealed to Elisha the king’s plans and that flour and barley would be available the next day. The messenger did not believe Elisha’s words. He was looking at the reality of the situation: the starving people, the diminishing animals and the duration of the famine. Also, the army of Syria was besieging Samaria. The word that food would be available tomorrow was almost too good to be true. He doubted the power of God and the messenger of God. He replied “Behold, if the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be? His reply questions the truthfulness of God’s promises, that a new thing or sudden thing cannot be true. He was looking at the situation, the starvation, and suffering and did not have his eyes on God. Elisha’s reply was it will happen, and you will see it with your own eyes, but you will not eat of it. This was a harsh judgment upon the King’s officer.

As I read these scriptures, I wondered if his response of disbelief was typical of most who do not know the power of the Lord. We may hear the word of God from God’s anointed, but not believe it will happen, and thus, we do not benefit from a miracle or promises of God. Belief takes faith. Are we too prone to look at circumstances, rather than belief through faith? If we don’t believe the word, then we have no basis to believe for a miracle. We must believe with our heart and not our head, remembering nothing is impossible with God. It doesn’t matter how good or how bad things look. God is still on the throne, and he can do anything if we will have faith and believe. Unbelief stops God from working in our lives. That will keep the Windows of Heaven closed for a miracle. While the King and his messenger did not have faith, Elisha did, and God had a plan to once again save his people, Israel.

The Hebrew word for windows of Heaven refers to sluice gates. Imagine an enormous dam, water backed up behind it into a great lake. When the sluice gates are opened, rushing torrents of water are released. It is the same way with God’s word and promises.

The phrase “windows in Heaven” is mentioned two more times in the bible. Genesis 7:11 “In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of Heaven were opened”. The surging torrent represented judgment on the world.

Malachi 3:10 “Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.” God wants his people to give their tithes, and then He will provide even more blessings for them.

We can open the windows of Heaven in our personal lives, to receive blessings and miracles. We must feed on the word of God, thereby increasing our faith in believing. It’s also important to “do something”. In verses 3 & 4, the lepers rose up at dusk and went into the Syrian army where they found food and were sustained. They also informed Samaria there was food in the empty enemy camp. There are many scriptures indicating that action must take place to receive a miracle. Example: “Rise up and walk”, “Go wash in the pool of Siloam” and “Go show yourself to the priest”.

When we believe and do something, we will see the windows of Heaven open up to meet our needs.

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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Retirement Resource Management

Free Financial Planning

By Steve Gaito
McDowell County



As the nation grapples with the coronavirus pandemic, we face unprecedented challenges that will require all sectors to collaborate for the public good, including finding ways to support the millions of financially at-risk Americans who will need quality financial planning and advice more than ever before.

As a CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER practitioner, I have partnered with the Foundation for Financial Planning (FFP) to provide pro bono financial planning to those in need. FFP will provide support resources and networks to help provide this aid at no cost to individuals and businesses in need. To be honest this is uncharted waters for most and will be a learning experience for almost everyone. By utilizing FFP resources I can efficiently help those impacted by this unique and devastating crisis. While the lasting effects of this pandemic are yet to be fully understood, FFP will be a great resource for me during this difficult period.

It is important to know that through this program there are no fees charged for planning services. I also agree to not sell any product or service to you. This will be a limited-term engagement focused on your immediate need and not your long-term financial plan. I am here to help you get through this crisis.

Who is a good candidate for this planning?

- Experiencing financial challenges due to unemployment
- Loss or reduction of wages
- Health-related expenses
- Impacted Small Businesses
- Difficulty in paying mortgage or rent
- Difficulty in paying utilities
- Worried about the downturn in the Stock Market

These are just a few of the topics I expect to discuss with people, but it is not a complete list. The reality is if you have questions about any financial topic that has impacted you or your company and want another qualified person to help you figure out what to do, I am here to help. I have over 27 years of planning experience and have been a CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER practitioner since June of 2005. I have worked with small and large businesses with cash flow and debt. Through FFP I will have resources to address the Federal Government programs as they become available. For individuals, I managed money through 2008 and have experienced several downturns in the market. I will help you take advantage of the plans available through the Federal Government too.

The key takeaway with this event is

1. You did nothing wrong
2. It would have been difficult to plan for this
3. There will be help available to you
4. I want to use my expertise to help you take advantage of everything that can help you get back on your feet.

The best way to contact me is through email at steve@retirerm.com but you can also contact my office at (828) 559-0299.

I look forward to helping you recover from this hopefully once in a lifetime event.

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.

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BCPS Hosts First County-Wide Archery Tournament

By Jonelle Boback
Burke County



Morganton, NC – Wednesday, March 4th, 2020
Burke County Public Schools recently held its first county-wide archery tournament involving elementary schools. Archers from all over the county descended on George Hildebrand Elementary School and competed against each other in multiple different flights.

This was the first time Burke County elementary schools and individual archers competed against each other in a county-wide competition. George Hildebrand Elementary School's archery team ranked first, Forest Hill Elementary School placed second and Icard Elementary School landed in third place.

The top 10 student archers starting with first place were as follows: Brooks Brown of George Hildebrand, Gatlin Ford of Salem Elementary School, Shyanna Magni of George Hildebrand, Lily Lowman of George Hildebrand, Cooper Price of Hillcrest Elementary School, Jayden Yang of George Hildebrand, Triston Gooden of Forrest Hill, Katie Aguilar-Ramirez of Forrest Hill, Joe Tate of Glen Alpine Elementary and Allie McIntosh-Minton of George Hildebrand.

Meghan Armour-Steele, physical education teacher at George Hildebrand has a passion for archery and helped to host the tournament.

Armour-Steele said, "The first Burke County Elementary Schools 10 Meter



Two students record their shots at the target after one of the flights.

It was wonderful to see the excitement and the skills of the participating student archers, as well as the tremendous support from their parents, guests, school personnel and administrators that attended. Michael Steele was also instrumental in organizing this tournament, and we had tremendous support from Mrs. (Karen) Auton, in order to make this tournament a success. It is one that I hope and believe will continue in years to come."

She believes archery to be an important part of her students' lives that gives them a sense of success.

Along with the BCPS tournament, the North Carolina State International Bowhunting Organization 3D Tournament was held at East Burke High School recently where several BCPS students were recognized. Natalie Bell, of East Burke Middle School, placed first overall in the competition. Lily Lowman, of George Hildebrand Elementary, was awarded fourth place overall. Jayden Yang was given ninth place overall. BCPS schools that participated were Forest Hill Elementary, East Burke Middle, Ray Childers Elementary and George Hildebrand Elementary. There were a total of 111 participants from North Carolina.

Armour-Steele said, "Archery gives students -- from all backgrounds and abilities -- the opportunity to participate in a disciplined sport, as well as learn a life-long skill. I think one of the biggest proponents of this program is that we tend to reach those students that may not necessarily be your more common traditional-sport athlete. It gives those individuals an opportunity to be successful at a team and individual sport, that is more non-traditional -- as well as gain a life-long skill."

Dr. Larry Putnam, Burke County Public Schools Superintendent said, "Great job to all of our archers. Our first ever local archery tournament was a success and is the result of a growing program within Burke County Public Schools. I can't thank Mike Steele and Meghan Armour-Steele enough for their hard work and dedication to making sure our students have this opportunity. Archery has been one of the many positive things that empower our students to be the best they can be. I would like to say thank you to all the teachers, school personnel and officers with the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission who helped to put together this opportunity for our students. My hope is that students and the community continue to see the benefits that this sport can bring."

Visit this link to see full results from the competition -- BCPS Archery Tournament Results

Jonelle Boback 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.



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Releasing Control

By Patti Jensen
Mitchell County



"For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self discipline." 2 Timothy 1:7 NIV

I have a control problem. I guess that anyone that knows me would agree. Although for years I thought my "strong trait" was a strength. I could look at a situation and see the "right answer" the "correct solution" "the way it should be done for best results". Yeah...I'm probably the only one who thought that was a strength.

I think I do have a logistical mind. I immediately can look at a task and see the steps to accomplish it. The problem is I also see that when I look at other's lives as well. Especially my children. As a mother, I always wanted to spare them the troubles and pitfalls I saw them heading towards. While I'm sure that's true for most moms, I also wanted to solve their problems for them rather than let them fail and figure out how to solve them themselves.

Add to my logistical mind and my control issues the fact that I am a worrier and what we have here is a problem. I worry about my children and now my grandchild. I worry about what I can't control. I worry about what I can't see in the future. I worry about what bad things might happen to any of us or my loved ones. I worry about being misunderstood...man, I especially hate one.

Now I have heard every sermon about worry and control. It's not what God intended for us and it isn't how He has made us to function. He has created us to not have a spirit of fear or worry. He wants us to rely on Him. Not ourselves. He wants us to believe that He can see how our lives should unfold, how our problems should be solved. We are to believe that He has us all in the palm of His hand and wants only good for us.

In my heart, I know that. But the minute my children leave for a trip I pray and then proceed to worry when I haven't heard from them. When a family member is sick, I pray and then proceed to google the remedies. That isn't letting go and letting God. That's not letting go at all. It's definitely something that I am working on in my personal life. Maybe that's what the scripture means by self-discipline.

With the current world crisis around the Covid-19 (Corona Virus) pandemic, I could see how this could have us all feeling like we are losing control and also have us filled with worry. This is something that we have never faced and is changing so rapidly that it sometimes feels like the world is just spinning out of control and we can't hold on. But we can hold on to HDM. We don't have to worry or feel out of control. We just have to hold on to the ONE who controls it all. One thing is for sure, God was not surprised by this pandemic.

God also does not create us to be timid. Most people wouldn't describe me as a timid person, but actually, I think I am a bit. I do try to be strong and overcome my insecurities (or at least hide them well) but I am timid when it comes to stepping out on my own. Like making my blog <http://www.agratefulgirl.com> public. And then telling friends about it. And then stepping out to share with you, the readers of the Blue Ridge Christian News. So insecure. Maybe a little scared of being judged, of being laughed at. I'm pretty sure some of both of that has happened as some have read my posts. (see what I mean?)

But I felt compelled to share. At first, I was writing and sharing recipes and memories just for my daughters. Like a virtual recipe box and memory book for them. But then I so strongly felt God's nudge to let others in. So here I am. Not being timid. Well, maybe I am still a little timid about sharing my personal thoughts and feelings. But I am trying to release control and let God do with this what He will. If some laugh or judge, I have to believe that I am supposed to just press on and share what God has on my heart. Maybe He will use one post, one sentence to touch someone or encourage them, or help them realize that at least one person (me) is in the same boat with them. Just trying to love God and love people.

So, I will keep sharing, with love, without being timid, and pray that I am in His will. If so, I know that He will bless my blog, A Grateful Girl, and this column. And I will pray that He blesses someone else through it.

And so, I challenge you. What are you trying to control in your life? What are you timid or afraid of that is holding you back from something you feel a nudge to do? Write this scripture on a post-it-note and put it on your mirror, on your laptop, on your car dashboard. And remember, especially during this trying time in our world. ... For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love, and self-discipline.

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>.

*All our sins and griefs to bear
And what a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer*

Mamaw finished her song. "Now watch those bad spots", she told me. I nodded because I couldn't speak. I was realizing what had just happened. I realized what an amazing moment I had just experienced. I had just heard Mamaw Atlas sing. It's not that my Mamaw hasn't ever sung before or that her voice is that spectacular. She hasn't ever lost her speech due to a stroke or illness and then rediscovered it. Nor was this the first time I had ever heard her sing. But, I looked at Mamaw beside me, filling the jars with beans; I saw her doing a bit of a hobble to the stove due to the discomfort of the pinched nerve; I saw her walls covered in pictures of her children and grandchildren; I remembered the tin sign by the door, and it was that it dawned on me, just how much Mamaw loves Jesus. In that moment and all through her life, Mamaw has chosen to find her in Joy in Jesus. Mamaw has chosen to be joyful, even through her pain and suffering, no matter how mild or severe. And just like any chosen child of God should do, she proclaims her love for Him.



I snapped out of my thoughts when Mamaw said "That does it. We are done! Whewww! I'm glad those beans didn't go to waste."

I carried the newly filled jars to the basement and put them on the shelf. I washed the dishes and helped Mamaw put away the canning things. As I wiped the counters, she came carrying two of the jars we just canned and handed them to me.

"Now I know you're tired and your Mamaw Sharrol probably has your supper ready. So, hurry on over and see that you all get these beans with supper."

"Thank you, Mamaw. But, come with me or let me cook your supper."

"Naw, I'm a goin to stay home and eat beans for supper. I really appreciated your help. I never could have done it without you. I love you, Hannah. You mean so much to me. You really do."

"I love you Mamaw. You'll never know how much you mean to me."

"Now run along, but you come back to see me some time. I promise not to put you to work." She laughed. "We'll sit and talk next time. Hopefully, I feel better and I'll cook ya' something to eat."

"Oh! I'll be back Mamaw, don't you worry." I said and then off I went, down that gravel road.

That day happened a few years back, but the memory of the day I heard my Mamaw sing, the day I really read the sign by the door and the day I canned green beans with Mamaw still lives on and makes for a story that I will tell all my life. Mamaw, I hope you know that one day when I'm old and have a home and a family of my own there will be a little tin sign that's nailed by my door and the sign will read "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord." People will notice my little sign and they will notice my love for Jesus. And if they should ask about my sign, I will say "It's true, in my house we love Jesus. I hung that little sign so whoever enters my home, they will know how much I love Him and how much I love my Mamaw." Then I will tell them the story. The story of a little woman and the story will go... In a North Carolina community, down in a holler, in a little house, lived a woman. A woman of great courage, immeasurable love, and a great desire to live for her Lord. Time had always given her age a number, but her youthfulness seemed eternal. Her wisdom was much wiser than any man or woman on Capitol Hill. Her understanding of life was unbelievable. Her hands rough and worn from a life full of farming and labor. She worked hard to care for her family, to love her husband and to raise her beautiful children. Her smile was warm and tender. Her laughter was contagious and jolly. Her prayers were felt by everyone. Her honesty welcomed. Her hospitality, a blessing. Her cooking craved. Her conversations, desired. But the best thing I can say about her is that she loved Jesus. I know, because I saw it. I know, because I felt it. I know, because she proclaimed. Yes, oh, yes. My Mamaw Atlas loved Jesus."

Hannah Hensley, 22, lives in Erwin, TN with her family. She is the oldest of 8 children. She loves living in the Blue Ridge Mountains, writing stories and visiting her grandparents, who live in Mitchell County.

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Dr. Dobson Speaks Hope
Amongst the Panic

By James Dobson



I am writing to you this month to express compassion and hope to those among my readers who are deeply troubled today by the uncertainty of our times. While our nation and our world have reason to be concerned by the coronavirus that stalks the human family, we must also exercise sound judgment and shine the light of hope. I don't intend to heighten your apprehension but want to point all of us to the Great Physician who told us we should "Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7). It is comforting to know that the Creator of the universe is mindful of our circumstances and invites us to call on Him in these distressing times.

My wife, Shirley, wrote a book entitled, *Certain Peace in Uncertain Times*, which speaks to our fears and anxieties. She shared, "We all want peaceful lives and contented hearts. Yet, with threats to our tranquility growing at a seemingly exponential rate, is it any wonder that many of us succumb to worry and fear? More importantly, is there a solution? Can we know certain peace in these uncertain times? The answer, of course, is yes. . . 1 When problems threaten to engulf us, we must do what believers have always done—turn to the Lord for encouragement and solace."²

Shirley emphasizes prayer as a spiritual act of worship. Throughout the Bible, and especially in the Psalms, we see prayers of adoration, proclamation, and petition. And God, who is rich in mercy, hears the prayers of His people. Psalm 10:13 tells us, "You, Lord, hear the desire of the afflicted; You encourage them, and You listen to their cry."

Just as Christians throughout history have faced hardships and persecution, we are not immune to trouble. Yet, through it all, we can be assured that God loves and cares deeply for us. 1 John 3:1 says, "How great is the love the Father has lavished upon us, that we should be called the children of God." The news and updates about the virus and its affect change each day; however, these events are not unknown to God. His gracious sovereignty and faithfulness remain steadfast. God's mercies are new every morning.

Another passage I love is Psalm 91, which David wrote about his many trials—"He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, 'He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust. . . He will cover you with His feathers and under His wings you will find refuge; His faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.'"

Some other key verses for us to remember are: Psalm 46:1—"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear;" and 2 Corinthians 12:9—"My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness."

While we must be wise and use common sense in avoiding the spread of this virus, we should not succumb to the onslaught of fear that is being manufactured by the many recent headlines. As Christians, we are called to be an example of prudence and assurance—not a picture of people ravaged by temporal troubles of this world. I'm reminded of a quote from my good friend, the late Chuck Colson: "Life is a mess. And theology must be lived out amid that mess." I think we all would agree that our world is messy right now. And if Chuck were still alive, I believe he would encourage us to be that voice of reason and hope.

I can't close without saying a word about the great hope of the Resurrection—given it is such a timely one. As you celebrate the Easter season, remember that Jesus Christ is the Giver of Life who takes away the sins of the world. Each of us is created in the image of God with an eternal soul and a value that exceeds the combined worth of the universe. If you have not accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior, this is the day to do so. To our fellow believers, use these trying circumstances as an opportunity to share the good news of Christ. Let's rejoice in our knowledge that Christ is risen. He is risen indeed!

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author, and the perfecter of our faith.

- 1. Dobson, Shirley, *Certain Peace in Uncertain Times*. Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2016; p.14.
- 2. Dobson, Shirley, *Certain Peace in Uncertain Times*. Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2016; p.15.

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

Sanity in These Crazy Times

By Dr. Miguel Cruz
Kinney County



During this Corona Virus Pandemic, it seems the extremists are getting the most attention. We have the general media whipping everyone up into a frenzy thinking we are all going to die like in some of these movies that have been popular with similar themes (my favorite was the recent *Planet of the Apes*). Or those that are ignoring all caution as if nothing is happening and it won't affect them.

What's important to remember is that God is still real and in control so there is no need to panic. I still don't understand what all the commotion about toilet paper was about. We should pay attention to our government officials and the CDC. Stay home, getting out only when needed, avoid close contact with others, when you are around others be sure to wash your hands and keep them away from your face until you do. The problem is that there are probably quite a few people with the virus, and they don't even know it. For most it may not affect them more than a common cold, so they think they are fine and end up taking it home to their grandparents or others who may be immune compromised.

Unfortunately, if you get it, there is no cure other than treating the symptoms like you would for a cold or flu. (as of 3/24/20 there are several proposed cures but have not been adequately tested and one death due to the attempted cure) Those who already have breathing difficulty or immune weakness may have life-threatening complications for which hospitalization may be necessary to treat the symptoms.

In my humble opinion, the best thing we can add for our protection aside from the CDC recommendations is to take action to keep our immune systems strong. There are lots of measures one can take to do this, some I will point out shortly.

It is an unfortunate part of our healthcare system that more effort is not made towards educating the public about lifestyle habits that sustain our health: things like the foods we eat, exercise or the lack of it, and the air we breathe. We may think living in the mountains gives us clean air to breathe, but if we go home to a moldy house, it will compromise our immune system (mold and its' effect on our health is a good discussion for another time). Giving your body the proper nutrients it needs to stay healthy and learning strategies to better deal with daily stress can greatly enhance our immunity lessening the ability for a virus to have serious consequences. Unfortunately, there is not a lot of money to be made with these strategies so we don't hear much about it, instead, we will be told about the different drugs and vaccines that will be made available and at a great profit to the pharmaceutical companies. I am not saying the drugs and vaccines are not needed, just that, they would be less necessary if we all had stronger natural immunity through a healthier lifestyle and making healthier choices.

I was recently asked to speak at a men's conference in a local church. They wanted to hear my story because in the last 3 years I had gone through severe appendicitis where my appendix had ruptured 2 days before I finally got to the hospital and Lyme's disease that progressed to spinal meningitis. Both turned out fine with the help of modern medicine. My story can be condensed to 3 filters by which I run my life and make decisions. Whenever faced with an important decision to make and even the simple ones I ask myself 3 simple questions. 1. How does this affect my walk with My God? 2. How does this affect my walk with my wife and family? 3. How will this affect my health?

It was through my faith in my God that I knew that it will be alright, that I had nothing to worry about, the doctors would do their part, my body would heal as it should and my wife would keep the business running. I can honestly say I had no worries through both ordeals.

It was through my confidence in my body's ability to heal that I knew no matter how bad the situation looked, my body could heal. I knew this because I do all the things I know we should do but most people don't because its' not convenient; like exercise, eat nutritious foods, take vitamins regularly and currently taking extra of the things to stimulate a healthy immune system.

It was through my confidence in my wife that I knew she would do the right things. We have spent the time together and trained together so I knew she was capable. I am a physician and she comes with me to most of my conferences and trainings so if you spoke with her, you would think she is a doctor, but she is not. She is a certified Integrative nutritional

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Sanctification

By David Valls
Mitchell County

This month in our series of articles dealing with the purpose of salvation, we will be discussing the process of sanctification. By definition, this word simply means to be "set apart." Once we have been saved, we have the righteousness of Christ placed on our account. Then we are justified. That means we are declared righteous based on the sacrifice of Christ. Then begins the process of sanctification. When a person is saved, there is a transformation that begins in a person's life whereby they become a new creature or a new creation in Christ. All things old have passed and have become new after we are saved. Christ is the potter and we are the clay. When a potter works with a piece of clay, they are careful to make sure that whatever they are making is a masterpiece... that is exactly how sanctification works! It's a step by step process whereby God transforms us into what He desires us to be. The clay has no choice but to surrender to the wheel of the potter. Spiritually speaking, we must surrender our will to God, so that we can allow His plan for our life to be fulfilled. The Bible tells us to be ye not conformed to this world but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind. The mind is where our thoughts come from and whatever our thoughts are focused on determines where our focus in life is. Whatever our focus in life, is where our treasure is... and where our treasure is, there will our heart be also. Does sanctification mean to be without sin? Certainly not! We possess a fallen nature that is our flesh. But when we have the holy spirit living inside us, it fights against our flesh while the flesh fights against the spirit. The question we must ask ourselves is are we more sanctified today than we were when we first became Christian? The closer we come to God, the more we grow in Christ. The more we grow in Christ, the farther we climb up the spiritual ladder of being what God intends for us to be. How much progress we make in our sanctification depends upon the people, places and the things that we surround ourselves with and the decisions we make. These things all determine whether we are progressing up the ladder of spiritual growth or falling into a spiritual decline, or somewhere in between. This is what the Bible calls lukewarm. Jesus says He would rather us be hot or cold... if we are lukewarm, He will spew us out of his mouth, which in Greek literally to violently vomit. But God gives us all the tools through sanctification to progress toward being who and what He has called us to be and does not end until we leave this world. As long as we live, there will never be a stopping point for spiritual growth. The need for this is the same for someone who has been saved for fifty years as it is for a new Christian. Let us strive by God's grace to be all that He wants us to be so we can enjoy His blessings, not only in this life but in the next.

David Valls attends Middle District Freewill Baptist Church in Buladean. I am from Mitchell County. I have been the adult class Sunday school teacher for the past 13 years.



Are You Shifting the Blame?

By Shawn Thomas
Angleton, Texas

"The people spoke against God and Moses, 'Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this miserable food.'" (Numbers 21:5)

Numbers 21:4 says the people of Israel "became impatient because of the journey" in the wilderness. But as people often do, they vented their anger in the wrong direction. Verse 5 says that "The people spoke against God and Moses, 'Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die ...'" Why were they blaming "God and Moses"? The reason they were dying in the wilderness was entirely their fault. Numbers 14 tells us that the people refused to enter the Canaan at the direction of the Lord through Moses, so God sentenced them to die in the wilderness instead of inheriting the Promised Land (14:35). It was not God's fault they were floundering and dying in the wilderness. It was their own.

But like many of us today, the people of Israel were looking for someone else to blame. It can be hard to own up to our mistakes, so we often look to "shift the blame" to someone else: our spouse, child, a supervisor, co-worker, a classmate — or even, like Israel here, to God Himself.

Are you doing this? Are you suffering the consequences of your disobedience to God in some area of your life, but you have not been willing to admit it? Is there someone you have been angry with — maybe even God? — instead of admitting that you have brought this upon yourself? If so, you never will make any progress before God or man, until you first stop trying to shift the blame.

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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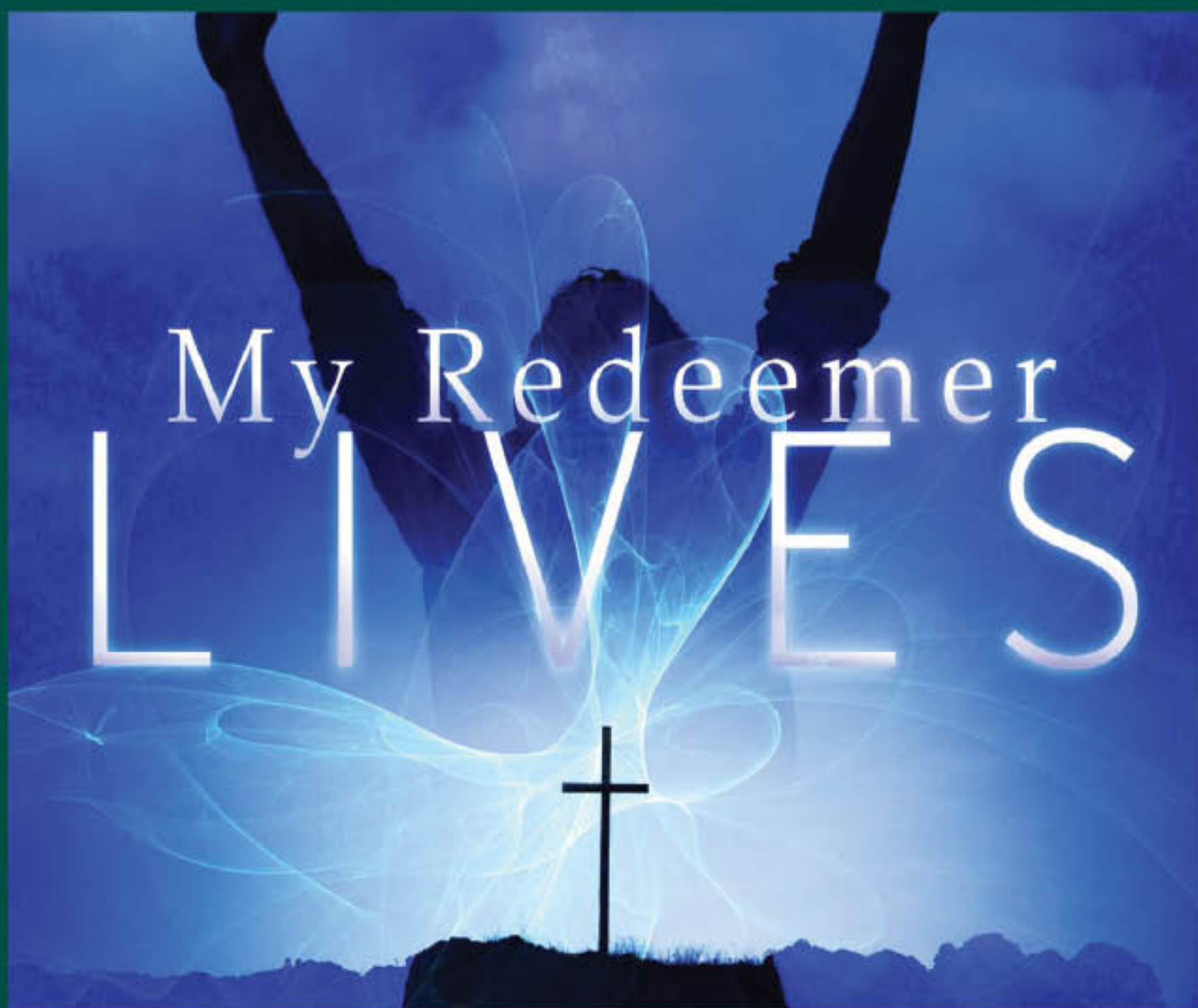
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