Good News Bible Club

Doug Harrell

“And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, and put his hands upon them, and blessed them.”

Mark 10:13–16 ESV

There is nothing in this world as important as teaching our children and youth about the Lord Jesus Christ. In today's politically correct environment it has become increasingly difficult to do this in public places outside our homes. Good News Bible Club, part of Child Evangelism Fellowship, is very active in our local area with 41 active clubs in Avery, Mitchell, Yancey and McDowell Counties plus others in Burke County that I may not be aware of. There were 2177 children enrolled in these clubs last year, plus enrollment at two YMCA's in the area, and there were twelve 3-day camp programs that took place also. Out of this last year, there were over 200 professions of faith made for Christ. God is great!

The greatest need are twofold, financial and volunteers. It costs approximately $1000 per school year per school to fund the program and that is important, but even more important is the need for volunteers. Normally there is a need for at least six volunteers that can meet with the club once a week, and the volunteers need to be at the school or location from about 2:00 PM until about 4:30 PM on the day the club is meeting.

My friends, as a father, grandfather and great grandfather, I can truly say that there is nothing as important in this life as teaching the lives of our children. Below I have reprinted, permission of some of the information from Child Evangelism Fellowship that describes more in detail what Good News Bible Club is all about.

Good News Bible Club

What is Good News Club?

Good News Club® is a ministry of Child Evangelism Fellowship® in which trained teachers meet with groups of children in schools, homes, community centers, churches, apartment complexes, just about anywhere the children can easily and safely meet with their parent's permission. Each week the teacher presents an exciting Bible lesson using colorful materials from CEF Press. This action-packed time also includes songs, Scripture memory, a missions story, and review games or other activities focused on the lesson’s theme.

As with all CEF® ministries, the purpose of Good News Club® is to evangelize boys and girls with the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and establish (disciple) them in the Word of God and in a local church for Christian living.

Can We Really Teach the Bible in Public Schools?

Yes! The Gospel has been taught freely in public schools all over the world for some time. Now children in the U.S. have that opportunity, too! In 2001 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in Good News Clubs v. Milford Central School that Good News Clubs® can meet in public schools in the United States after school hours on the same terms as other community groups. Children attend Good News Club only with their parents' permission.

Please be in prayer about sending a helping hand either with financially or by volunteering, or better yet, both. Please contact Darrell Cable at 828-925-9122. In the Asheville area contact Jason Beverly at 828-450-6194.

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Some Things Just Don’t Make Any Sense!
By Preacher Chris Rutherford
Mitchell County

Every time I read the paper or watch the news I am amazed and often disabused at what is going on in our country. There are some things that just don’t make much sense to me. We seem to have educated ourselves into losing all common sense. Things that should be simple, common sense issues have been made into such complicated debates that most people can’t even understand what the debate is about. Let me give you a few examples.

A few years ago, there was a story on the evening news from a South Carolina station that went something like this. A woman who was addicted to heroin gave birth to a baby. Of course, as expected, the baby had major complications and only lived a few weeks and died. The mother was arrested, tried, and convicted for manslaughter and placed in prison. As sad as that is, here is something worse. She could have had that same baby born during the pregnancy and not one charge would have been brought against her. This goes on every single day in this country. Babas are killed in a mother’s womb and a lot of people seem to be ok with it. Just doesn’t make much sense to me.

In our school systems today, our children can study and read a book written by Adolf Hitler called “Mein Kampf”. And probably if one wanted to, one could even invite someone into the classroom to talk to the children about this book. They could answer questions and even explain to the children about Hitler’s policies. Now we are talking about a person who was responsible for the slaughter of millions. For the most part, this would seem by some as educational and productive for children. However, if I as a pastor were to be invited to speak to the children about the teachings of Jesus, how do you think that would go?

If I asked the children they were created in the image of God, and that He loves them and has a plan and purpose for their lives, how do you think some people would react? What if I taught the children about how Jesus teaches us to love and care for others, would that be ok? What if I taught the children about how Jesus teaches us to love and care for others, would that be ok? What if I taught the children about how Jesus teaches us to love and care for others, would that be ok? What if I taught the children about how Jesus teaches us to love and care for others, would that be ok? What if I taught the children about how Jesus teaches us to love and care for others, would that be ok? What if I taught the children about how Jesus teaches us to love and care for others, would that be ok?

These are just a few basics that are found in the Bible. Most likely, I would be on the next evening news and probably the focus of a lawsuit before long. Just doesn’t make much sense to me.

In our nation there is a debate going on over marriage. We have same-sex couples who believe that marriage should be recognized as a legitimate marriage relationship. Now for us as Christians, this should not even be up for debate! The only way one could come to the conclusion that this is right is to ignore what the Bible teaches. One of the basic understandings of Biblical marriage is the bearing of children in a marriage between a man and a woman. Would someone please explain how this is possible in a same-sex relationship? Even if one does not believe the Holy Bible or simply chooses to ignore it, everyone himself teaches that this is not normal behavior. Anyway, just doesn’t make sense to me.

In our nation there is also a debate about abortion. A person who is reading this article and they are on the fence. Why, you may ask? Because I would have the audacity to actually call something wrong. Right now, I am being called a religious fanatic, hate-monger, proponent of hate speech, judgmental, intolerant religious bigot, etc., etc., all because I do not agree. The very ones, who go about teaching everyone to be accepting of all, are now being insensitive to my views simply because they do not align with their views. And somehow, I am the intolerant one. Just doesn’t make sense to me.

Right now, in our country, our national debt continues to grow and grow. Yet, every day we do not have the money, our leaders continue to spend that which we do not have, and they know we do not have it. Now folks, when I was in elementary school, learning the three R’s (Reading, Writing, and Rithmetic) I was taught the basic principle that one cannot spend what one does not have! It’s pretty simple to understand that if a candy bar costs a dollar and you only have a quarter, you wait until you get the dollar before you buy the candy bar. If you do not have the dollar, my Daddy always told me you had to go to work and earn it! Somehow, we have missed this along the way. Just doesn’t make sense to me.

The examples could go on and on. We as a nation, and often as individuals, continue to ignore the teachings of Scripture. In spite of what the Bible teaches about respect for human life (even in the womb), marriage, raising children, right and wrong, finances, etc., we seem determined to do the opposite. We don’t want to follow what God teaches us to follow and yet we want God to continue to bless our nation. We elect leaders who we know are going to follow the same path and we expect God to bless our nation. We continually give in to voices of unrighteousness all in the name of tolerance, and we expect God to bless us. We want to do what is right in our own eyes, and we expect God to bless us. Someone once said, “Those who choose to ignore history are destined to repeat it.” Society is destined to repeat other nations in history if something does not change. The Bible teaches us that it is righteousness that exalts a nation (Proverbs 14:34). We cannot be a nation that winks at ungodliness and expect a God of holiness to bless us! Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord…Psalm 33:12.

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

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Youth to Youth
By Schell McCall, Executive Director
Mitchell County

Youth to Youth Members at Bowman Middle School Lead Their School’s Participation in National Drug and Alcohol Facts Week
This past week (January 22-28) was National Drug and Alcohol Facts Week -- a national health observance that links young people to facts that SHATTER THE MYTHS® about drugs. Members of the Youth to Youth group at Bowman Middle School observed National Drug and Alcohol Facts Week by announcing a substance abuse awareness fact each day during morning announcements. On Friday morning, students were given the opportunity to take a quiz on the facts presented during the week for a chance to win a Bluetooth speaker. Over 150 kids took part!
This activity is an example of the work that local Youth to Youth empowerment groups are doing to gain leadership skills and spread awareness of substance abuse issues to their peers! Youth to Youth (Y2Y) is a youth-led, adult-guided initiative of the Mitchell Yancey Substance Abuse Program that brings young people together to build leadership skills and create positive change in schools and the community.
To learn more about PATH’s Youth to Youth initiatives contact PATH staff at (828) 862-7899, info@pathnc.org, or visit http://pathnc.org/programs/substance-abuse-prevention/youth-to-youth-y2y.
Schell McCall is Program Associate for Yancey County 4-H.

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He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. 1 John 4:8

No Regrets Family -
The Greatest Pitcher in the World.
By Pastor Dean Honeycutt
Mitchell County

A young boy stepped onto the baseball field with a ball in his hand and a bat over his shoulder. Looking out to deep center field he said, "I am the greatest batter in the world." as he threw the ball into the air and swung his bat with all his might. "Strike one" he said. Again, taking his stance looking deep into the outfield, "I am the greatest batter in the world." "Strike two." Determined to make the hit the boy threw the ball into the air and swung the bat with all his might. "Strike three." Then with a smile on his face the little baseball player said, "Wow, I am the greatest pitcher in the world."

One of the greatest things you can give your child is confidence and self-worth. This is so important to their development as a child and adult. I have noticed children who are trained Biblically in a Christian home with a loving father and mother are very confident. I am not talking about a prideful or arrogant confidence, a haughty spirit or better than others attitude. I am talking about a confidence that trusts in God and helps that child nurture in their relationship with Jesus Christ, and when they get out on their own they have the confidence to stand alone in a world system that is immodest.

Psalm 139:14 (KJV 1900) 14 I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Marvelous are thy works. And that my soul knoweth right well.

I speak with first hand experience. My mom encouraged me, but my dad, bless his heart, struggled in that area because he was an alcoholic. My dad failed to realize as a young boy I needed his praise, I needed his encouragement, I needed to hear him say "atta boy" you did an excellent job. My dad learned to do this later. He became an adult and had a family of my own; however, though I appreciated his approval the damage had already been done. As parents we cannot turn the clock back and have a redo.

So as a child and young teen I lobbied for the approval of male role models in my life. I looked for approval. It is very important for your child to know that you love them and approve of them. This does not mean you approve of the things they do wrong, of course not. You discipline them when you do wrong, but then you hold them and love them and praise them when they do right. You build their confidence up.

Our daughters need approval from us as well. They need to hear that they are beautiful, and God has created them in a beautiful way. I do not like to go shopping, but when I am asked to help look for a dress or dress I go along because when my daughter comes out of that dressing room she is looking for my approval. That is important because she wants to know what I think. I do not always approve the dress or jeans. But when she does find that one that she likes, and I like it too, I now have a beautiful set in mind. This is important because when God brings that special person into her life to wed she will also be looking for my approval and that is very important to me and Pam.

You can go to any playground where kids are playing and in a brief time you can pick the ones who have confidence and the ones who do not. I am not talking about being shy. A child can be shy by nature but still have confidence. Confidence is built by a healthy relationship between a child and their parents.

What is a healthy relationship between child and parent? The Bible says for children to honor their parents. This means children respect their parents and obey them. A wise parent understands how to discipline their children in love. "Father who provoke their children to wrath" are overbearing in nature and expect demands out of their children that they cannot possibly deliver. It is like the dad who expects his child to play a sport like a professional athlete and gets mad when the child does not do well on the field or court. Can you imagine how bad this feels when they do not receive the praise from their dad or mom they so desire to hear. We can push our children so hard that we drive them away from the things they love.

When dad and mom love and respect one another their children will learn to love and respect others. We model in front of our children behavior. My child will learn confidence when they see me act in confidence. When we trust God in times of adversity and prayer in confidence our children will see this in our lives. The way I love my life for God, treat my wife, and love my children will often play a key role in how my child can conduct his life as an adult. Is this one hundred percent guarantee, no, it is not but I will guarantee that your child will have a far better chance succeeding in life and loving God and others if they understand their self-worth is found in their relationship with Jesus Christ. What a privilege and honor it is to have children and see them grow into confident young adults.

Praying for your family.

Pastor Dean Honeycutt Preaches. Snow Hill Baptist Church in Bakevile, NC. He may be reached at 815-583-0313. snowhillbaptist@gmail.com or visit their website at www.snowhillbaptist.com

If ye love me, keep my commandments. John 14:15

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**God's Love**

By Jody Griffin

Avery County

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

I have discovered since beginning to write about the ministry privilege granted me to serve as a correctional chaplain, that no matter the perspective offered, some who read these words will affirm it, while others will reject it. Some will feel validated while others will feel violated. It would be very difficult for many to have love for him. My mind wandered a bit as I thought of those who had been injured physically, emotionally or spiritually as a result of his actions. There has been no contact from any of them. He reasoned that if they hated him, it just made sense that God did too.

Sometimes the only thing to say is nothing, and that's exactly what I did for what seemed like forever. Until what felt at the moment like a fierce pastoral effort drew these verses to my mind and heart. We prayed and asked for God to assure him of God’s love that is so great that it offsets all. When he left his turned calm, at peace and appeared to be touched by the love we had spoken to him.

The real challenge for me began later that day. I just could not get his ‘story’ off my mind. He was overcome with regret for his decisions that led to his incarceration. His shame told him that he was not worthy of God’s Love. My own human imitation was challenged by this question and its implication for seeing that way. Then it struck me. My struggle to truly ‘present’ with him in his despair came because deep down, I understood the feeling.

I’ve had my moments when I wondered if and how God could ever love me. And when those moments I am compelled to remember that God’s love is not like human love. Human love is flawed by selfishness, greed, idolatry and other forms of sinfulness. But God’s love, the kind of love spoken of by those who were inspired to pen the words of Holy Scripture, is different. God’s Love is given to all in Jesus Christ, and for those who will believe in him, the benefits are eternal. Sometimes later same young man passed by me on the yard. I said hello and said, “Some guys in my block told me about what you said to me that day, Chap! I got it now! I got it God does love me! Now all I want to do is live my life for Him!”

God back and had shut the door for a bit. As one called to share God’s Love with everyone, I confessed to God my personal struggle to love a person whose decisions had caused such pain. Deep in my heart I knew what the Lord was saying to me.

My own decisions have caused their share of pain for others. Yet, even as I was speaking grace to this person, I was holding his sin against him. Funny how we do that, isn’t it? (Not really)

But God, with infinite grace, opened this fellow’s eyes to the true meaning of life. God has given it to us. And God, with infinite grace reminded me that my sins were forgiven through the blood of Christ! Thanks be to God!

Moments like these are what this opportunity is all about. Thank God for the honor that I have to represent Christ within the walls! And thank you for praying, and for supporting this work! You make moments like these possible through your financial support!

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

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**Is Jesus the Only Way?**

By Pastor Kurt Bomar

Avery County

We as Christians are often attacked as being too exclusive in our positions about Salvation. You’ve heard the chorus before, “Who are you to say that you have the exclusive rights to truth? You Christians are so narrow minded and egotistical to believe that.”

I find it interesting that I never hear this complaint lodged against other major religions. Islam, for example, is much more “exclusive” than Christianity, in that, not only do they believe their religion is the only way to paradise, but they also believe that if you don’t agree with them, then you are an infidel and they can kill you. If you doubt me, examine the Quran:

Quran (2: 191-193) – “And kill them wherever you find them, and turn them out from where they have turned you out. And Al-Filah [disbelief or murder] is worse than killing... but if they desire, then lo! Allah is forgiving and merciful. And fight them until there is no more Filah [disbelief and worshipping of others along with Allah] and worship is for Allah alone.”

Translation: convert or die.

While other major religions may not be as violent, they all have one thing in common—a claim of exclusivity of truth. So, to lodge this complaint against Christianity alone is hypocritical.

This takes me to a second point: if all major religions are mutually exclusive in their truth claims, then logic demands that only one can be right. Therefore, the complainers of the accusers of Christianity (usually atheists) would better be spent on examining the claims of Christianity to see WHY we claim exclusive truth. To not do so would be like a student railing against his teacher for insisting that 2+2 only = 4 instead of counting on his fingers to confirm the truth.

Disclaimer: I’m not saying that other religions don’t have elements of truth. In fact, all of them do. I’m not saying that they’re not nice, moral people who practice other faiths often are.

What I am saying is that the only way we can be absolutely sure of absolute truth is to hear it directly from God. God knew that, so he sent his Son to tell us. He lived, died, and rose again from the dead. A fact no other religion can claim. We had reliable men who recorded the visit of Jesus for us. We know their testimony is reliable because they laid down their lives rather than reject it. Occasionally a man (woman) will lay down their life for something they believe to be true, but no one will lay down their life for something they know to be a lie.

My encouragement is not to be misunderstood by those who would complain that we are “holders of exclusive truth.” It’s OK to claim you’re right if you are.

1 Peter 3:15: “But in your hearts set Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.”

Kurt Bomar is pastor of Walnut Grove Church.
What is Love
By Doug Harrell

I don’t know who will be reading this, but if you are in a relationship, or wanting to be in a lasting relationship, you might want to read the book in the Bible "Song of Solomon".

"My beloved speaks, and says unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land. The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and under every green tree do they hang their clusters, and the smen with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away. O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely." Song of Solomon 2:10-14 KJV

Valentine’s Day is a day that we set aside to show love and affection to our friends, family, and our mate. I happen to think that it is important to do this every day rather than just one day a year. In May this year, my lovely wife Barb and I, if we live until then, will celebrate 24 years of marriage and I will be quick to tell you that I would do it over again in a minute. Saying that we had never had arguments or quarrels would be a big misnomer to say the least, but I can truly say that neither of us has ever considered divorce at all, at least I can attest to myself and think that this is true of Barbara as well.

Very early on in our marriage we began reading books on marriage and marriage relationships and vowed to each other that we would always work on making the marriage as fun and fruitful as possible. I want to just list a few things that are critical to making a relationship last with an abundance of love and fun.

Talking to sweetheart, do you really know the person you are thinking about marrying? Have you spent enough time dating to be over the infatuation period? do you know their spiritual background and beliefs, are you on the same page on social issues? DO YOU BOTH HAVE A SOLID RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LORD? This is the basis of all relationships if you want a relationship that will last through the ages. Many people today laugh and scoff at the idea of a Biblical marriage, but don’t be glib. God has laid down the foundation for love and marriage and it does not have to be small, it is just the opposite! Men, don’t be afraid to show your emotions, tell your wife every day that you love her and discuss her, bring on her mind and her body. Here again, read and reread Song of Solomon and see how lovers speak to each other. A woman wants to feel loved and wanted intellectually and sexually, there is absolutely nothing un-biblical about any of that. Romance you wife each and every day of your life and I promise it will make marriage much more fun. You ladies, your husband wants your respect probably more than anything else you can give him. We men want to be seen as the knight on the white horse taking care of our woman. Let him know how much you respect him and give him room to be the leader in the family. I promise if you will lift him up as your leader and provider, in most cases he will become the person you would like him to be. Let him know that he is your leader and companion, the one you want to be with, the one you admire most. Enjoy loving each other in all areas of your lives and it can be so rewarding. Marriage and relationships, family, children, grandchildren and great grandchildren, these are the things that make life pleasant. When the Lord decides to take us home, the only thing that we really leave in this old world is the impact and legacy we leave with our friends and families, the difference we have made on their lives. Begin with a loving relationship with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and spread Christian love to all those you come in contact with. If you are married, read and reread Song of Solomon. Happy Valentine’s Day to all.

Morganton Seventh-Day Adventist Church
Ultimate Love
By Rick and Cindy Mercer
Burke County

We have all heard stories that came out of the 9/11 tragedy. The following story begins with a man named Stanley who sat on the eighty-first floor of the South Tower of the World Trade Center. Suddenly the nose of a 767 jet filled the sky outside his window. He dropped the phone and dove under his desk. Steel shrieked against steel as the ceiling crashed down. Electrical wires sparked. Decks and filing cabinets tumbled across the room. And then Stanley started sobbing and then praying.

As many of us watched the dreadful fate that day, news reporters flashed scenes over and over again—the thousands of people fleeing the building that day. Horribly burned and profoundly bleeding, they stumbled down darkened stairwells.

Another man named Brian was running down from the eighty-fourth floor when he heard cries for help. It was Stanley, who had somehow managed to crawl through the rubble but was now trapped under a fallen wall.

Brian pulled away charred debris and shattered doors. Finally, he reached the desperate man. “You have got to make it through the wall,” he yelled. “I can’t,” Stanley replied. “You have to do this,” Brian shouted back. Stanley clawed his way up to him and Brian pulled him from the rubble. The two strangers hugged like brothers. When they finally got outside, with tears in his eyes Stanley looked at Brian and said, “Keep in touch because I owe you my life.”

Does this bring to mind the amazing love that saved you and me? When we ponder on that, our heart should also cry out, “Lord, I want to keep in touch, because I owe you my life.” The essence of the Christian life is fellowship with God. When two people are in love, they long to be together. Separation is painful. When we fully sense Jesus’ love and commitment in saving us, our hearts respond in love. We long to be with Him. We want to spend time with Him in fellowship. We don’t want to be separated from His love for an instant! In one of my favorite books Steps to Christ we are told that “The price paid for our redemption, the infinite sacrifice of our heavenly Father in giving His Son to die for us, should give us excellent conceptions of what we may become through Christ.” And then the inspiration of scripture reminds us “Be holy in all your love. The Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.” 1 John 3:1. This places great value upon man!

Friends, God values us highly. He loves us immensely. He longs to be with us intensely. His love breaks our hard hearts and draws us to Him. Through Calvary, we see Him our lives. The least we can do is give back to Him the lives He redeemed and gave to us.

That is the ultimate example of love!

Rick Mercer is the pastor of the Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church at 2187 Jamestown Road, Morganton. They can be reached at 828-320-3549 or cjmercer@carolina.net. Check out www.morgantonad.org. Their passion is to share the love of Jesus with all who will listen.

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The Nonprofit Leader’s Guide to Planning and Action

Contact: Susan Larson
Mitchell County

Nonprofit organizations are continually faced with questions, “Are we doing the right thing? Will this event or that program be consistent with our mission? What should we be focused on in the short term to get to our long-term goals? What are our long-term goals?”

Consultant Judy Futch is an expert in helping nonprofits assess their goals and plans for the future. She will be guiding a two-part process for Avery, Mitchell and Yancey county nonprofits on two Wednesday mornings, February 28 and March 21, in the ARC, upstairs of the Tea River Arts Gallery at 360 Oak Avenue, Sparta. The workshops will run from 9:00 a.m. to noon, with a registration fee of $30 for the first registrant from an organization and $25 for up to three more from the same nonprofit. The cost covers both sessions and registrants should clear their calendars to attend both. “The Nonprofit Leader’s Guide to Planning and Action” is sponsored by WNC Nonprofit Pathways with support from Duke Energy.

In the first session participants will focus on mission, vision, guiding principles and strategic directions and annual plans. She’ll suggest key ways to involve staff, board and volunteers in these planning processes and will set the stage for a planning event to conduct with them before session two. In session two participants will describe what was planned and what actually happened and assess what the highlights were and what they might do differently the next time.

Judy Futch is a senior consultant with WNC Pathways. In addition to working with a number of local nonprofits, she is also one of the consultants guiding the WNC Nonprofit Pathways Leadership Program. She consults with nonprofits on issues of merger, service delivery improvement, staff retention and recruitment, strategic direction and leadership succession. She also works with early-stage organizations to identify stakeholders interests, clarify vision, mission, goals and leadership roles and to build effective board, executive director and staff relationships.

Her background is in health education. She established the Mental Health Education Program at Wake Forest University School of Medicine (formerly Bowman Gray) and also the Management Education Department at Mountain Area Health Education Center (MAHEC) in Asheville.

To be sent a link to register for this workshop, contact Susan Larson at sjlamselton@gmail.com or 828-765-2652.

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Beginnings

Traditions
Morganton Baptist Church

I Love You...or Do I?

By Pastor Dan Qarolo
Burke County

The word love has come to be used in a variety of ways. Some people may say they love chocolate or love a particular hobby. They may love their job, and they may love their car. These same people will then say they love a spouse or children. Obviously, the manner in which we use the word love differs extensively. In addition, the biblical concept of love is greatly contrasted with how the world views love. Unfortunately, believers have allowed the world’s concept of love to dictate their concept. It is easy to say the word “I love you” is truly a challenge to love as God expects us to love.

Many believers are familiar with the famous words of 1 Corinthians 13:4: I fear that many who are familiar with this passage do not understand what it means and therefore cannot properly apply it to their lives. Note the following brief definitions of this well-known passage and determine to make this the standard by which you are judged. You will most likely find that it is easy to say I love you...but do I?

1. Charity suffered long; therefore, it bears up under provocation and is forbearing with others. In other words, love does not react.
2. Charity is kind; therefore, it always expresses itself in that which is loving and merciful.
3. Charity envies not; therefore, it avoids negative feelings over someone else’s success.
4. Charity vaunteth not itself; therefore, love never heaps praise upon oneself.
5. Charity is not puffed up; therefore, love never has an exaggerated self-conception.
6. Charity doth not behave itself unseemly; therefore, love never behaves disgracefully or acts dishonorably.
7. Charity seeketh not her own; therefore, love does not devote serious effort to achieve one’s own desires; in other words, love is not self-serving.
8. Charity is not easily provoked; therefore, love does not cause a state of inward annual by its own actions.
9. Charity thinketh no evil; therefore, love keeps no score of wrongs.
10. Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity; therefore, love is not glad in injustice or wrongdoing.
11. Charity rejoiceth in the truth; therefore, love rejoices in righteousness.
12. Charity beareth all things; therefore, love suffers a cloak of silence over what is displeasing in another person.
13. Charity believeth all things; therefore, love is trusting.
14. Charity hopeth all things; therefore, love waits with confidence for that which is good to happen.
15. Charity endureth all things; therefore, love maintains a belief or course of action in the face of opposition. In other words, it holds out or endures instead of fleeing.
16. Charity never faileth; therefore, love never becomes inadequate for some future need.

The challenge is indeed great to love as God expects us to love. I challenge you to determine to love those whom God has brought into your life with this kind of love. Imagine the impact Christianity could make if we all simply chose to love this way. Jesus told his disciples, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another” (John 13:35).

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

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Yancey County Hospice

“What Does Love Look Like?”

By Jacob Willis
Yancey County

Many pictures of love are depicted in society today. Valentine’s Day approaches with cards, chocolates, flowers, stuffed animals and pictures of couples in love. Love that is depicted in the movies usually is the puppy love of romance novels, the exotic form of love, or of the Shakespearean tragedy. We can become so confused about what real love looks like that we mistake true love for something else. Satan uses counterfeit images and messages about love to create chaos in our lives. All temptation begins with attempting to meet a legitimate need in an illegitimate way. So it begins the question what does real love, biblical love look like?

First of all, real love looks like Jesus. If we are looking for the example of real love we look to Jesus. Love is a choice before it is a feeling. The Bible says, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. Love is choosing to give what isn’t required without the expectation of receiving anything back. Agape (God Love) is unconditional, unmerited, and unselfish. Jesus gave himself a ransom for many, in other words He died so that you may live. The Bible says, “While we were yet sinners Christ died for us.” He made an active choice to love us while we were at our worst. That is love personified.

Secondly, love is an action. Love is a choice, but love is also an action. If someone is saying constantly “I love you”, but then demonstrating another behavior, that isn’t true love. The Bible says in Romans 5:8, “Christ demonstrated His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.” He took love from thought into action. If you ever question whether someone loves you, observe what they do. God only said He loves you, He died in your place for your sins. To sin means to miss the mark, to set out of bounds, or to just be plain twisted. That’s why the Bible says in Romans 5:8, “For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” That doesn’t mean some of us, that means all of us have broken God’s law. He doesn’t judge us for it, He comes down to where we are and dies for us. Jesus says in John 3:17, “For God so did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that through Him the world might be saved.”

Finally, love is tough. Love must, out of love, speak the truth. Love must say what is best and right, sometimes to the chagrin of the audience. True love is willing to confront wrong, stand up for the marginalized, and when needed, stand up for ourselves. Jesus makes enemies because He speaks the truth. The people that love you most are the ones who are willing to tell you the truth.

While working with Yancey Hospice and Palliative Care, I get to watch true love in action. Couples who stick with one another and care for each other during the worst of times: Doctors, nurses, CNA’s, social workers, volunteers, and chaplains assist patients and families, to provide dignity to a dying person. Christ is our great example of love. When we follow His example we can change the world one life at a time. If you have never received Christ as your savior, He loves you, and He will forgive you.

Jacob Willis is an ordained pastor and Benevolence Coordinator for Yancey County Hospice. You may contact him at jacobw@hospiceofyancey.org.

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
Family Matters
By Battie Styles
Yancey County

Yancey Alliance for Young Children (YAYC) awarded funding for new Family Matters program.

The Yancey Alliance for Young Children (YAYC) has been awarded a $30,000 grant by The Community Foundation of Western North Carolina to fund our Family Matters program, which will provide parents with new opportunities to learn about topics related to raising children birth through eight. Over the next year, 24 classes will be offered in 3 regions of the county—Buncombe, Mitchell, and Avery counties—on topics such as communicating positively with your child, understanding typical and atypical development, supporting a child who has experienced trauma, and using everyday interactions to build your child's skills. Meals and child care will be provided. More information is coming soon about where and when these classes will be held, and how to sign up.

YAYC is an initiative of the Blue Ridge Partnership for Children and was launched in July of 2016 with CFWN’s funding to create mutually-supportive alliances that increase young children’s access to critical health and education services. This CFWN funding is the result of the YAYC Parent Education Work Group planning efforts, which have been led by Teresa Emery, Outreach Coordinator for Parent to Parent Family Support Network, a program of Appalachian State University. The Family Matters program is also made possible by the many Yancey County families who gave us feedback about their needs for information and support. YAYC is partnering with Parent2Parent, Yancey County Schools, and many talented parenting professionals to provide these classes.

YAYC would like to thank the Bailey-Billard Fund/Yancey Fund, Crumfield Charitable Fund, Clyde and Mildred Wright Endowment Fund, and an anonymous foundation of The Community Foundation of Western North Carolina for funding our new Family Matters Program. The Yancey Fund is an affiliate fund of The Community Foundation of Western North Carolina and partners with CFWN to award grants in Yancey County. The Advisory Board of The Yancey Fund has local knowledge of donors and nonprofit organizations, and helps CFWN effectively allocate financial resources.

Advisory Board members read applications, attend site visits, and relay their feedback to the full Yancey Fund Board. With support from the Program Officer of CFWN, the Advisory Board makes recommendations to CFWN about worthwhile projects. The combination of The Yancey Fund’s local expertise and dollars and CFWN’s regional philanthropy benefits many Yancey County nonprofits.

Contributions to The Yancey Fund are pooled and invested by The Community Foundation. Proceeds from the investments are used to make grants while the original gifts remain intact, continuing to grow for the benefit of future generations. If you would like to know more about the Yancey Fund please visit www.yanceyfund.org or call Jon Powell, Chair at (828) 208-3057.

Yancey Alliance for Young Children (YAYC) awarded funding for new Family Matters program.

I have always been moved to help with Missions since I was a young child. At the same time, going to a foreign country scared me. I often prayed that the Lord would direct me to my mission field. I always thought I would grow up and be married with lots of children, teach school, and live happily ever after. I had a love for children. God’s timeline and my timeline were not the same. He always knows what is best for us. As time passed and I hadn’t found the person God had chosen for me to marry yet, my mission field became more clear. As a teacher, I see the needs our children of McDowell County have. I was introduced to our local DSS and the Foster Care program. God is good to all of us. I prayed asking God’s direction. With each step of the process, he involved my supportive friends. Me being single and working full time, I know I couldn’t do this without their help.

In 3 years, I have fostered 3 children and adopted one of them. My first fostering experience was a little 7 month old boy. We had him for 9 weeks. He eventually went home to grandparents. That first time losing a child to go back to family was bittersweet. It was so hard, but I understand it was the best for him. Three months later, we received the call to take another little boy. He was part of our family for 2 years. I spent those two years developing a positive relationship with his mother. Shared parenting is so important in foster care. You become a role model, friend, confidant to that parent. It also helps so you can maintain contact when they go home. Our third child was a little girl that came to us at birth. After 2 years, we were blessed to be able to adopt her.

God is hopefully still using our family in some was in the Foster Care system. God can use you too. This is our community and our mission field. Make a difference foster/adopt a child. Contact McDowell County DSS 828-652-3355.
A Meditation

Knowing Your Love Languages:
By Timothy Eller
McDowell County

In our fast-paced society, we often communicate via Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, and Snap Chat. We are able to communicate with people around the world. Even if we are communicating more, I feel that we are not connecting. We are losing the connection that we have with other people. Over the phone or internet, we lose that energy that is produced and intimacy when people are together in person and they communicate. We need to regain that communication between human beings in a face-to-face manner. We need to realize that communication is related to in five ways. Words of Affirmation is our first love language, communication, and quality time, acts of service, gift giving, and physical touch. These languages refer to how you receive love, and respond to others with love. Do you know your primary language of love? This is key to building long and lasting intimate relationships.

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

Mitchell County Animal Rescue

MCAR Dealing with a Surge in Animal Cruelty and Neglect Cases
By Patricia Bean

How the public can help identify and report cases of abuse and neglect.

Spruce Pine, NC (January 22, 2018) – In the past few weeks, Mitchell County Animal Rescue has seen a surge in cases regarding animal abuse, abandonment, and neglect. These cases have resulted in animals being seized from the shelter in terrible conditions ranging from broken bones, animals in need of immediate veterinary care, and animals kept in harmful due to prolonged neglect and cases of advanced emaciation and starvation.

Sadly, in some of these cases, it is possible that neighbors may know about this abuse but are reluctant or afraid to report them right away, causing unnecessary suffering on the part of the animals involved. Because of this, Patricia Bean, MCAR Executive Director, urges everyone in our community to be vigilant about reporting any suspected cases of animal abuse or neglect. "Reporting animal abuse and neglect in Mitchell County is easy, and all calls are received and looked into. This can be the difference between life or death for some of these animals."

Animals in rural Mitchell County, NC, in the heart of the Appalachian Mountains, are at risk of animal abuse or neglect. You can call Mitchell County Animal Rescue directly by phone at 828-756-6952. You can also reach us by email at mcardirector@gmail.com. Patricia Bean serves as the County Commissioner appointed Cruelty Investigator for Mitchell County, NC, working closely with local law enforcement. Calls can be made anonymously if you wish, and we are under no obligation to provide your name or phone number. You can also reach local and county law enforcement on their non-emergency hotlines, Mitchell Communications, at 828-488-1101. If you see an animal emergency, you can also call 911.

MCAR wants the public to know that they are a resource to any pet or pet owner in need by offering free services to help low income families. These services are available to help prevent animal neglect from happening in the first place. Free blankets are provided all winter long outside the front entrance of the shelter and can be used to help insulate dog houses. They can be used to keep pets warm when they are outside and when animals should be brought inside in order to remain warm in the colder weather. They also have a pet food bank available to the public for anyone in need of food. "We have a wonderful pet food bank program, made possible by donations, so that if your pet is hungry and you cannot afford pet food, just call the shelter and we will provide you with free dog or cat food," said Patricia Bean. "All of these resources are available for free, but we encourage everyone to think of the animals before you leave them in your care."

Mitchell County Animal Rescue is here to help both the animal citizens of Mitchell, NC and the people who love them. This is a great way for people who are not able to care for their own pets to help animals in need. "We want to be the solution, not the problem," said Patricia Bean. "We are here to help both the animals and the people who love them."

Please remember that we as a community are the animals' first defense against abuse and neglect. We encourage you to be aware of your surroundings and if you see something that concerns you, please do not hesitate to contact MCAR immediately. Animals need you to be their voice. By working together we can end animal suffering in Mitchell County. For more information about MCAR visit www.mitchellcountyanimalrescue.org.

About Mitchell County Animal Rescue
Mitchell County Animal Rescue, Inc. (MCAR) is a not-for-profit humane organization devoted to the rescue and care of abandoned and otherwise unwanted animals. Its facilities are in rural Mitchell County, NC, in the heart of the Appalachian Mountains. Our mission is “To protect, rescue, and care for abandoned and unwanted animals; to promote the importance of spay/neuter is reducing the population of stray animals, to place animals in loving homes; and to educate young people in humane treatment of animals.” Founded in 1987 as a mostly volunteer organization, our success in community service led to a partnership with Mitchell County in 2004, ensuring that no animal in need would be left behind. Although we are a small shelter with limited resources, we are highly dedicated to our community and we strive to offer as many programs as our budget will allow including: adoption, intake of stray and surrendered pets, lost and found, cruelty investigations and prosecution assistance, low-cost spay/neuter programs, low-cost rabies clinics, pet food banks and community education. We currently operate with 4 full-time and 2 part-time employees who are extremely dedicated to fulfilling our mission. And we use our experience and knowledge to help educate and encourage volunteers who share the same values with our animals each and every day. We have as many as 30 regular shelter volunteers, 30 children volunteers each week from the local Montessori School, a 9 member Board of Directors, and 2 veterinarians who work closely with our staff at a reduced cost. We are extremely proud that our little shelter was the 2015-2016 Non-Profit of the Year Award from the Mitchell Chamber of Commerce for the last four consecutive years, 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017! We have 2 dog kennels, 4 of which can hold multiple dogs in cases of mothers with litters or bonded dogs who should remain together. We also have a special cat area with 59 cages, many of which can also hold multiple cats who can enjoy company. In addition to the space at our facility, we have an active foster program with 6 homes participating. Visit www.mitchellcountyanimalrescue.org to find out how you can join us in our work.

Patricia Bean works for the Mitchell County Animal Rescue.

Crossword Solution

Sudoku Solution

www.brcnews.com
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The Rest of the Story

By Doug Harrell

Usually, when I sit down and read one of these stories of Clint’s, I am laughing, but today I am not. Today, I must admit, there were running down my cheeks tears. I had finished reading his recap of adventure. Lord, I miss that friend! There are people in all of us: alive that are true friends from the very beginning of the time that you meet. Clint was one of those to me. Over the sixteen years we were best friends, I don’t think I ever chanced getting either of us. Clint tells the story of our little pond, today where we started that small pond, stands a true pond with a water lily to water the garden and more. No, I did not dig it, but it had done purposefully. Clint would be so proud! Enjoy as you laugh along with Farmer Clint!

Furry Farm

Dear friends,

I’ve been writing this column for nearly 3 years – in fact, this is my 56th tale from what I call “The Furry Farm” at Harrell Hill. A few months back I seem to have exhausted my inventory of stories from that fateful summer of 2010... when I lived and worked alongside my friends Doug and Barbara Harrell. But, “poof”, here I am again... another incident has come to mind.

Drought Drama

Sitting here today, in our comfy FLOODED Mitchell County, it seems impossible that drought plagued the area not that long ago. In fact, the summer I went to “Farmer School” at Harrell Hill was a hot and very dry. Coming from the Big City of Hendersonville, NC, I was chomping on the life and sights of the farmer. Like most “city folk”, I thought tomatoes grew in my local angle store.

Farmer Doug was bem的意义 the lack of rain, for just a second, when he decided that we needed to find water to irrigate the potted garden. Being the cynic that I am, I thought to myself, “FIND WATER! That’s the most ridiculous thing I’ve ever heard.” While he was making a symbolic gesture towards the skies, I was trying to keep my composure from laughing.

Farmer Doug stopped alongside what appeared to have been a ditch stream - perhaps back in prehistoric times. If you laid your belly beside it you could ALMOST feel a tiny bit of moisture in the soil. Always the optimist, Farmer Doug had referred to it as a “stream”... “I’m thinking to myself,” This IS NOT A STREAM... it’s a little more like a leak in the dirt!”

Every so often I would wander into the expanding cavel to shovel it out. Doing all my part in this DRY HOLE! I recall feeling somewhat tentative about the effort... surely there were evil critters - perhaps a rattlesnake or two, maybe a killer ground squirrel - beneath the surface, irritated that we were disturbing their homestead.

By this time I had lost at least 50 pounds of Farmer Clint fat... having gone from a size 50 waist (at 409 lbs) to a waist 7 and 150 lbs. Although I was far from a model and a little rotund, I gave me the “FARMS are dry” as my excuse and no longer... shovel and grunt... dig and sweat... another rock fighting against my shovel... ooooh, shhh, oooohh, shhhhh (that’s the sound of a man working on the chain gang!)

I am pretty sure that I was only minutes, possibly seconds away from meeting Jesus when I noticed a tiny wet spot on the wall of the cove... surely I was hallucinating - this must be a mirage.

Now more... little more... more now... VOILA, a trickle began flowing from the center of the earth! Farmer Doug grinned... I stood in that hole, my mouth open, my big tootsie water covered the rocks of my Farmer Clint boots. I wandered in wonder as the makeshift reservoir began filling, ever so slowly but surely!

A Garden Party

Remarkably, after a couple hours that doggone hole was FILLED with water! Farmer Doug, with me-to-a-twelve year old, rigged up irrigation system with pvc pipe, a few sprinkler heads and some duct tape... he started the compressor and primed little pumps, then dumping it into the muddy water... sure enough - LIFT OFF! Who needs rain when you have a lake to draw from?!

It may be a bit of a stretch to say that these vegetables erupted in applause, but not much! As the cool night fell upon our garden it could almost see and hear those withering leaves and stalks reviving... amazing.

A Farmer’s Praying Knee

During the summer of 2010, my summer of recantation on Harrell Hill Farms, Lee Erce released a song titled “Leve Like Crazy” I want to share a couple verses of that with you:

Just Ask Him How He Made It
He’ll Tell You Faith And Sweat
And The Heart Of A Faithful Woman,
Who Never Let Him Forget
Be A Best Friend, Tell Me The Truth, And Overuse I Love You
Go To Work, Do Your Best, Don’t Outsmart Your Countryman
Never Let Your Prayin’ Knees Get Lazy
And Love Like Crazy

My friends, these words perfectly describe Farmer Doug Harrell, my friend and soul sisters. As the risk of embarrassing him, I hope you take this message to heart... Never Let Your Prayin’ Knees Get Lazy.

I’ve told you before that Doug always woke me up long before sunset with a promise, “Pollar, we’re burning daylight!” And I’ve described the delicious buckwheat cakes and homemade soups he made for my belly. But before any of that happened... in advance of waking his helper... before stirring the pancake batter... Doug Harrell sat in the dim morning light, Bible in hand, seeking the face and will of his Father.

We had a productive garden in the summer of 2010... a time when much of Mitchell County looked like scorched earth. Corn... tomatoes... beans... okra... broccoli... survived despite the drought... and water flowed from dry ground. I believe, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that God rewarded the faithfulness of my friend Farmer Doug Harrell... He made that water flow... all because he never lets his prayin’ knees get lazy!

And the water continued to fill that muddy reservoir until the rain fell again. Praise God and Amen!

Still Humbled in the Hills,
Farmer Clint

Mountain View Corrections

Turn Your Faith Loose

By Don Stafford

Mitchell County

Imagine having enough faith to impress God. That’s exactly what happened in Luke chapter 7: 1-10. A centurion, a commanding officer of the Roman army, came to Jesus on behalf of his servant who was sick and sore. When Jesus offered to go to the centurion’s home and heal his servant, the officer said “Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed”. You see here a man who understood the power of words. He was, after all, an army officer. When he spoke, everyone listened, and then they did what he said. Now Jesus responded quickly because the man’s words were full of faith. He said “I have not found so much faith in all of Israel”. The faith that so impressed Jesus was the centurion’s willingness to believe without requiring a sign or wonder from heaven. All he needed in order to believe is that Jesus could heal his servant was the word. “Speak the Word only.” He said. And within the hour his servant was healed.

The Bible says, “Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word”. Someone told the centurion that Jesus was all powerful and that He could do all things. They told him how He spoke as one with authority and not just the Pharisee’s How He could heal the sick, open the eyes of the blind and cause the lame to walk, and how he loved all those who needed Him. Jesus can help you and me with our problems and heartaches. All we need to do is turn our FAITH Loose and see what will happen.

Don is the Pastor of Ledger Baptist Church and a chaplin at Mountain View Corrections.

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Christian Action League of NC

What the Issues of Racism and Abortion Have in Common
By Dr. Mark Creech

During the 1930s, the Federal Writers' Project sponsored remarkable interviews with former slaves. The project was based on the premise that no one could better describe the institution of slavery in America than someone who had experienced it. These reports were recorded and today the Library of Congress contains more than 2,000 incredible slave narratives.

Recently, I came across a book edited by Beulah Humphree called My Folks Don’t Want Me to Talk about Slavery. Humphree reviewed and compiled 21 first-person accounts of the more than 170 interviews by the Federal Writers Project of that were from former slaves from our state, North Carolina.

Here’s an excerpt from that book. The person speaking is former slave, Jacob Massey. At the time of the interview, Mr. Massey was 88 years old and lived on North Haywood Street in Raleigh.

"I belonged to Colonel Ben Bledis. His plantation was in Warren County, and he owned about fifty slaves or more..."

Our clothing was made of rope and had tall grass. We were dressed in a white shirt with a black hat and a black coat. Our clothing was poor but homespun.

"They had a slave called Ben Bledis. He was a slave who had a very bad temper. He was very mean to the other slaves. He would hit them when they didn’t do what he wanted. He was very cruel to them."...

"They used to make us work hard. We had to work from the sun up to the sun down. We had to pick cotton and tobacco and do other hard work."

"Even when we were sick, we had to work."

"We worked all day and all night. A slave who made a week, even after doing that, was lucky if he got off without getting a beating. We got mighty bad treatment, and I never told you, a slave didn’t stand as much snow and rain as a dog did. They whipped us for a little bit of trifles. They whipped me, so they said, just to help me get a quicker start."

"Tink slavery was a mighty bad thing, though it’s been no bed of roses since, but that’s the way it was."

Reading such words today, it’s hard to believe there ever was a time in our country when the racist subjugation of one group of people was not considered a grave injustice. What’s even harder to believe is that members of Christians in partnership with Muslims in North Africa promoted the slave trade to the New World.

Gilbert M. James in Baker’s Dictionary of Christian Ethics notes: "When voices were raised against this inhuman traffic, particularly by influential men and representatives of powerful organizations, the slaveholding interests were driven to find moral justification for enslaving human beings. As a result, a vast body of literature developed on the Scriptural justification of slavery, in which large agents of the church in the South gave support. The churches’ defense of slavery because so widespread that the American Anti-Slavery Society observed in their 'Facts' column of May 7, 1844, that no institution is more hostile to the anti-slavery movement than the professedly Christian church in this country."

Throughout the annals of history, one may find professing Christians who led in the way of folly and wickedness. Yet in every case, such evil was never because of Christianity but in spite of it. It was never because of what Christianity actually taught but a perversion of its actual position.

This same error today, I believe, is being made with respect to abortion. Although it is a fervent that the churches support for slavery in the past, it was also Christianity which produced a William Wilberforce and the Clapham Sects who had a profound influence in abolishing the slave trade. And it was Christian abolitionists who were the driving force behind ending slavery in America.

The fight against racism and the struggle to end abortion are both highlighted and emphasized in the month of January. Martin Luther King Jr. Day is celebrated on Monday, January 15th, and Sanctity of Human Life Day is observed on Monday, January 22nd.

Both issues, racism and the sanctity of human life, are addressed by God’s creative purpose "in the beginning" to make man in his own image. Everyone carries the divine image. Therefore, we should never unjustly defeat, degrade, or destroy the life of any fellow human being at any stage or manner. Here’s a final thought: May God bless this nation when our nation might record and loudly with awe to the first-person testimonies of those who were targeted for abortion, and for one blessed reason or another survived, during the sad days when it was still legal.

Rev. Mark Creech is Executive Director of the NC Christian Action League. You may contact him at markcreech@christianactionleague.org or 919-727-5650.

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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

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Questions with Answers
By Billy Graham

For decades, Billy Graham's 'My Answer' column has provided easy-to-read, Biblical answers to difficult spiritual questions. Each week, new answers are posted on BillyGraham.org where readers can search for specific topics or scroll through hundreds of time-tested posts from Billy Graham and the BGEA team.

Last year, the most-clicked answer pages were visited hundreds of thousands of times. Perhaps you or someone you know have wondered about the answer to one of these questions:

1. Are we living in the last times?
2. What is the rapture?
3. What happens the first minute after we die?
4. Is it OK for a Christian's body to be cremated?
5. Does a Christian have to die (go to heaven)?
6. Do you have a question about what it means to know Jesus Christ as your Savior? You can explore the answer with chat with a trained counselor who is waiting to help you.

Q: How bad is the world going to have to get before God finally steps in and Jesus comes back? I get very concerned when I see all the evil things that are happening in the world today. Are we living in the last times?
A: The Bible warns us against making precise predictions about the exact time of Jesus' return—but His return is certain, and we may well be living in the last days before He comes again. The Bible says, “...the night is near; the day is almost here” (Romans 12:12).

Shortly before returning to Heaven, Jesus told His disciples that someday He would return to establish His Kingdom. But before that could take place, He said, certain things would have to happen—and we see many of these today. For example, He said that before His return the Gospel must be preached throughout the world (see Mark 13:10). Never before has this been possible—but now it is, through radio and the Internet and other mediums of communication. So many other things have also happened since Jesus spoke. Satan's final attempt to halt God's work through a massive onslaught of evil. Our world is no stranger to evil. Satan has always been working to stop God's plan. But God's enemies now have access to modern weapons of mass destruction, and no one can predict what the outcome will be, Jesus said. “You will hear of wars and rumors of wars...Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom” (Matthew 24:6-7).

The real question, however, is this: Are you ready for Christ's return? You can be, by turning to Him and putting your faith and trust in Him. Don't take His warnings lightly, but commit your life without delay to Jesus Christ. Are you ready for Christ's return?

Q: What is the rapture?
A: There are many Christians who believe that the second coming of Jesus Christ will be in two phases. First, He will come for believers, both living and dead, in the "rapture" (2 Thessalonians 4:13-17). In this view, the rapture—which is the transformation and catching up of all Christians, dead or alive, to meet Christ in the air—will be secret, so it will be unknown to the world of unbelievers at the time of its happening.

The effect of this removal, in the absence of multitudes of people, will, of course, be evident on earth. Then, second, after a period of seven years of tribulation on earth, Christ will return to the earth with His church, the saints who were raptured (Matthew 2:30; 2 Thessalonians 1:7, 1 Peter 1:11, Revelation 1:7). He will be victorious over evil. He will reign on the earth for 1,000 years (the millennium) with His saints, the church.

Signs of the end of the world? Read this Biblical wisdom from Billy Graham and Franklin Graham.

After 1,000 years, living unbelievers and the wicked dead now raised to life will be judged at the great white throne judgment. They will then be cast into the lake of fire, while the saved will live forever with Christ in a new heaven and earth (Revelations, chapters 19-20).

Before we meet Christ by giving your life to Him today.

Q: Does a Christian have to die?
A: Christians who want to please the Lord often have questions about dying. The dictionary defines the word "died" as "a state of somatizing of something as a voluntary contribution to the body of the person in question." It was a common practice in the Old Testament and was required of members of the nation of Israel. 

"...the night is near; the day is almost here" (Romans 12:12). At this point, interpreters differ as to whether there will be a literal thousand-year reign of Christ on earth or whether the whole 2,000-year Unitarianism 4:13-17. At this point, interpreters differ as to whether there will be a literal thousand-year reign of Christ on earth or whether the whole 2,000-year reign and new heavens and earth will immediately appear.

All Christians do not agree on every detail of what will occur in the final events of this world's history. Some believe these events and their order of occurrence have simply not been made clear in the Bible. What is important is that all Christians hold in common that Christ will ultimately return bodily, visibly, and gloriously reign and rule with His resurrected and transformed saints forever and ever. The details of this great event will be made known in God's own time.

"Are you ready to die?" Read more in this Bible study from Anne Graham Lotz.

Q: What happens the first minute after we die?
A: The Bible doesn't answer all our questions about heaven and life after death—and the reason is because our minds are limited, and heaven is far too glorious for us to understand. Someday, all of our questions will be answered—but not yet. As the Apostle Paul wrote, "Now I know in part; then I shall know fully" (1 Corinthians 13:12).

However, the Bible certainly does indicate that when we die we enter immediately into God's presence if we belong to Christ. From a purely Scriptural point of view, death looks somewhat like sleep—but not from God's point of view. Paul declared, "We are confident of eternal life; I, say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8). Elsewhere he wrote, "I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far" (Philippians 1:23).

Peter declared that we will be given new bodies—bodies that will never age or be subject to death, because they will be like Christ's resurrection body. As the Apostle says, "The dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:52).

Is it your hope in Christ? Death is a reality—but is God's offer of salvation in Christ. Don't put off your decision for Him, because you could be called into eternity at any moment—and then it will be too late.

Don't wait; invite Christ into your life today.

Q: When a Christian dies, is it all right to cremate the body?
A: The Bible does not give specific directions for the disposal of the body following death. Bible-savvy practices are described in Cager's Bible Dictionary as follows:

"...the body of Christ will be believed soon after death, as is evident in the narratives of the burial of Sarah, Genesis 23:1-20, Rachel, Genesis 35:19-20, and Rebekah's nurse, Genesis 35:8. The Hebrews did not normally cremate, except in most unusual cases of emergency, as in the case of Saul and his sons (1 Samuel 31:11-13).

Later Babylonians burned their dead and deposited their ashes in chariot funerary urns, as did Greeks and Romans. Hebrews in later times, indicated by the numerous cemeteries found in New Testament Palestine, also practiced cremation.

Christians who want to show respect for the body. Even though the resurrection of the soul or spirit has moved on to an eternal destiny, the body is the tangible reminder of all that person meant to us. In addition, the body is destined for resurrection, transformation, and reunion with the spirit at Christ's return.

Whether burial is cremation best expresses that appropriate respect is a very personal decision. The wishes of close family members and friends should also be considered in any decision, because they are the ones who will live with the decision and with the memories.

At his resurrection it will not make any difference whether a person's body has been buried or cremated. God knows how to raise the body, either in the resurrection of life or the resurrection of condemnation (John 11:29-29). The new body of a Christian will be a resuscitation of the body that he or she had while a member of this earth. It will be an eternal, spiritual body never again to experience weakness, disease, suffering, or death (1 Corinthians 15:35-34 and Philippians 3:20-21).
Many Christians believe that this principle of giving one-tenth should be carried over to the New Testament in giving to the church and other Christian organizations. Billy Graham would fit into this category. He has said, “We have found in our own home, as have thousands of others, that God’s blessing upon the nine-tenths, when we tithe, helps it to go farther than ten-tenths without His blessing.” However, even then the question as to whether to tithe from one’s net or gross income is not questioned in Scripture, nor is the question of whether to give it all to the local church or to include other ministries. We feel that such decisions should be based on personal conviction.

Other Christians who tithe do so simply because they respect the Old Testament principle and find it a helpful place to begin in their giving. They do not believe, however, that tithing is a New Testament obligation. It is not mentioned in the New Testament except where it is describing Old Testament practices or in the Gospels where Jesus is addressing people who were under the Old Testament law. Note Jesus’ comments to the Pharisees in Luke 11:42.

A New Testament teaching on giving which may be helpful to you is found in 1 Corinthians 16:2. “On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income.” This passage brings out four points: we should give individually, regularly, methodically and proportionately.

The matter of your giving is between you and God, and He always takes into account our circumstances. He knows when they are beyond our power to direct and control. The important thing is that we see giving as a privilege and not a burden. It should not be out of a sense of duty, but rather out of love for the Lord and a desire to see His kingdom advanced.

Second Corinthians 9:6-7 says, “Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”

The deeper question, you see, is this: What has priority in our lives? Is Christ really first—or do we put ourselves and our own desires first? Make sure Christ is first in your life, and then ask Him to guide you.

---

February is a month famous for one thing, LOVE. I’m thinking Valentines Day! We set aside February 14th every year to recognize our love and affection for husbands and wives. I want to be able to show my love to my Valentine. I want to be able to say the words of love that are in the Bible, if you’re a student of God’s word you know that everybody should be Valentines Day for the husband and wife united by God.

I write specifically to husbands and wives because God ordained this relationshipship from creation. From Adam and Eve and throughout God’s word, we find the relationship of a man and woman as husband and wife equally yoked as God’s plan for the family and procreation.

It is heart breaking to see what man has done to marriage and human sexuality. Consider the book of Genesis and begin there. The fall of man in the Garden and Sodom and Gomorrah are both examples that took us down a dark path concern- ing sexuality. Today man tries to justify many things; same sex relationships; couples living together outside of marriage, adultery, pornography, bisexuality and even pedophilia as legitimate expressions of love. God calls these and more like them sin. For the Christian marriage, Valentine’s Day is not about sexual perversion, it is a celebration of Godly love. There is no genuine love apart from the love God calls a man and woman into as husband and wife. For example, in Hebrews 13:4 we read, “Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornication is of God will judge.”

I want to take this time to honor biblical marriage. Not just marriage, but biblical marriage. There is a difference. In Deuteronomy God called Israel not to marry into the neighboring people, not because of race, but because of idolatry. The neighboring people did not know the God of Israel, they worshipped false gods and images made by their hands. God did not want that influence in the lives of His people. From 2 Corinthians 6:14- “Be ye notunequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?” and what communion hath light with darkness? “This passage goes much deeper than marriage, it relates to every aspect of the believer’s life. Yet, if you exclude marriage, this is written to the believer. We are responsible for how we approach marriage.

Like many pastors, I counsel. Too often this counseling involves marriage. I have heard too many husbands and wives tell me if they only knew the other person was not saved. Before I marry anyone, I ask specifically if both are saved, are they born again. This is the foundation of a Godly marriage. I will not marry a couple unless both have a testimony of being saved, and both have a home church to reference back too. I counsel singles to know the spiritual condition of the person you’re dating. Just as the wind can’t be seen you can’t see their spiritual condition. They have too many distractions of a Christian floating around today. Ask pointed questions, where do they go to church, how long have they been going there, what work are they involved with, what is the pastor’s name, visit with them and listen to the conversations with others. If they are well known for not, the conversation will tell you quickly. I’m not trying to break up dating couples, I’m trying to save future marriages.

A man or woman with a lustful heart will tell you anything you want to hear so they may fulfill their fantasy. It may be sex, money, power, influence or even a quick escape from an unwanted home life. Whatever the reason, if it isn’t God’s marriage, it won’t last because of the salvation of husband and wife. It has little chance of surviving. If the devil helped make it, he will destroy it. It is always God’s desire for a marriage to be successful. A Christian should never give up on their marriage. The Christian can be the testimony God uses to win the spouse. That doesn’t mean a Christian is immune to the problems. Separation and divorce are two different things.

A Godly marriage is a beautiful marriage. A man and woman both born again by grace and through faith in Christ alone. Christ is the foundation of their lives and will be the foundation of their marriage. These marriages have problems you, as we all do. There are trials and failures, even in sin from temptation. Where Christ reigns there is HOPE! Divorce will not be mentioned in the Christian marriage, why, because the Christian marriage has a foundation that will not crumble and both husband and wife will want for it to last. If you and your spouse are both born again, then God has for that, many today can’t say that. Enjoy Valentine’s Day as your special day of the year to worship God for His creation of marriage. Remember to cherish each other as Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 7:5- “Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence and likewise also. The husband also render unto the wife due benevolence and likewise, also the husband hath not power over his own body, but the wife ye nor on the other, except it be with consent, for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer, and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency,” Sound counsel from God’s word concerning marriage, love and Valentine’s Day, until next month may God keep you family in His grasp.

Terry Cheek is Pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Marion.
Enjoying Everyday Life

Mitchell County SafePlace
By Doug Sudduth
Mitchell County

The Rotary Club of Spruce Pine received an informative program about Mitchell County SafePlace from Dr. Dan Barron and Kelle Biggs when the club met on December 21. Introduced by Rotarian Elise Percival, Dr. Barron spoke about the numerous agencies that receive grants from the Fund for Mitchell County and then invited Ms. Biggs to talk about her work with the Teen Dating Violence Prevention Program. Over the last two years 620 students, ranging in age from 11 to 16, have had the opportunity to participate in the Safe Dance program. The evidenced-based curriculum helps in identifying danger signs, a factor linked to alcohol and other drug abuse. Students are better able to understand both emotional and physical abuse, recognize warning signs, setting boundaries, and helping friends who may be in abusive relationships. As one student said, “This class is important so that as a young age we are knowledgeable about physical and mental abuse that can be caused by dating abuse.”

Spruce Pine Rotarians support the program that Ms. Biggs has implemented in Mitchell County Schools and applaud her efforts to keep our children safe.

Rotaion Elise Percival presenting a locally handmade Rotary mug to Kelle Biggs.

Doug Sudduth is the Public Relations Officer for the Spruce Pine Rotary Club.

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Grace Community Church

Prank Called by Worry
By Jerry Lewis
McDowell County

Worry is like an unwanted sales call, an annoying bill, an
annoying interruption in cell service. It doesn’t seek permis-
sion, doesn’t give advance warning, and stays longer than
you want. It cares not for whatever else has filled your day
and will take all your brain and heart space.

How do you close the door when worry knocks? How do you hang up
the phone when worry calls?

Jerry Lewis is Senior Pastor at Grace Community Church in Marion.

Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church

What We Preach
By Shawa Thomas
Burke County

“To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given,
to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.”
(Ephesians 3:8)

Here Paul shares the essence of the Christian message.
Both what this message is, and what it is NOT, are signifi-
cant.

The message we have. Paul says, is “the unsearchable
riches of Christ.” Jesus Christ Himself is the Christian message. He is “the way,
and the truth, and the life, and no one comes to the Father but through (Him).”
(John 14:5) In Him is found “every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places”
Ephesians 1:3 tells us. So just as Paul shared in 1 Corinthians 1:23, “We preach
Christ crucified ...” HP is our message.

This message is also NOT what many “Christian” ministers and ministries
focus on today:

• It IS NOT a proclamation of physical healing and material prosperity.
• It IS NOT “positive thinking.”
• It IS NOT merely “family values.”
• It IS NOT “church growth.”
• It IS NOT conservative politics.

Some of these things may be good, or have certain good elements. But they are
not to be the focus of the message of a Christian church or ministry. Only Jesus
can save (John 14:6). And every spiritual blessing is found “in Him,” Ephesians 1
repeatedly shows us. So as Paul points out here, our message is “to preach ... the
unsearchable riches of Christ.”

Shawa Thomas is Senior Pastor at Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church in Morganton.
Her messages and devotionals are available at www.shawathomas.com

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(24)
“Can anybody find me, somebody to love...?”

The strains of the electric guitar were screaming to the wailing of Freddie Mercury’s nearly falsetto pitch. The singer with the one-of-a-kind voice echoed in my ears as he kept repeating the refrain, “Can anybody find me, somebody, to love.” For something different for my run tonight, I picked a playlist a little outside of my norm.

Queen was on the deck. Rock I began running in the late seventies, at the tender age of any favorite rock bands. Naive. I had no idea of their lifestyle. To me, they made music that was challenging and inspiring. My own musical talents were limited to the organ. The combination of opera with rock guitars that Queen had become famous for, resonated within my young being.

It was all that mattered at that time. Besides, who didn’t remember listening to “We are the Champions” at least one High School pep rally?

That was many years past, at a time when the teen and trouble were in hand. Like so many youths of our world, then and now, who seek someone to love them, so it was in mine.

As a young lad churned below my thoughts, my mind recalled those pathways so many years ago. Thousands of miles would pass beneath my feet as my running career would end. The body ays forget, but the mind reminiscences the memories less. Slowly, the pace increased until there was a smooth cadence. My fingers pressed the speed button on the treadmill up until it felt this was the proper altitude for tonight’s flight.

Some call it the runner’s high when the body’s endorphins are released to protect our muscles from pain. Call it another one of God’s little miracles. When our muscles are torn in the process of exercising, the endorphins buffer the pain, allowing us to push ourselves farther than we might otherwise.

The more we become physically fit, the greater the number of endorphins are released. Once we believe in our body, we can almost achieve a feeling of running on air. So, it was this evening, at least for a few sparse moments, when I had finally found a rhythm that matched my pace and was back in the groove. It felt good, but I knew it wouldn’t last. The belt on the treadmill flowed beneath the gray sky outside the fitness center faded away.

“I’ve got to get out of this prison cell,” Freddie sang. The image of this earthly body came to mind, and the day when we saw Jesus in the sky, in our new bodies, made whole and anew. “Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” 1 Thessalonians 4:17

It felt as if I were being lifted beyond that cursory vision in life, away from the toll of keeping that decaying shell fit. Before me was the image of the cross. His body, abused, flagellated, and bloody, hung limp. I felt as if my approach was on hand and knees. Beyond that, there was no comfort. “somebody, too, tooo, love.”

There before me hung that precious life, the Son of God. I had found him, somebody to love, and what was made all the more precious, He loved me more. As the ancient rock song played behind me, the love of Jesus began to wash my soul. His love flowed through my veins like a river of the Spirit descending from on high.

I was unworthy of such love.

There was no compassion on earth combined that could match the feeling that percolated from the cross. My humble being crouched beneath his looking up at the shattered human form, once eto God in the flesh. Tears formed in my eyes as I looked upon his image.

“Come and see,” he would tell the disciples when they asked where he dwelt. Yet, he was no longer here. We could not go and abide with him on that day for he had begun his crossing of that great stream. He would fall into the depths of hell, and then rise from the dead and become the resurrected Christ. My mind could see the lifeless, blue-tinted foot hanging limp. Blood crusted upon the grayish image. The ground below him stained with his precious blood. His own life source that was to be used to wash away my darkness. He had given all so that my sins could be forgiven, so that someday we may abide with Him, not just for the tenth hour, but for all eternity.

My hand reached to touch him, but before there was contact, the voice of the song screamed again, “Find Me Somebody to Love.”

And I had.

He was there. He was always there. The guitar wailed, the strings funeralized together until their voltage surged through me, uniting with the other from above until all was one. I received Him, wholly, without question, and he flooded my soul with the Holy Spirit.

Jesus was with me.

The black ribbon flowed beneath as the overwhelming feeling of God’s love warmed my entire being within. My heart panted for Freddie, for his lifestyle caused his death, AIDS. Had he come to know Christ before he passed this life?

“Can anybody find me, somebody to love...?”

My mind lived on today in the form of music, a gift from God. But more importantly, he received the most precious gift before dying?

Had he too received Christ?

“Somebody I’m gonna be free,” his voice rang out, and yes, we will be, free of this earthy prison cell, called a human body.

I pray that Freddie did find somebody to love more. Someday we shall find the answer, but for now, I know for certain I had found Somebody to Love, and His Name is Jesus Christ, the only begetter Son of God.

“Can anybody find me Somebody to Love?”

No, you’re not going crazy because everybody’s trying to put you down, you only have to believe. Once you find Him, you have found Someone to Love, and in return, someone who will love you beyond your understanding. You will finally be free. Death will hold no sting.

Can anybody find me Somebody to Love?

Yes, I can Freddie. Yes, I can.

His Name is Jesus Christ.

Thanks be to God, again and again.

Forever and ever, Amen.

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Timothy W. From is the Executive Director of the Waldensian Trail of Faith. He lives in Waldese with his family. He is the author of “Brucia to Heaven,” an active blogger, artist and musician. Timothy also has a BSEE from UF, is an Eagle Scout. He is now teaching in Watauga County.
McDowell Tech
By Michael Lavender
M.C. McDowell County

McDowell Technical Community College in Marion recently dedicated a new simulation lab for health science students in the Hemlock Building on the college’s main campus. The Vickie A. Hogan Multidisciplinary Simulation Lab will be used to train and educate students preparing for careers as nurse aides, practical nurses, registered nurses, phlebotomists, emergency medical technicians, paramedics and those preparing for related careers in health science.

Funding for facility renovation, equipment and related expenses was provided by generous gifts and grants from A.C. “Bud” and Thurlene Hogan, Appalachian Regional Commission, Bank of America, Cannon Foundation, Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust, and The McDowell Endowment.

“We are grateful to each of these individuals and organizations for their support of the college and our programs,” said Dr. John Gossert, MTCC President.

“We are especially thankful to Bud and Thurlene Hogan, who helped us conceive and initiate plans for this facility before Mr. Hogan’s death last Feb.”

The Multidisciplinary Simulation Lab was dedicated in honor and memory of the Hogan’s late daughter, Vickie, who had dreamed of becoming a medical missionary, but was unable to do so because of a series of strokes that began when she was in elementary school. She went on to finish nursing school, became a nurse and eventually worked with stroke patients at what was then Thom’s Rehabilitation Hospital in Asheville, where she herself had been patient years earlier.

“Research has shown that simulation labs allow students in clinical programs to get important hands-on experience performing procedures they will later use with real patients in hospitals, medical facilities and in emergency, field-based settings,” said Dr. Penny Cross, Vice-President for Learning and Student Services.

“The main difference,” she said, “between providing care in a simulated lab and in the field, is a live person and surroundings that mimic real life. However, our newest mannequins are extremely life-like, without the risk of injury to live patients as students begin their practical training. Our ambulance bay, exactly the same size as a real one, has been set up to teach EMT students how to provide quality medical care in the confined space of an ambulance.”

“MTCC is the first college in North Carolina to have the most up-to-date version of Victoria, a medical simulation mannequin,” said Judy Merlon, Dean of Health Sciences, who has coordinated the creation of this lab. “We are excited to have the latest, cutting-edge technology on campus to assist our health science students in attaining their educational goals.”

“I am convinced that students trained in our new lab will be some of the best-prepared health care providers anywhere,” said Gossert, the MTCC President.

“We are raising the overall skill level of our students and they, in turn, will raise the level of patient care in medical facilities and emergency settings throughout the region.”

Michael is the Media and Promotions Director for McDowell Tech in Marion NC.

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Vickie A. Hogan Multidisciplinary Simulation Lab

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Dear Dave,

At what point can you spend, and have a little fun, when you're following the Baby Steps plan? Jen

Dear Jen,

Everyone likes having fun, and there's nothing wrong with spending some cash if you can afford it. I just want people to make sure they have their finances in order first.

I recommend completing the first three Baby Steps before you run out and buy a bunch of toys. Just to review, Baby Step 1 is saving $1,000 for a starter emergency fund. Baby Step 2 is where you pay off all debt—except for your house—using the debt snowball method. In Baby Step 3, you go back and fully fund your emergency fund with enough cash to cover three to six months of expenses.

Completing the first three Baby Steps puts you on pretty solid financial ground. At this point, once you've saved up the cash, it's okay to take a vacation or buy a reasonably-priced toy. But don't have so much fun that you forget about the other Baby Steps. Baby Step 4 means putting 15 percent of your income into pre-tax retirement plans, like mutual funds and Roth IRAs. Don't neglect saving for college if you have kids. That's Baby Step 5. Baby Steps 6 and 7 are paying off the house early and building wealth and giving like never before.

Remember, there are only three things you can do with money—spend, save, and give. You can do all three without putting yourself in a bind by following my plan!—Dave

Dear Dave,

I have cousins who are thinking about moving back to Connecticut from Virginia. They'll be renting for a while, and I have an unoccupied rental house. Do you think renting to family is a bad idea? Katherine

Dear Katherine,

Renting to family can work out just fine, as long as there are clearly understood rules and boundaries in place ahead of time. Both parties should understand there must be a landlord and tenant relationship with regards to all aspects of the rental agreement.

Tenants have the right to expect a landlord to make needed repairs promptly, pay the taxes and insurance on a property on time, and do all the other things a landlord should do as outlined in the rental agreement. As a landlord, you have the right to expect the rent to be paid early or on time, and for the tenant to respect the property and guidelines in the rental agreement. A landlord also has the right to evict a tenant through fair, legal process if they violate the terms of the agreement. When it comes to these business dealings, you're wearing the landlord cap, and they're wearing the tenant's cap. At Thanksgiving, Christmas, and other family events, the cap comes off and you're family. But you don't get to play the cousin card as a way to keep from paying rent, and you don't get to play that game to avoid your duties as a landlord.

Phrases like, "Well, I just thought because you're my cousin" have no place in these situations. Make plans to have a full-blown, in-depth conversation about every aspect of the rental agreement and relationship before anything is signed. If you don't, there's a possibility someone will develop a sense of entitlement about something.

And that's no good in any type of relationship!—Dave

Dear Dave,

My sister has bad credit due to a lot of late payments. She has finally started to change her ways and get control of her finances, because she and her fiancé want to make an offer on a house. The bank won't approve it if she is on the loan, and his income alone isn't enough to get the amount they need. His parents are well-off, and they have offered to co-sign on the loan. Is this a bad idea? Rhonda

Dear Rhonda,

It's a really bad idea. Those two have no business thinking about a house right now, and his parents are about to make things even worse with their misguided help.

If you need a co-signer, you're nowhere near ready to buy a home. They need to slow down. I mean, they're just engaged. They don't even need a house at this point. They should get married, live in a cheap apartment for a while, and work on paying off their debt. After that, they need to save up an emergency fund of three to six months of expenses, then start setting cash aside for a huge down payment on their first, modest house.

These two have a bad case of house fever. And mom and dad need to step back, look at things objectively, and realize they would not be blessing these kids by helping get them into a home they obviously can't afford!—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 13 million listeners each week on 550 radio stations and multiple digital platforms. Follow Dave on the web at daveramsey.com and on Twitter at @DaveRamsey.
The Darkness is Spreading—Rapidly.

By Franklin Graham

Every day, it seems like yet another confusing cloud has
spread its dark shadow across the land.
The relentless reporting of widespread sexual harassment
has dominated the news cycle for months. Television hosts,
congressmen, Hollywood stars, journalists and businesswomen
have all confessed to predatorial acts of sexual harassment.

The repercussions have been enormous, as women across the
country have accused victims and co-workers of inappropriate
behavior.

And that’s just the tip of the iceberg.

Online pornography use is at an all-time high. Gay and transgender characters are now
a common sight on television, even in programs for small children. Atheists are hell-bent on
eradicating any mention of God in our homes, schools, and sporting events. Drug addiction,
especially to new opioid painkillers, is an epidemic in many parts of the country, particu-
larly rural areas with high joblessness.

Mass shootings are no longer a rare occurrence, and they happen in once-sacred places
like churches and historically safe places like schools and public venues. The weapons of
terrorism are no longer just homemade bombs but also cars and trucks, which can run
down citizens as broad daylight on busy city thoroughfares.

Abroad, the darkness is just as widespread.

Christians across the Middle East suffer intense persecution from Islamic terrorists and
authoritative governments. In so many parts of the world, it’s never been a more dangerous
time to be a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Some think we are on
the verge of nuclear war
as North Korea continues
its campaign to upset
the very real
treat of an atomic
threat that could have catastrophic
consequences for the entire
world. The thought of a
multiple nuclear weapon
launches from countries like North Korea, Iran, and (which the North Koreans supply with
arms) and reciprocal military responses is frightening indeed.

The Bible is clear: moral and spiritual darkness has always been the case for a world
that rejects and refuses to acknowledge God. Describing a godless culture that hates God,
the Apostle Paul said that “they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts
were darkened” (Romans 1:21).

Moral darkness invariably leads to ungodly, disobedient living that defies God’s command-
ments and principles, setting the stage for lifestyles and behavior that eventually reap
destructive consequences.

What I believe is happening today that I certainly haven’t seen in my lifetime is the
credibly swift spread of darkness across virtually every sector of our culture, here at home
and in practically every region of the globe.

The Judeo-Christian worldview that has once dominated has seen serious erosion.
The forces of evil are working on every front to undermine and destroy the foundations
of a morally healthy society—respects for authority, the sacredness of the marriage union
between a man and a woman, the sanctity of life for the unborn, and our freedoms to take
a stand for values that we know are right.

The Bible is clear: such moral chaos comes because people reject the Gospel of the
Lord Jesus Christ.

...and this is the judgement: the light has come into the world, and the people loved
the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does
what is evil hates the light, and does not come to the light (John 3:19-20).

Jesus is the Light of the world. In fact, there is no light other than Christ. Those who
walk in darkness are those who don’t know the Savior of the World, the Author of Light.

For those of us who have repented of our sins and placed our faith in our Lord and Savior,
“He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom
of his beloved Son” (Colossians 1:13).

Paul put it this way to describe the Lord’s commandment to him in his preaching:
“lam sending you to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from
the power of Satan to God” (Acts 16:17-18).

Hell, itself is not only the absence of light, but it is complete, utter darkness. The
Scriptures call it “vain darkness,” a place that is reserved exclusively for the devil, fallen
angels, and unrepentant man.

But the Light that is from above, the Light of the World, will be the single source of all
light in the new Heaven and the new earth. “And night will be no more. They will need no
light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light” (Revelation 21:25).

And we know that those who believe and walk in the Word of God over the world may
be, it can never extinguish the True Light. “The Light shines in the darkness, and the
darkness has not overcome it” (John 1:5).

While I am—far as long as I am—a child of God, I have a charge that I will proclaim Jesus
Christ as the one, the truth, and the life (John 1:4-6). In the coming year, I will be pro-
claiming that Gospel is 18 cities along the West Coast of the U.S., as well as in Portugal,
England, Armenia and Mexico.

It’s our responsibility as believers to let our light shine before men, and to honor and glo-
ry God by our good works and godly life, regardless of how evil the culture has become.

Therefore, through the power of Christ, we can make disciples and innocent, children of God without bias in the
midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world”
(Philippians 2:15). ©2017 BGEA

Scripture quotations are taken from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version.

Is Jesus Christ the light of your life?

Reverend Franklin Graham is President and CEO of the Billy Graham Evange-
listic Association and of Samaritan’s Purse, an international Christian relief
organization.

www.brcnews.com

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Allen’s Offerings

911, What’s Your Emergency?
By Allen Buchanan
Mitchell County

Yes, I’m calling for America. We are experiencing hurricanes, wildfires, tornadoes, flash floods, earthquakes, ice storms, blizzards, mud and rock slides. That is just natural disasters.

In other areas, we are experiencing sniper attacks, suicide bombers, drug wars, illegal aliens, sexual abuse, child abuse, murders and human trade.

Some suffer from starvation, addiction, pride, lying, cheating, suicide, vulgar- ity, back biting, uncertainties and many medical issues.

We need the One to come to the aid of our Rescue. We need the Way, the Truth and the Life - we need JESUS! America is Lost without this One to turn to. We have no hope nor future.

In our pulpits, men of God stand and preach the second coming of Jesus Christ. They refer to our land as the present-day Sodom and Gomorrha. With so many of us calling out “911” we cannot deny we’re in trouble. We’ve given Satan too much lead way.

...because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. 1 Peter 5:8
Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me. John 14:6

If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. 2 Chronicles 7:14

For whatsoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Romans 10:13

Jesus is the answer!

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

February
Hospice Thrift Store Sales
Located in Lobby beside the P&R
2/6/18-2/10/18 Book Sale
Paper Backs .25
Hardbacks .50
2/13/18-2/17/18 Clear Glassware 1/2 off
Plus Furniture Markdowns
2/20/18-2/24/18 Dollar Days
All clothing $1.00
2/14/18 WE LOVE OUR CUSTOMERS DAY
Complimentary Cookies and Coffee
Don’t Forget!
Senior Citizens get 25% off on Wednesdays
Veterans get 25% off Everyday
(828)-688-6400

A HIGHER STANDARD OF CARE!

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Yancey’s Community Hospice Since 1982

HospiceofYancey.org
828-682-9675

www.brnews.com
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YOUR LOVE
How lovely is Your song oh Lord
So tender from above
It’s sweet to know Your Spirit
As peaceful as a dove.

Fresh as a flower in sunshine
Clean as the spring waters flow
Soft as the rain in the morning
White as the new fallen snow.

No cloud can ever cover
The glory of Your face
As a beautiful horse at battle
With reins of love and grace.

The time could bring all wisdom
Of earth and heaven above
Nothing here could ever change
The wonders of Your Love.

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 Pigeon Missionary
Baptist Church in Wauwatha, “home away from home”. She is currently singing with the
Gospel Group “John’s Voice” out of Mars Hill, NC. Her latest song “Homecom-
ing” will soon be heard by many.

Hospice Accreditation:
Because Quality Matters
By Brent Price, Outreach Programs Coordinator
Mitchell County

As the number of healthcare providers in our community continues to steadily grow, choices are increasingly
more difficult to make. Today it is more important than ever to be sure that your hospice provider has done all
they can to guarantee the best possible care available.

Hospice and Palliative Care of the Blue Ridge earned our hospice accreditation through the nationally recog-
nized Accreditation Commission for Health Care (ACHC) in 2016. The ACHC is a nonprofit accreditation or-
ganization that has stood as a symbol of quality and excellence since 1966.

On-site surveys are conducted every three years by ACHC surveyors who possess specific hospice expertise and experience. They follow a comprehensive review process that examines organizational structure, policies and procedures, and compliance with state and federal laws.

Hospice accreditation is not required by law and many hospice agencies choose not to become accredited. However, we know that accreditation reflects our dedication to meeting standards that clearly reveal a higher level of performance and patient care.

The process of review is rigorous and costly. Still, we believe that it is one of the most effective ways we can demonstrate and ensure our promise of outstanding care.

Accreditation sets us apart from other hospice providers by highlighting our dedication to the improvement of patient outcomes and safety. It provides a witness to our commitment to hospice standards and best practices while containing costs and continuously improving performance. When you need to choose a hospice provider find out if they have done the hard work to become accredited.

From the deepest heart of our calling we seek to be faithful to the patients and families we serve. The choice to become ACHC accredited is an important way we have chosen to be true to our calling— an opportunity to give our utmost for His highest.

Hospice accreditation is important because quality really does matter— and most of all, because you matter to us.

Brevard Brent Price is a chaplain at Hospice & Palliative Care of the Blue Ridge.

Check out our new Website—www.brcnews.com
And find us on Facebook

Hospice and Palliative Care of the Blue Ridge, Inc.
Formerly Hospice of Mitchell
(828)-765-5677

Serving our Community for Over 25 Years...

For Love
Not Profit
Highlighting Burnout
replenish / rē-PLÉN-ish (v): To fill up again; to restore or make complete again

As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. —Psalm 42:1 (ESV)

Burnout—It's real, and it can have major consequences. It can leave you empty, discouraged and exhausted, with little energy left for God. Sound familiar? Maybe it's time to replenish. Start here.

1. Get away
Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while.—Mark 6:31, NASB

You don't have to use vacation days or drive far away to take a break with God. You can pick a place close by to relax and simply enjoy His presence. Here are some ideas: a community park, a pool, a hammock or rocking chair, a quiet corner of an ice cream or coffee shop, a book store or library, or a spot by the water. You might even bring some music or a journal.

If you like to be active, try going on a hike or bike ride, kayaking, taking a one-person picnic, gardening or painting. Getting away doesn't have to mean a change in your physical location, as long as you're getting away from daily stresses to spend time with God.

2. Be still
Be still, and know that I am God.—Psalm 46:10a, NASB

Taking time to "be still" may be harder today than ever. So much screams for our attention in this fast-paced, digital world. In the Bible, the prophet Elijah heard God in the form of a "still small voice" (1 Kings 19:12). If we don't intentionally take time to turn down life's noise and be still, we could miss God's quiet message to our hearts.

Part of being still means taking a break from the demands of work, school and other activities and focusing on God. If you aren't intentionally setting aside one day a week to rest and worship, now is a good time to start.

3. Listen
A wise man will hear and increase in learning, and a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel.—Proverbs 1:5, NASB

God often speaks to us in a still, small voice. Other times, He sends a meaningful message through a person or experience at the right moment. Yet, worry, stress and a growing "to-do" list can clutter our minds and keep us from listening.

O Thou Whose stillness drowns earth's total noise—in gazing sounds: progress, traffic, voice, fluttering of my frustration, mattements, agitation, the screaming silences without, within, the din of questions clamoring for their "why?" and "how?" the rumbles of man's disconnect, corrupting hate, violence, war's distant thunder rolling near, and everywhere the cries of fear that paralyzes as it grips...and near at hand a faucet drips. O Thou, Whose stillness drowns earth's total noise, only in Thee is stillness found...

And I rejoice.

4. Meditate
But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.—Psalm 1:2, ESV

There are so many thoughts crowding our minds that it can be hard to focus. We're pulled in every direction, with this person or that thing demanding our attention. But then we come to a verse like Psalm 1:2, which tells us to meditate on God's Word. How exactly do you do that? And with such a hectic schedule? Here is thinking patterns to help:

Think on these things:
What is noble and right.
What is pure.
What is lovely and admirable.
What is excellent and praiseworthy.

5. Be present
But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her."—Luke 10:41-42, ESV

Find yourself going through the motions or so distracted that you can't really enjoy a special moment? As the story of Mary and Martha in Luke 10 reveals, we can't afford to be so busy or distracted that we fail to hear God's voice, experience His presence or honor His goodness.

Are you Mary or Martha? Read Luke 10 and decide.
**Burke County Chamber**

**2018 Annual Meeting**
Tuesday, February 13, 2018
5:30-7:30 pm
The CoMAA
(401 S. College St)
Limited tickets $30 per person.

**Catawba River Baptist Association** - Your Catawba River Baptist Association is partnering with Burke Hospice & Palliative Care to offer a grief recovery group meeting beginning Tuesday, February 6th at our CRBA office.

GriefShare is where a friendly, caring group of people walk through life’s most difficult experiences. Built around a 13-week video curriculum, GriefShare supersedes the pain of grief and encourages people to move from mourning to joy using scripture. To sign up for this special ministry please call 828-879-1601. Rev. Ken Baker of Hospice will be the facilitator.

Our Annual CRBA Royal Ambassador Race Day will be Saturday, February 24th. No donation is required to help those in need. The fundraiser will be held at the Old Rock School Auditorium. The cost is $5 per car and kids can be purchased at our CRBA office or by visiting www.royalracers.com. Lunch will be provided for all attending.

This rally will highlight the variety of opportunities NC Baptist have to be involved in missions across our state, in our nation, and around the world. Featured everyone will be the prayer for the new God’s Closet - a prayer ministry for mission. The rally is for men, women and youth - everyone interested in missions is encouraged to attend. A main focus of the rally will be states, national, international partnerships and projects (including Disaster Relief) that are supported by the NCMO.

**Baptists On Mission**

A meal is provided for the NC Mission Railies at no charge, but reservations are necessary to ensure an accurate meal count. The cutoff date for reserving a meal for the celebration is one week prior to the event. To register, please include the number of people you are registering under the “Quantity” button at the bottom of the page under Region Rally Events and then click “Continue.” You can also register by phone by calling Kaila Eskridge at 918-459-5596. Meals 5:45 pm Missions Program 6:50 - 8:30 pm

Please join us at the Region 5 Missions Rally on Monday, February 12th at a Social River Baptist Church 2009 S. Cigale Ford Rd, Statesville, NC. To register please go to http://baptisomission.org/events/region-rallies

**Great Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church**

“Eating You Alive” movie. “00 Old Sol” is the story of how the world’s largest fast-food chain started. This is a comprehensive look into why we are so sick, who is profiting and who is taking the “hit.” It brings together evidence-based science, expert testimony and inspirational stories of people who have reversed disease and discovered the truth about how a Whole Food, Plant-based lifestyle can address and solve some of our world’s most current crisis. Love offering taken. This is provided by your friends at the Great Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church. Questions? 828-334-0084

**Reversing Diabetes classes (for preventing, etc.) start up again January 1st and go each Monday evening through February 19. 6:00 pm in the Waldenham Room**

**Grace Community Church**

“New Prayer Line Launches in Marion, North Carolina - James 5:15 says ‘The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.’ A. J. Gordon said, ‘You can do more than pray after you have prayed, but you cannot do more than pray until you have prayed.’ Churches in McDowell County believe God’s Word and agree with A. J. Gordon. That’s why they have launched 659-PRAY. Here’s how people can call anytime, leave a message and know that churches in McDowell County will be praying for them. Here’s how it works: The prayer line (659-PRAY) is housed at Freedom Life Ministries (freedomlifeministries.org). Each day prayer requests will be sent to 25 partnering churches in McDowell County who will immediately send those requests to their respective prayer teams. These requests will then be prayed over for the next 21 days. We also ask that your prayer request is covered daily by hundreds of people across McDowell County. 659-PRAY will begin on September 1. Between now and then, please ask your pastor if your church is involved. If not, encourage your leaders to reach out and set one up. For more information, please call Reëlda at (828) 759-4899 – Contact: Chris Allison Cell Phone: 828-559-7312 E-Mail: chris@rocketdesigns.com

**Morganton Seventh-day Adventist-Burke County** - God's Closet - Morgaunon FREE Shop Day will take place on Friday, February 2, 2018, from 9:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m., at the Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church, 2187 Jemmston Road, Morganton, N.C. There will be free children's clothing, shoes and bedding. It is for anyone who can show a state as proof of residency.

God's Closet - Morgaunon is a non-profit organization that will offer FREE clothing to parents and / or guardians of children ages 0 to 18 years of age. If you or someone you know is in need of children's clothing and / or would like to donate and get involved, please see the following contact information. We ask that everyone pray for the new God's Closet - a prayer ministry that will be a blessing to others in our Burke County community.

God’s Closet - Morganton
Phone: 828-344-3876
E-mail: nogodscloset@gmail.com
Website - www.gods-closet.com
Facebook Page - God’s Closet - Morganton
@GodsCloseMorganton
After visiting the God’s Closet – Morgaunon Facebook Page please Like and Share with your friends!

**The Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church** will be offering FREE Blood Pressure Checks on Saturday, February 3rd, from 9:30 a.m. until 10:00 a.m., located at 2187 Jemmston Road, Morganton, N.C.

Valentine Banquet - Sunday, February 11th at 6:00 pm, at the Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church, 2187 Jemmston Road, Morganton, N.C. Come and enjoy a delicious dinner and support the Morganton SDA Youth Pathfinder Club.

Please join us for our monthly Health Social - Sunday, February 25th at 1:30 p.m. Please bring a plant-based dish and copies of the recipe to share if you will! Directions and more information, please contact Cindy at 870-510-6041.

**Town of Valdese Community Affairs & Tourism**

mang@valdesecc.gov | 828-879-2129 | visitvaldese.com

Old Colony Players, Inc. is a performing arts and community theatre company operating since 1935 in the Town of Valdese, North Carolina. It was incorporated in 1997 as a non-profit organization. In 2017, OCP celebrated the 50th consecutive season of producing the outdoor drama “From This Day Forward.” The drama tells the story of the Valdenses, a people from the area known as the Cot- tins Alps in Northern Italy near the French border, and the founders of the Town of Valdese. It is the fourth longest running outdoor drama in North Carolina. OCP produces community theatre performances throughout the year, staged in the renovated Old Rock School Auditorium.

The Old Colony Players, Inc. Board of Directors is seeking qualified candidates for the full-time position of General Manager. The ideal candidate should have knowledge and experience with non-profit organizations, fundraising, business and financial skills, personnel management, and have a passion for the arts. The position is full-time and benefits include a competitive salary and various non-salaried perks such as tickets to the Old Rock School Auditorium. For more information, please contact the Valdese Community Affairs office at 828-879-2129.

**McDowell County**

Cross United Methodist Church - 24/7 Sharing Food Pantry at Cross United Methodist Church in Marion. The food is available for anyone in the county who is in need and is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week with no questions asked. We do ask however that you take only what you need so items will be left for others who may need them. The church is located at 5 West Cross Street in Marion just past Blue Ridge Terrace Apartments in the Cross Mill Community. Donations of non-perishable food items and gently used blankets are very much needed and can be dropped off at the pantry site or you may call 828-442-8086 or 828-490-9257. If you would like to make a monetary donation, make checks payable to Cross United Methodist Church c/o of Susan Comer, 96 Wilkes tarts, Marion, N.C. 28752. You continued prayers for this outreach ministry are very much appreciated.

First Baptist of Marion - Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of North Carolina Annual Gathering March 15-17, 2018 Knoxville Baptists - Winston-Salem, NC Leadership Institutes Thursday, March 21st & Thursdays, March 15th First Friday Gathering Friday, March 16 All Are Called Forum Saturday, March 17 Mission Trip We are beyond to Houston, Texas where we will partner with Cross Mission First Person to provide Hurricane Relief. Youth Pastor Info Meeting - Jan 28th, Noon

**Grace Community Church**

New Prayer Line Launches in Marion, North Carolina - James 5:15 says ‘The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.’ A. J. Gordon said, ‘You can do more than pray after you have prayed, but you cannot do more than pray until you have prayed.’ Churches in McDowell County believe God’s Word and agree with A. J. Gordon. That’s why they have launched 659-PRAY. Here’s how people can call anytime, leave a message and know that churches in McDowell County will be praying for them. Here’s how it works: The prayer line (659-PRAY) is housed at Freedom Life Ministries (freedomlifeministries.org). Each day prayer requests will be sent to 25 partnering churches in McDowell County who will immediately send those requests to their respective prayer teams. These requests will then be prayed over for the next 21 days.

Ecuador Mission Trip

We will be taking a group to Ecuador in June of 2018 to help with construction, medical assessments and support for women and children. The cost is $1500 (more info to come). If you are interested email robin@graceforall.org

**Mitchell County**

All Saints of America Orthodox - On Saturdays beginning in June, All Saints of America Orthodox Mission will be having Divine Liturgy at the meeting hall located at Trinity Episcopal Church, 15 Hemlock Ave, Sylva, N.C. 28777. The Liturgy will be served weekly on Saturdays at 11:00 AM. Fr. Steven Webb, the Greek priest who performs all liturgies will be the priest in residence. All Saints of America Orthodox Mission is a part of the Russian Orthodox Church, all services are performed in the English language.

Bear Creek Baptist Church - Celebrate Recovery

This is a Christ and Biblical Based Program, giving help and help for men, women and families suffering from addiction. Any questions contact Josa Wise@ 361-8455.

There will be a meeting every Thursday night with someone there to talk to men, women, and their families.
Bits 'n Pieces

Calvary Chapel Asheville - Spruce Pine - Calvary Chapel Church in Asheville is hosting a home fellowship and Bible Study in Spruce Pine. The fellowship is held on Thursday evenings at 7:00pm at 79 Seab Rd. (Anise area - off Bonsly Creek Rd.). Call John Jackson 760-793-3799 for information and directions. And bring your Bible.

First Baptist Church Spruce Pine - will have a Spring Awakening with Dr. Jim Henry on March 24-25. Dr. Jim is Pastor Emeritus of FBC Orlando where he served as Senior Pastor for over 30 years. He also is former SBC President in 1995-1996. Saturday March 24, 6:30 pm and Sunday March 25, 10:45 am and 6:30 pm. All Church Welcome.

Support Group For Caregivers Of Those With Memory Loss - To Hold Meetings The First Friday Of Each Month From 1-3PM - Care & Share, a newly-formed support group for caregivers of loved ones who have memory loss, will hold monthly meetings at the offices of Froggie & Palliative Care of The Blue Ridge, 136 Hospital Dr. in Spruce Pine, from 1:00 PM. to 3:00 PM. High Country Caregiver Foundation welcomes and encourages all caregivers to attend. Families dealing with a level one with memory loss can quickly become exhausted, traumatized, and isolated, and this new group intends to provide support, friendship, education, information and referrals for caregivers. Monthly meetings held on the first Friday of each month will offer refreshments and fellowship. There will be opportunities for caregivers to tell their stories, learn tips, share ideas, and give and gain support to others in the same situation. For more information about the group and the meeting please contact Suzanne Russell at (714) 614-5876 or Janet Dunn at janetdunn@yahoo.com.

Mitchell County Baptist Association - Mitchell Baptist Association Mid-Year Meeting is February 26, 7:00 pm. Snow Hill Baptist Church in Bakersville. 2018 Bible Drill—are on Saturday, March 24, 2018 at Bear Creek Baptist Church.

Disciple-Making Conference is Tuesday, February 27, 2017 at Center grove Baptist Church in Clemmons, NC. For more info contact Pam Cardwel At pcardswel@scabaptist.org or call 800-5102 ext. 5615.

Mitchell Baptist Association has volunteered to be a drop-off point for churches to bring in their old material, bibles and literature to be used by the organization “Love Packages.” This material will be picked up on a regular basis. For more information on this organization, please go to lovepackages.org. Their purpose from the beginning has been to equip and strengthen the Church overseas. They are enabling missionaries and workers around the world to reach the lost, plant churches, train leaders, disciple believers and serve the poor. The office has a list of what can be used.

Good News Club—Our Good News Clubs are going strong in Devon Elementary in Spruce Pine and Gouge Elementary in Bakersville. At Deyton, 8 teachers and 34 students are enrolled. Four students have been gloriously saved. At Gouge, 6 teachers and 14 students are enrolled. We are in the process of starting a Good News Club at another school in January. Requests continue to be finances to continue this ministry. Volunteers that are willing to train and teach, and that each child involved will hear and understand the Gospel.

Mitchell County Chamber - Applications are Ready! The Mitchell County Chamber of Commerce is launching the first annual Blue Ridge Weddings Pop Up Show that will take place March 10 at the Cross Street Commerce Center from 11:00 am until 3:00 pm. If your business could benefit from the show, we would love to see you at the show! If you are interested and would like more information, please contact Kelly Jones for an application at kjones@attackcountry.com.

Spruce Pine Farmer’s Market Finds New Home - We have a new winter location for the market! We will be at the community room of Spruce Pine Main Street at 167 Locust street. We will be inside from 11:45am. This will be our winter location the 1st Saturday of the month from January till April. Come shop local with us.

The Mitchell County Historical Society has begun scheduling its Scanning Days for the beginning of the new year. We will have others later in the year. We will be happy to scan your pictures, documents, letters, maps, by computer scanner, so you will have an electronic copy of these treasures for your computer. You can then send them to your own friends or family to enjoy. We scan them while you wait and add them to our ever-growing collection of images and documents about Mitchell County.

We will also have our learned genealogists on hand to look into your family histories and give you tips on how to pursue your own genealogical history. Our scanning dates are as follows:

Saturday, February 3
Historic Courthouse, Bataville
10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Saturday, February 17
Main Street Office Spruce Pine 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Saturday, March 3
Public Library Headquarters 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
If you have any questions, please call us at 688-4371... We're through Friday, 10 to 4. Or, go to our website: michellashistory.org

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

Women’s Prayer Breakfast - If you would like to join a group of women who are dedicated to praying, learning about God’s will, and fellowship, come join us for breakfast at DT’s in Spruce Pine. We will be ending by 10:00 am. Open to all for more information call Barbars Harrell at 828-487-3645 or email at barbara@bcnews.com. February meeting is on the 9th, at 9:00 am.

Yancey County

Parkway Playhouse Presents Murder Mystery Dinner At The Nv Wray Inn BURNSVILLE, NC: Executive of the Estate – an interactive murder-mystery dinner presented by Parkway Playhouse – will be performed on February 10th at 6:30pm at the historic Nv Wray Inn located at 102 Town Square in Burnsville. The story: The most famous pastry chef in Bakersville, Renci: “Sticky” Van Snijtjes, has recently died. His family and business associates have gathered at the Nv Wray Inn to witness the execution of the will. When the most obvious successor turns up dead, it’s clear that more than just the will has been executed. You and the rest of the guests must sift through all the clues to sort out this mysterious recipe.

Tickets to Executive of the Estate can be purchased by calling the Nv Wray Inn at 828-862-2392. Tickets are $45 per person and admission includes a three-course dinner.

The Nv Wray Inn is also offering a special overnight package. $250 plus tax includes 1 night overnight accommodations, 2 tickets to the Murder Mystery Dinner, 1 bottle of wine, 2 Nv Wray Inn wine glasses and a Nv Wray Inn postcard.

Yancey County Meals on Wheels (Burnsville) – Volunteers needed to deliver meals to Yancey County shut-ins, any weekday, 10:30 am no noon. If you would like to volunteer, please call the Yancey County Senior Center at 828-868-8611.

Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture - Our 15th Annual Business of Farming Conference is right around the corner on February 24. Don’t wait! early bird registration ends in two weeks on January 31. Also, use our $25 farm partner discount to register a secondary member of your farm, and attend even more of the great workshops and networking activities offered at this year’s conference. We have several new workshops this year including “Legal and Insurance Implications of Agritourism,” “Managing Farm Lodging and Rentals,” and “Photography Composition and Techniques” all taught by regional farmers and business professionals. See a full list of conference offerings.

On February 23, Farmers can also attend a half-day workshop on “Farm Succession Planning” hosted by Labouchier Adams or ‘Labor Challenges and Strategies” hosted by NC Cooperative Extension in partnership with other local farms and organizations. Take advantage of a great weekend of learning and networking! Register for the conference and half-day workshops online or contact ASAP at 828-236-1822 to register over the phone.

NOTES
Winter Months
By David Burleson
Burke County

The winter months bring many challenges to the Burke United Christian Ministries (BUCM) and the clients we serve. The recent snow and very cold temperatures have created a high demand for food, clothes and homeless supplies. Because of our wonderful staff and volunteers at BUCM, lunch was served every day and dinner was served on our usual nights of service, Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday. We were also able to take care of the clothing needs of our clients.

The winter months are particularly difficult for our homeless clients. During the last year, BUCM served 277 homeless clients. Of the 277 homeless clients, 45 were under 18 years old. With the support of the HOPE committee and other committed community members, winter has been a little warmer and more comfortable for our homeless community.

The amount of food needed at BUCM for the soup kitchen and food pantry increases during the winter months also. We are extremely grateful to our churches, businesses, restaurants, grocery stores, civic groups and individuals that contributed food and supplies for BUCM. We are very thankful that several individuals choose to give BUCM their birthday and Christmas gifts to help others. This was especially true for many of our children and teenagers. Also, several church youth groups collected food and funds during the national Soup Bowl of Caring event that coincided with the Super Bowl game. This is one of the largest food drives of the year. It is a blessing to see that our future leaders understand the importance of helping others.

Greatly used clothes, shoes and other supplies donated by our community have helped meet the needs of our clients. Coat and other warm clothes have been especially appreciated during the winter months. Because of the generosity many in our community, our clients have clothing and other supplies to keep them warm.

Since the calendar shows that we have several more weeks of winter, we still have many needs to meet. Many times we are asked about our greatest needs during the winter months. Here is a list of those needs:

- Blankets
- Men’s Jeans
- Back Packs
- Children’s Sweaters
- Towels
- Canned Fruit
- Canned Meat
- Mac & Cheese
- Cereal
- Jelly
- Shampoo
- Toilet Paper
- Sleeping Bags
- Taps
- Tents

During the winter months, we have seen God at work in tremendous ways at BUCM. When there have been needs, what is needed shows up right on time. It has been a blessing to see what God has done through the people of Burke County.

I also want to invite everyone to our breakfast fundraiser on Saturday, March 24th at 8 a.m. The all you can eat Breakfast will be from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. and the cost is $7. For good food and fellowship, be sure to come out and support BUCM.

Another way to support BUCM and the clients we serve is to volunteer. We still need volunteers for our clothing closet and store, the food pantry and to harvest food. If you would be interested in discussing being a volunteer or making a donation to BUCM, please call us at (828) 433-4077 or visit our webpage at bucm.net.

The Burke United Christian Ministries is very excited about what God is planning to do in 2018.

David Burleson is Director of Burke United Christian Ministries

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- Freedom Auto Detailing
- Freedom Landscaping - Commercial & Residential
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February 2018 - Blue Ridge Christian News page 30
As part of our spreading “Good News”, we have provided these pages for information for your organization or church that would be of interest to the public. I send out reminders in a group email to remind those of you who have requested it, or used this service regularly. If you wish to be added to the email list please email me at barbara@brcnews.com. One of the things any of you using this service needs to remember is that we publish only once a month and the info has to be submitted a month ahead. When sending info please send to my email: barbara@brcnews.com. A great way to get your meeting dates, events, and other info to the public.
Most institutions of higher education, in their mission statements, espouse an environment open to diverse viewpoints and opinions. However, on many college and university campuses an atmosphere that welcomes expression of conservative views is lacking or non-existent, and often replaced with one of hostility. As political correctness becomes more extreme on liberal college and university campuses, the value of a four-year degree is diminished when First Amendment rights of conservative students, faculty, and invited speakers are stifled through intimidation, shout-downs, protests, and even physical violence.

Our institutions of liberal on college campuses toward those with whom they disagree and want to silence is often contrasted with anti-Christian bigotry under the guise of social justice, often, ironically, at universities that were founded by Christian denominations. The expression of diverse political viewpoints on a wide range of issues should be a given, however, because it is not. Supported legislation, which Governor Cooper opposed, required the UNC Board of Governors to develop, adopt, and implement policies and forms a committee on free expression. The committee will make annual reports to the Board of Governors, the General Assembly, and the Governor. The initial annual report of the Committee on Free Expression is due by September 1, 2016.

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

Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church

The Most Romantic Verse in the Bible?

By Shawna Thomas
Barke County

"So, Jacob served seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her." (Genesis 29:20)

Surely this is at least one of the most romantic verses in all of the word of God. Jacob loved Rachel so much that he was not only willing to work seven years to earn her hand in marriage, but the seven years "seemed to him but a few days" because he loved her so much. It's hard to beat that sentiment!

But this is also indicative of a truth that applies in a number of areas of life: we can spend a lot of time on something we really love, and care about. It's not hard to get someone to do something, or be with someone, that they really love. Which convicts many of us regarding the paltry amount of time we are willing to give God. If we really "love" Him, as we claim, then why does someone have to twist our arm to go to worship? Why is it so easy to spend multiple hours on television or the internet, but so hard to spend even an hour with God in His word and prayer?

Do you love the Lord? Perhaps the best test of that, is whether "the most romantic verse in the Bible" describes the way that you spend time with God.

Shawna Thomas is Senior Pastor at Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church in Morganton. His messages and devotionals are available at www.shawnatomithomas.com
**NC House District 86**


I was very pleased that the legislature, as part of the two-year budget adopted last June, approved provisions for a new education initiative that focuses on reading proficiency for students at all grade levels. The initiative’s main goal is to improve students’ reading skills and literacy in general. The program will thus help bolster the necessary educational credentials that North Carolinians will need to ensure that they will be able to best succeed and better meet the workforce needs in the years that lie ahead.

With the initiative in place, students in the 11th grade take the ACT test at the end of the school year to assess their readiness for either entering the workforce or continuing their education at a higher education institution, community college or university. The ACT includes an assessment of each student’s readiness for career or higher education based upon their reading ability. Sadly, less than 40% of our high school juniors are able readers. With reading being key to success in most modern-day jobs and other subjects studied in school, this lack of readiness by our students is a huge drag on their futures as well as for our businesses needing capable employees, whether just out of high school or after completing additional schooling after high school. Moreover, when students leave high school unable to read at a competent level, those attempting to go further with their education most often find themselves first paying for remedial courses before they can even get to the courses that they believe are important to their future. That is assuming they do not become discouraged and drop out.

In recent years, the North Carolina legislature has invested heavily in an effort to enhance reading in kindergarten through third grade. That program has been called, “Read to Achieve.” It seems, thus far, to be meeting with noticeable success. However, there are still substantial numbers of students leaving third grade without adequate reading skills. In addition, experts tell us that students, about the fourth grade, begin to need different reading skills as they get into more substantive subjects in which reading is key. In short, it may be said these students need to read not just to pronounce or recognize say words. Rather, students need to understand the words they read and the need to use words to explain their understanding.

The letter reading approach, that of comprehension and communication, that the new Reading Commission is formed to address. The commission is headed by State Superintendent of Public Instruction Mark Johnson. The members of the commission consist mostly of educators with expertise and understanding of different ways to teach reading in grades 4 through 12. The idea is not to prescribe what schools can teach or what children should know but to provide a model curriculum that they can choose. Ultimately, the goal is that, as a state, North Carolina will dramatically increase the percentage of our students who are capable readers when they leave high school.

**NC Senate District 46**

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

One of the big topics of discussion across our nation last month was the federal tax reform bill that was passed into law on December 22, 2017. Having a front seat to the many tax reforms we’ve implemented in NC (Carolina Journal), I’ve found the negative reactions to tax relief to be very interesting. Similar to the objections to tax reform we heard here in NC last month there were national leaders denouncing the idea of returning a “paltry sum of $2000” to the hands of the taxpayer. In other words, if liberals, government knows how to spend your money better than you do. For the average citizen, an extra $2000 would be helpful, and the equivalent of a month’s rent, a couple mortgage payments, a down payment on a car, etc. But just as we saw in NC, the liberal left is Washington D.C. made in the last two years have few of our state on a very positive economic path. Since December 1 of 2017, Burke County has increased three different jobs announcements that will add 440 new jobs in Burke County. In Cleveland County, officials were also able to announce hundreds of new job opportunities due to hundreds of millions of dollars in business expansion and relocation in the county. Most North Carolinians are employed now than at any time in the history of our state. The General Assembly's nonpartisan Fiscal Research Division has recently reported that, “the economy is on solid footing and remains in a stable growth pattern. Employment continues to grow at a steady pace. The state’s growth is starting to outpace average national growth. The economy is stronger than it was a year ago and is beginning to look like an economy that has entered into a true expansionary phase.” It’s good news for our State, and you can read the entire economic report at NC General Assembly Fiscal Research Division. As these federal tax reforms continue to take effect, I expect that there will be more good economic news on the horizon. Happy Valentine’s Day to each of you, and I hope that you will take the opportunity this month to let the special people in your life know how much you love and appreciate them.

**NC House District 118**

Rep. Michele D. Presnell Michele.Presnell@ncleg.net 919-733-5733

N.C. retirement plans: put 56.7 million back in retirees’ pockets in January Implements President Trump’s Tax Package in a Matter of Days

N.C. retirement plans: put 56.7 million back in retirees’ pockets in January

The following is reprinted from the Office of State Treasurer Dale F. Folwell. (Raleigh, N.C.) – North Carolina State Treasurer Dale F. Folwell, CPA, announced today that January benefit payments to North Carolina retirees will increase by a total of $56.7 million this month thanks to the Retirement Systems Division (RSD) beating the clock on an IRS deadline.

The deadline was the result of the new federal tax reform law, which lowered the amount of federal taxes that should be deducted from 2018 benefit payments to North Carolina retirees and benefit recipients. Employers have until February 15, 2018 to update the federal withholding tables used to calculate how much is withheld from individual payments. The RSD Operations Team within the N.C. Department of State Treasurer was able to update the tables ahead of the IRS’s deadline.

“Tou’re very proud of our team for taking the initiative so quickly after the new tax law was passed by Congress and signed by President Trump. While this is the result of a change in federal law, it involves more than just tax withholding and benefits,” said Folwell. “This is a result of the outstanding job that our career public servants do to serve government workers.”

New streamlined processes continue to help RSD create operational efficiencies, including releasing 2017 tax forms weeks ahead of schedule and at the fastest pace in six years. This comes despite a steady increase in retirements and new payment disbursements that set another record for RSD: over $350 million is now paid each month to more than 121,000 retirees and benefit recipients.

In other news, Folwell led by Tom Conover and Susan White decided not to reduce the first of the year increase in our member’s benefit payments. “I’m pleased to say that the tax reforms have resulted in a positive change for our state’s retirees and benefit recipients,” Folwell said.

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Background: Among its many functions, the N.C. Department of State Treasurer manages the North Carolina Total Retirement Plans, which administer the retirement benefits of more than 1,000,000 North Carolina’s state and local government, law enforcement, judicial, and legislative employees, as well as teachers and fire and rescue workers. More information is available at myncrretirement.com.
Loving Threads
By Pastor Merri Taylor
Tunica County

It was minuted by a memory from a ministry from days gone by, back in Alabama.
It was inspired by the challenge to "get out of the boat" from a sermon series. God
took this and led Michele Hackabee to enlist the talents of others, a desire to teach
some a new skilled hobby, and the passion to show others the love of Christ in a simple
and tangible way. This is what gave birth to the Shoal Creek Baptist Church Prayer
Shawl Ministry. First, there were crocheted prayer shawls for folks with health
problems, others who were lonely, or just simply needed to know that others were
praying for them and love them. It did not take long before we received news about a
truly miraculous recovery of a teenaged girl who received a shawl. After this, one of the
ladies in the fellowship received a cancer diagnosis, and chemo-therapy was the
scheduled treatment, which normally leads to the loss of hair, and this led to crocheted
hats for her and other chemo-patients, and then, hats for shoe boxes as gifts for
Salvation Army's Purse Operation Christmas Child. Last of all, simple scarves were made to
be placed in blessing bags with other necessities to give to the homeless folks, and other
scarves were placed in public venues for anyone who desired to keep it. The prayer
shawl ministry even expanded to collect stuffed animals for the Burnsville Police
Department, given as a comfort in situations where children are encountered in
officer's duties. There were enough animals collected for two departments to share.
The fellowship of Shoal Creek and friends of Shoal Creek have embraced this
ministry, enabling its growth in many generous ways.

This simple ministry of crocheting threads of yarn into shawls, scarfs, and hats is
to share the love of Jesus with others. As each piece is crocheted, there is prayer
for the person who receives it. Before the shawls are distributed, the church places
them on the altar, hands are laid upon them and prayer is lifted to God in heaven
to use each, just as He used the foremen and handloom weavers that Paul used and
were given to people in need. Our God is still in the miracle business, and He has given
a few miracles with this ministry. Some have received a touch from the Master's hand,
and others have received a different kind of miracle and that is why they do some
thing that makes a difference in the lives of others.

It is loving threads, Meeting a need, sharing love, and showing Jesus is real!
This is just one of the many ways some "get out of the boat" and carry the
message of the Gospel into this world. Each piece is "Stitched in prayer. Gifted in love!"

Mary Lee is a brain surgery survivor from years ago, and her physical
limitations have kept her from doing many things. She has discovered
a new purpose in life and ministry through crocheting prayer shawls
and scarfs. She comes every Sunday morning that she can attend
with several items, and always takes more yarn to do more. This ministry is
doing more than just touching the lives of those who receive the shawls,
scarfs, and hats, for it is impacting those who are crocheting these gifts of
love as well.

Ministry Members—Seated L-R: Daphne Buchanan, Michele Hackabee;
Standing L-R: Pam Taylor, Lexi Duff, Janie Westbrook, Lacey Robinson, Wanda
Hughes, Barbara Branch, Jana Black, Linda Puckett, Kelly Miller, Margaret Neum-
mann. Not pictured: Mary Lea Hardin, Wendy Duncan, Amanda Silver, Sherri
Hubbard, Rachel Proctor, Maria Chavez, Shirley Coltryahn, Kathy Newell,
Linda Lowman

Church prayer for shawls, scarfs, and hats at the altar

Shawls, scarfs, hats, and animals

Part of the group going out to share the love of Jesus together

Items collected for the Blessing Bags to give to homeless people

Pacing scarfs on benches in downtown Burnsville

I am not lost! Take me if you need me! Stitched in prayer. Gifted in love

Pastor Merri Taylor is a native of Williamson, NC and was married to his
Beloved wife Pam, for 36 years. They have three children, and five grandchildren.
Taylor is a graduate of Fruitland Baptist Bible College, Liberty University, and
Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary. He has been serving as pastor of Shoal
Creek Baptist Church since September 1, 2013.
Burke County Schools

BCPS Honored With 10 Public Relations Awards
By Cheryl Shuffler

School public relations professionals across the state were honored Friday, Jan. 25, for the products of their craft during the North Carolina School Public Relations Association’s (NCSGRA) annual Blue Ribbon Awards for Effective Communications celebration at the O. Henry Hotel in Greensboro. Thirty-eight school districts were recognized for outstanding work and received a total of 366 awards in eight categories.

Included in the list of winners is Cheryl Shuffler, public relations officer for Burke County Public Schools. Burke County Public Schools received 10 Blue Ribbon awards in five categories. Board of Education Members Edna Weller, Seth Hunt and Board Chair Randy Burns as well as Superintendent Dr. Larry Putnam, Assistant Superintendent David Fonsecas, Chartwells K12 District Manager Peggy Luther and Chartwells K12 Regional Marketing Manager Christa Turitski joined Shuffler in accepting the awards on behalf of the school system.

The categories, entries and awards are:

- Digital Media Engagement
- Welcome Video – Bronze Award (Link to Welcome Video)
- Virtual Students Talk Turkey – Bronze Award (Link to Turkey Video)
- Excellence in Writing
- Welding Class Sparks Interest at FIES – Gold Award (Link to Welding story)
- Freedom Principal, East Burke AP Awarded by School System – Silver Award (Link to story)
- Backpack giveaway – Gold Award (Link to Photo Album)
- Last Day – Recreate First Day – Bronze Award

MORE

Publications
Burke County School and Family Magazine – Bronze Award (Link to latest edition)
District Strategic Plan 2017-2012 – Bronze Award (Link to Strategic Plan)

Dr. Putnam said, “You know Cheryl Shuffler as the voice of Burke County Public Schools as she is the one who calls you on snow days. But every day, she is out there helping us tell our story and accentuating the positive about Burke County Public Schools. These awards represent 10 examples of the countless stories we tell and the ways we engage with our community. They also are examples of teamwork. Our principals, teachers, staff members and students all have a part in telling our story of igniting learning for a brighter future every day. By focusing and promoting our schools and working with our community partners, we show what a great county, community and school system we have.”

NCSGRA President Todd Hagan, executive director of Community Relations & Communications for Gaston County Schools, said entries of the award winners rivaled the best work of public relations practitioners in any field. “Blue Ribbon Awards are the highest. These awards represent 10 examples of the countless stories we tell and the ways we engage with our community. They also are examples of teamwork. Our principals, teachers, staff members and students all have a part in telling our story of igniting learning for a brighter future every day. By focusing and promoting our schools and working with our community partners, we show what a great county, community and school system we have.”

Blue Ridge Wedding Pop Up Show and Bridal Marketplace
By Patti Jensen

Blue Ridge Wedding Pop-Up Show and Bridal Marketplace
coming to Spruce Pine March 10th
Spruce Pine (January 30, 2018) The Blue Ridge Mountains are a beautiful setting for weddings throughout the year and the Mitchell County Chamber of Commerce is helping brides and grooms plan their special day. The Blue Ridge Wedding Pop-Up Show and Bridal Marketplace will take place on Saturday, March 10, 2018 from 11 AM-3 PM at the Cross Street Center in Spruce Pine and will feature wedding vendors who specialize in helping brides plan their special day.

Brides will be able to talk with caterers, hair and makeup artists, wedding planners, wedding venues, custom invitations and sign designers and more at the event. “This event was created to help brides get married in our area connect with wedding vendors who can help make some of the stress out of their planning,” said Patti Jensen, Executive Director of the Mitchell County Chamber of Commerce.

“We have so many wonderful businesses in our area who offer amazing products, venues and services at affordable prices and our goal is to connect them with the brides who are planning their upcoming weddings. Supporting these small businesses and showcasing our beautiful area is a win-win.”

The event is free to attend and open to the public. “Those attending the Show will have a great day of samples, prizes and more,” said Jensen. The vendors showcased at the event will have time to talk with brides, grooms and mothers of the bride to share about their services as well as provide information and giveaways.

A unique feature to the Show is the Bridal Marketplace. Future brides and mothers of the bride who have wedding décor that they would like to sell have an opportunity to set up a booth at the Show. “We know that there are many garages and closets out there with beautiful wedding décor that has only been used once,” said Jensen. The Bridal Marketplace is available on a first come first serve basis by reservation only and has a small fee attached to reserve the space. Those interested in these spaces should call the Mitchell County Chamber at 828-765-9033.

“We are especially thankful for our sponsors: Springmaid Mountain and Cross Street Commerce Center for their support of this event. Brides can meet with Springmaid Mountain Resort at the event and register for a two-night giveaway. Attendees at the Show can see the Cross Street venue and learn about the upcoming renovations to the space.

Vendors interested in being a part of the Blue Ridge Weddings Pop-Up Show can call 828-765-9033 or email kjones@mitchellcountychamber.org. The event also has a Facebook and Instagram page that will feature new vendors and sponsors as the event draws near.

Patti Jensen is Interim Director of the Mitchell County Chamber of Commerce.
Evergreen Church

Eternal Love
By Rev John McCoy
Round Mountain, Tennessee

"The LORD has appeared of old unto me, saying, ‘He has loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore, with loving-kindness has He drawn me.’" (Jeremiah 31:3) The tragedy of sin is that it keeps God from being to us all that He wants to be—Our Lover (1-6). The image of marriage is frequently found in both Jeremiah and Hosea. When we disobe y God, we sin not only against His law but also against His love. We break the heart of God when we give our love to what He hates. Perhaps no doctrine in Scripture is as clearly stated as that expressed in our text and in many other passages. God loves us! His love is an "eternal love" and compels Him to act strongly and lovingly on our behalf.

"Therein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). This theme finds glorious expression in the grand hymn of the last portion entitled "I Am His, and He Is Mine." Loved with everlasting love, led by grace that love to know, Spirit, breathing from above, thou last taught me it is so! O this full and perfect peace, O this transport all divine-In a love which cannot cease. I am His and He is mine. Jesus prayed, "I am in them, and thou in me, that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am" (John 17:23-24). The Father will never allow us to part from Him or our Savior. These precious facts are taught us by the "inspired" (literally "God-breathed") Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:16), and the Comforter ... the Spirit of truth who [will] guide [us] into all truth" (John 16:7, 13). "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John 3:1).

In His grace, we come to Him, experiencing sweet forgiveness and everlasting love. Grilled in the security of His enduring love, we have peace. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee" (Isaiah 26:3). As we look at the rest of Jeremiah 21 we see he is to be Our Father (7-9). Israel is His forebear, He redeemed the people in Egypt (Exod. 4:22). God wants to be a Father to us (2 Cor. 6:14-18), but our sins stand in the way. Our Shepherd (10-14). The flock of Israel was scattered and scattered, but the Lord was caring for it just the same. No matter how dark the day, the Shepherd will find you, lead you, and give you a song. Our Comforter (15-40). What lamentation there was when homes were broken and people were carried off to a foreign land! But God gave the word of comfort: they will come home again. He promised them a new covenant that would change their hearts, and we have that covenant in Jesus Christ (Heb. 8:10-13). In closing Phil. 4:23 Pastor. John McCoy send all prayer requests to johnmccoy1@gmail.com

John McCoy is pastor of Evergreen church in Round Mountain, Tennessee and also chaplain at Round Highways Nursing Center.

Lees-McRae College

Lees-McRae College Elects Dr. Herbert L. King, Jr., as 16th President of the 118-Year-Old Institution
By Nina Mastandrea
Avery County

BANNER ELK, N.C.—On January 19, 2018, the Lees-McRae College Board of Trustees elected Dr. Herbert L. King, Jr. as the 16th president in the 118-year history of the institution. King will succeed Dr. Barry M. Buxton on June 1, 2018.

"I am honored and excited to have the opportunity to serve as the next president of Lees-McRae," King said. "I value its mission; its student centeredness and I feel at home in the natural beauty that Banner Elk provides. My family and I are eager to become part of this community, and I am grateful for the trust that the board has placed in me to lead Lees-McRae into the future."

President-elect King will arrive on campus serving as the Vice President for Institutional Advancement at Hamden-Sydney College in Hamden-Sydney, Virginia, where he was responsible for all development, alumni relations and career functions of the college.

While at Hamden-Sydney, King achieved the third, fourth and fifth-best fundraising years in the college's history and the best years outside of a capital campaign. His time there was also marked by the two best years of endowment gift giving as well as setting the record for unrestricted gifts to the college.

Through the generated gift income, Hamden-Sydney was able to construct the $11 million Brown Student Center and the $4 million renovation of the Van-Christ Center for the Arts. He also increased the alumni giving percentage from 29 percent to 36 percent in one fiscal year resulting in a three Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) awards.

Prior to Hamden-Sydney, King served as the Vice President for External Relations at Hollins University in Roanoke, Virginia, and the Vice President for Institutional Advancement at Furman College in Furman, Virginia.

King's experience extends beyond the scope of higher education with time as both Executive Director and Director of Development at the Patrick Henry Boys and Girls Homes in Brookeland, Virginia, where he was tasked with creating the organization's first strategic plan, launching comprehensive facility renovation efforts and multiple fundraising efforts.

King received his Doctor of Education in educational leadership from The University of Virginia, his Master of Education in educational administration from Lynchburg College and his Bachelor of Arts in English and history from Hamden-Sydney College.

Dr. Barry M. Buxton, 15th president of Lees-McRae College, announced his retirement on July 31, 2017. As such, the Board of Trustees began inviting nominations and applications for its innovative and visionary leader in academic, fiscal, administrative and professional matters.

McNair Tornor, Board of Trustees chairman and search committee co-chair, said "The Board and search committee extended a great deal of time determining the leader to lead us in the future—we found that person in Lee King. He possesses those qualities we were looking for—good communicative and collaborative skills exceptional fundraiser and strong athletic programs and outstanding faculty. Field-specific case preparation and hands-on learning enhance the broad core curriculum. For more information, please visit www.lmc.edu or call 828.898.5241."

Nina Mastandrea is the content manager of Lees-McRae College.
What's Love Got to Do with It?

By Pastor Steve Williams
Mitchell County

The answer to that question is Everything. Sincere biblical love is a rare thing in this world. There are plenty of exhibitions of fleshly and worldly love, but sincere, biblical love is hard to find! The Bible tells us that God's Love is Badass, in Isaiah 31:3, "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yes, I have loved thee." And the Bible also tells us that God's love is Unchanging, in Romans 8:38-39. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, (59) Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Let's look at what the Bible tells us in 1 Cor 13:1-7. 1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity (love), I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. 2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity (love), I am nothing. 3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity (love), it profiteth me nothing. 4 Charity (love) suffereth long, and is kind; charity (love) envieth not; charity (love) vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, 5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, 6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth. 7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. This passage in 1 Cor 13:1-7 shows us two very important things about biblical love in the Christian Life. First it shows us the importance of Biblical Love. See it's one thing to speak love, but it's a whole different story to show it to others. It's easy to say I love you because all that is, is words I've spoken. I've heard sometimes our words are cheap. Showing our love for our fellow man is going to take us out of our comfort zone, could even cost you time and money, and may even take a great effort. The Bible says in 1 John 3:18, "My little children, let us not love in word neither in tongue but in deed and in truth." Second this passage paints us a Picture of Sincere Love. Verses 4-5 shows us Loves Action. A Sunday School teacher asked her class if they knew the difference between kindness and loving kindness. One little girl said she knew the difference. She told the teacher that kindness is like when you ask your mother for some toast and she gives it to you, but loving kindness is when you ask your mother for some toast and she gives it to you with butter and jelly on it. And that's the way God is. God in His loving kindness, is an exceedingly generous giver. He doesn't just give you some blessings, but He gives some blessings with some butter and jelly on it. That's the way True biblical love should be.

Words of Wisdom
- Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend. - Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Friends show their love in times of trouble, not in happiness. - NA
- Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you. - Matthew 5:44
- Love all, trust a few, do wrong to none. - William Shakespeare

A Little Laughter for 'The Soul...It Love
Bill and Steve are discussing the possibility of love. "I thought I was in love three times," Bill says. "Thought?" Steve asks. "What do you mean?" "Three years ago, I cared very deeply for a woman who wanted nothing to do with me," Bill says. "Wasn't that love?" Steve asks. "No, that was obsession," Bill explains. "Then two years ago, I cared very deeply for an attractive woman who didn't understand me." "Wasn't that love?" asks Steve. "No, that was lust," Bill replies. "And just last year, I met a woman while I was on a cruise. She was gorgeous, intelligent, a great conversationalist and had a super sense of humor. Everywhere I followed her on that ship, I would get a very strange sensation in the pit of my stomach." "Well, wasn't that love," asks Steve. "No. That was motion sickness!" Bill replies.

Steve Williams is the Pastor of Berry Chapel Baptist Church in Spruce Pine.
ACROSS
1 a ruin and a desolate waste from Migdol to ___ (Ezek 29:10)
3 as it began to ___ toward the first day of the week (Matt 28:1)
5 the LORD your God, ___ brought you out of Egypt (Deut 13:5)
6 He makes Lebanon ___ like a calf (Ps 29:6)
12 What is ___ and will observe these things (Ps 107:43)
13 Then he gave a ___ of bread, a cake of dates and a cake (2 Sam 6:19)
14 take thee ___ and lay it before thee (I,4) (Ezek 4:1) (KJV)
15 But the people grew ___ on the way (Num 21:4)
17 They repay me evil for good and leave my soul ___ (Ps 35:12)
18 They ___ past like boats of papyrus (Job 9:26)
19 picnic pest (Prov 6:6)
21 The ___ is also unclean; although it has a split hoof (Deut 14:8)
22 Joseph worked with physicians to his father Israel (Gen 50:2)
23 What has happened to us is a ___ of our evil deeds (Ezra 9:13)
25 fish and all manner of ___ (Gen 1:20)
26 sold on the Sabbath (Neh 13:16) (KJV)
29 Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to ___ in the desert? (Num 21:5)
30 neither is worshipped with men’s hands, as though he were ___ thing (Acts 17:25)
32 Noah and his ___ , Shem, Ham, and Japheth (Gen 7:9)
33 As ___ a man who casteth firebrands (1,3) (Prov 26:18) (KJV)
36 remains only a single seed But if it dies, it produces many ___ (John 12:24)
41 They hatch the ___ of vipers and spin a spider’s web (Isa 59:5)
43 David became a ___ after killing Goliath (1 Sam 17:31)
45 as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it ___ down (2 Kings 21:13)
46 he saith unto them, Why make ye this ___ and weep (Mark 3:39) (KJV)
48 a little honey, spices, and myrrh, and almonds (Gen 45:11)
49 Jesus went into the ___ and began to cast out (Mark 11:15)
50 when thou art ___ go and sit down in the lowest room (Luke 14:10) (KJV)
51 abbr. for the nineteenth book of the New Testament (KJV)
52 “Go and ___ to him, ‘You will certainly recover’ ” (II Ki 8:10)
53 ___ and Dunah, and Eshean (Joshua 13:52)
55 examine the mildew and ___ the affected article (Lev 13:30)
57 Michal was upset by David ___ some of his clothes in public (2 Sam 6:20)
58 Xerxes who ___ over 127 provinces (Ezra 1:1)
59 The body is a ___ though it is made up of many parts (1 Cor 12:12)
60 Laban’s oldest daughter (Gen 29:16-17)
61 He trains my hands for battle; my ___ can bend a bow (2 Sam 22:35)
64 abbr. for the first book of the pentateuch (KJV)
65 do not repay the ___ edge of your field (Lev 25:32)
66 Jehoiada the priest took a ___ and bored a hole in its lid (2 Kings 12:9)

DOWN
1 Jacob set up ___ pillar at the place (1,3) (Gen 33:14)
2 Her ___ clogged to her ___ (Lam 1:9)
3 Therefore disaster overtake him in an instant (Prov 6:15)
4 a holy nation, ___ belonging to God (1,6) (1 Peter 2:9)
5 when Isaac was old, and his ___ were ___ (Gen 27:1)
6 the poison of ___ is under their lips (Rom 3:3) (KJV)
7 those parts of the body that seem to be ___ are indispensable (1 Cor 12:22)
8 ___ unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrates! (Matt 23:14)
9 you have not been trustworthy in ___ worldly wealth (Luke 16:11)
10 How ___ is the candle of the wicked put out! (Job 21:17) (KJV)
12 and a bird on the ___ may report what you say (Ecc 10:20)
13 Part of the body (Judg 19:29)
14 like the merchant ships, bringing her food from ___ (Prov 31:14)
15 all the days of my appointed ___ will I wait (Job 14:14)
16 join in their purification ___ and pay their expenses (Acts 21:24)
17 as David said, “Am I ___ that you come at me” (1,3) (1 Sam 17:43)
18 Benjamin’s ___ was five times so much as any of theirs (Gen 43:34) (KJV)

25 to loose the bands of wickedness, to ___ the heavy burdens (Isa 38:6) (KJV)
26 Bitterly she ___ at night, tears are upon her cheeks (Lam 1:2)
29 The fear of the LORD ___ length to life (Prov 10:27)
31 abbr. for the fifth book of the Old Testament (KJV)
32 a man’s ways ___ right to him, but the LORD weighs the heart (Prov 21:2)
33 husband of Jezebel (I Kings 19:1)
34 A cheerful heart is good ___ (Prov 17:22)
35 I see ___ of an almond tree (Jer 1:11)
36 ___ and the ___ where he built high places (2 Chr 33:19)
37 ___ a prophetess, was leading Israel at that time (Judg 4:4)
38 Roman Emperor at the time of the early church (KJV)
39 They were ___ to trap him in what he had said (Luke 20:25)
40 Speak to one another with ___ hymns and spiritual songs (Eph 5:19)
41 talking about and listening to the ___ ideas (Acts 17:21)
42 one official is ___ by a higher one, and over them both are (Ecc 5:8)
43 ___ projective (Job 41:26)
44 It had a great, ___ wall with twelve gates (Rev 21:12)
45 ___ David himself walked behind the ___ (2 Sam 3:31-32)
46 ___ to see if you can him into showing you the secret (Judg 16:5)
47 ___ another well, but they quarreled over (Gen 26:21)
48 Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the ___ of the world (John 1:29)
49 by me and Silvanus and Timothy, was not yes and ___ (2 Cor 1:19) (KJV)

Solution on page 14
Tiny Pantry, Big Hearts

Small, Local Church Opens 24/7 Food Pantry
By: Ginny Rhodes
McDowell County

The congregation at Cross Mill United Methodist Church doesn’t fill the church up on Sundays with only about 13 members, but what they are filling up is a tiny food pantry outside of their church available to anyone who needs it 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

“The idea is just to do what we can to reach as many people as we possibly can. And give it with love from our hearts, and hopefully, prayerfully, it will reach those that really need it,” said Pastor Walter Puges. “In this day and time, we need to give back to let people know that there are some people in this world that still have the idea to give as we have been given to.

Two old newspaper racks that have been refurbished with fresh paint and lettering serve as the pantry that sits outside of the fellowship hall of the church. It is filled with non-perishable goods and bottled water available to anyone any time they need it.

“I have always had a passion for a food pantry,” said church member Susan Gossett, who spearheaded the pantry after learning about another church in Morganton who did the same thing. “This is a great way for those who may be embarrassed to go other places to get food. They can come and take what they need and no one has to know.”

She and the church also hope the pantry will spark donations from the community, organizations and businesses to keep the food boxes filled up at all times.

“We do need help with supplies, but no matter what God will supply our need. We hope there will be a lot more involvement,” said Gossett.

Although the pantry is anonymous, a grateful person who benefited from the food recently left a note for the church that said, “I’m homeless. Thank you so much. This means so much to me. God bless.”

For anyone wanting to donate, bring your items by the pantry located at 85 West Cross Street in Marion. For a larger donation, folks can call Susan at 442-4091 or Johnny Patton at 460-9257. Service at the church begins at 9 a.m. each Sunday.

“We ask the community to pray for us and pray for the success of this adventure. We are coming into a season where there is going to be a lot needed. We have a lot going on in McDowell County that a lot of people are not aware of,” said Puges. “I think this will help in many cases to relieve some of the pressure and some of the pain that folks will have to deal with.”

Ginny Rhodes is an award-winning multimedia journalist at The McDowell News in Marion, North Carolina. Currently, she covers education for McDowell County, and is the editor of The Express, a weekly lifestyle and entertainment publication. Ginny grew up in McDowell County and lives in Old Fort with her husband Christopher and two children: Scarlett, 7, and Sawyer, 2. She is the secretary for McDowell County Crime Stoppers Inc., and a board member for McDowell United Fund. She has her bachelor’s degree in Communications from Appalachian State University. To contact her, email vrhodes@mcdowellnews.com.
Pause...and Consider

A Healthy Heart
By Ken and Jan Merop
Avery County

All the leads were attached to me correctly. Yet the doctor couldn’t get a reading from the cardiogram machine. I lay there praying against the temptation of what he might find.

That was many years ago. But I can still hear the doctor saying, “I don’t see anything on the screen. I don’t know what’s wrong.”

Quietly, I said, “I’m still here.” He quickly raised and said, “Oh, it’s not you! It’s the machine.”

We laughed a bit and he eventually was able to rule out anything with my heart. Healthy physical hearts are essential to good health. Proper nutrition, good eating habits and exercise are vital. Our spiritual hearts need to be nurtured as well. For example, in Proverbs 12:25, NEV it says, ‘Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, but a good word makes it glad.”’

Proverbs 17:22 says, ‘A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones.”

There are many verses that remind us of God’s peace and our thankfulness. For example, Colossians 3:15 encourages us to let God’s peace rule in our hearts and to be thankful. The above verses give us the prescription for a healthy heart. Joy, encouraging words, peace and thankfulness provide the environment in which a heart thrives— not just survives. In 1 Thessalonians 5:16 this prescription is affirmed with these words: “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

Recently, say husband Ken gave me an acronym for the word heart. ‘H’ stands for healthy, which we just explored. Then he saw how ‘E.A.P.’ follows ‘H.’ We must listen to God’s word so we will hear his voice and what he wants us to say to us. Once we hear what he has to say we will discover a beautiful truth.

The letter ‘T’ stands for treasure.

A treasure is something of great value. That is how God sees us. In Isaiah 43:7, the Lord God says, “Everyone who is called by my name, whom I have created for My glory, I have fashioned him, yes, I have made him.”

We belong to the Lord and He loves us with an everlasting love. Jesus proved that by dying a substitutionary death for me and you so that when we receive His free gift of salvation we are born anew into His family. We are His children and children are a treasure.

Let’s live as treasured ones. Selah

A Singular Heart

A heart singularly focused on God opens itself to His abundant love that flows freely to others. Sometimes that heart bleeds with the one loved. Other times it rejoices with exuberance. And, still, there are times when it quietly embraces. We are designed to have a singular heart for God...the One who embodies love.

“God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them.” 1 John 4:16b

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The Goal
By Jason Koon
Barke County

Most of us will probably nod along as
we read the following quotes about the
state of the modern Church:

“The Church has lost its hold on the
masses. The Church does not hold the
young people passing out of its
Sunday schools. The Church has failed in
meeting the increase of population.”

“The Church is in a state that is not
pleasing to God, it is not answering its
destiny, it is on a downward grade.”

There is no place left for the growth of that faith which realized those
frequent conversions which were the glory of previous generations.”

Most of us, however, would be surprised to learn that these quotes come
from a book called “The Death of Conversions” written by Andrew Murray
one hundred twenty years ago. There are always those who try to live with
case foot in the world and one in the Church: maybe it’s worse today, maybe
not, I don’t know. But I do know that unless we recognize our conformity
to the world, and begin to pursue the transforming power of the Word and
the Spirit that we are promised in Romans 12:1-2, we will never see God
move the way He desires to move in us, and make us into the people He has
called us to become.

I can’t speak to the specifics of the state of the Church in 1897, Andrew
Murray is better equipped to populater the exact deficiencies in His
day than I am, but I do think I understand some of the root problems in
our thought processes today. One of the most critical errors we have
made is in the way that we have presented the Gospel (no error which,
Murray warned us about a century ago). We have told people that
the goal of their salvation is to get to heaven. If you asked one-hundred
Christians if they agreed that the true goal of their salvation is
to get into heaven, I would be surprised if less than two or three
objected. Now, it might seem strange to suggest that a statement like this
is incorrect, after all, heaven is our future hope and our promised “blessed
inheritance.” Maybe it is not incorrect to suggest that heaven is our goal, but
biblically it is incomplete.

Those who have known he also persistently to be conformed to the image
of his Son — Romans 8:29

He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be
holy and blameless before him — Ephesians 1:4

As Christians, heaven is our future hope, it has come to enter in the
person of Jesus, and residing within each believer in the person of the Holy
Spirit, but it is not the ultimate goal of God’s plan. The ultimate goal is to
make us right with Him: to make us righteous. When the Churches filled
with people who are hoping only in heaven, not in righteousness, we are
much less likely to take temptations and other threats to our righteousness
seriously. “Well, it doesn’t really matter, I’ll get to heaven either way.”

However, if we understand the ultimate goal of our salvation as being made
righteous, our perspective begins to change. “Why would I want to do
anything to move myself away from my goal of righteousness before God?”

[One hundred years after Andrew Murray, the world has not
changed. School shootings, recess activities, and recent events
in our community have raised questions about the ultimate
goal of our salvation: To be conformed to the image of His
Son.]

Jason Koon is Pastor of Bridge42 Church in Morganton, NC.

Bear Creek Baptist Church

It’s A Really, Really Big Problem!

By Bruce Cannon
Mitchell County

It’s a problem of gigantic proportions. It affects
every family in the United States in some form or
fashion. It decreases job productivity, leads to
employee absences, and increases the likelihood
of accidents on the job. It causes families to
struggle terribly. It leads to so many deaths. It’s
jail cells and court calendars. What is it? Substance
Abuse and Addiction.

Check out these statistics provided by The Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Services Administration (SAMHSA), an operating division within the U.S.
Department of Health and Human Services:

- 21.5 million American adults (aged 12 and older) battled a substance use
disorder in 2014.
- Approximately 5 percent of the American adolescent population suffered
from a substance use disorder; this equates to 1.3 million teens or 1 in every
12.
- About one out of every six American young adults (between the ages of 18
and 25) battle a substance use disorder.

As sad as it is, we must understand that Western North Carolina, along with
the rest of the state and nation, has a drug abuse/addiction epidemic. Drugs,
especially opiates, are readily available and can be easily obtained. Once
drugs are misused and/or abused, addiction occurs. And the heartbreaking
cycle of theft, debt, criminal charges, and stays in jail begins. Families
gather around a son or daughter, a friend, or parent figure that was never
due to this problem.

Drug addiction is no respecter of persons. It affects the rich and poor,
churched and unchurched, educated and non-educated, and young and old.

My burden is to reach youth and children with truth before drug use begins.
My plan is to be very plain spoken, to pull no punches, and to sound the alarm
of what drugs do. It is our call to everyone in Western North Carolina to deal
with this problem, develop effective means of prevention and treatment, and to implement
those plans.

Help is found and comes when we allow no longer in denial that there is a
problem, understand that we cannot handle this by ourselves, turn to God
for His blessing and provision AND accept responsibility for our own situation. Rather than
presuming there is no drug problem or that it is someone else’s problem to deal
with, why not take responsibility for the solution, seek the Lord’s blessings
and be ready to join other like-minded citizens who want to see change. We can no
longer bury our heads in the proverbial sand.

February is the month our loved one would much rather have written on the
blessings of loving and being loved but this is the topic the Lord laid on my
heart. And, what better way to show love to the masses around western NC
than to come together for the sake of the home, the addicted and society in
general.

Pray with me. Seek God’s face for the answer and when He reveals the solution
join other like-minded believers to deal with this problem.

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 Blandton Baptist Association and has served on the General Board
of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina.

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“INSURANCE is the most IMPORTANT thing a person has because it protects him against the loss of everything he has in the world.”
— H.O. Hirt, ERIE Founder
How to Avoid Dissension in Marriage
By Dr. Tom Walker
McDowell County

Dissension in marriage is very disturbing and disquieting to a marriage. It is God’s plan that there be harmony and closeness in human relationships, especially in the home. The word “dissension” can mean “disagreement among those expected to cooperate or a conflict among two or more people.”

There are some very basic things to consider that we might avoid troubling dissension between a married couple.

Love Your Spouse Deeply

Love should be kept very much alive between you and the one you choose to join your life with in marriage. I heard recently of a young married couple where the husband was upset with his wife and addressed her with a disrespectful four-letter word. Where love is what ought to be, the woman does not have to worry about that kind of thing happening. If love is not what it ought to be, conflict can cause abuse in many forms, verbally and even, possibly physical. 1 Corinthians 13:7 says of love that it, “Bear all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.” The word “beareth” means “to cover with silence or endure patiently.”

Deal with Self Individually

Too often a person sees their marriage as the cause for all of the problems without looking in the mirror at one’s own self. Romans 8:15 says, “If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body...” The word “mortify” means “to become dead” or “put to death.” It is the responsibility of every believer not to allow the flesh (or the old Adam nature) to have its way. We should live unselfish lives. It is important that we do what the Apostle Paul recommended and, “likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 6:11).” The old man within us is not dead when we are born again, but the new nature can overpower the downward pull of the old nature.

One must look at his or her own weaknesses. If that is done, one will not be as quick to charge the marriage partner as being the one who is all wrong. Fleshly motivation causes inolerance and insensitivity. It is best to pray for a meek and quiet spirit. A proud heart will not want to admit where it is wrong. It is troublesome and retaliative when it causes someone to assignating your self esteem.

Live Knowledgeably

I believe that means that each marriage partner realizes how weak and full of infirmities each one possesses. We should expect weakness in each other and not live in a dream world that expects either marriage partner is perfect. When weakness shows up in your spouse, do not be surprised about it. You are both imperfect marriage partners and both must we willing to face that fact if harmony and peace are to prevail. When we live with a real knowledge of ourselves, we will be more patient with one another.

Live Cautiously

Keep in mind the Bible says, “they two shall be one flesh” (Eph. 5:31). As marriage partners, you be no more offended with the words or failings of each other than you would be if they were your own. Physically, if your pancraas fails to function as it should, you can become a diabetic. If one ever loses sight of the “closeness” of the marriage relationship there will be more dissension than there should be. You are not thoughtless when it comes to your spouse, neither should you be when it comes to dealing with your marriage partner.

Live Agreeably

Seek to agree about matters, especially when major financial decisions are to be made in regard to finances or in regard to the children. We always have to keep in mind that a marriage is two people working together for the common good of both. Marriage is designed by God to be for a lifetime. Why be miserable in marriage when you can work together, respecting one another’s opinion, and live a life of complete happiness? Why have to go through as unnecessary divorce due to stubbornness and a lack of cooperation?

Live Tenderly

Don’t respond with anger to anger. It would be best if a person who is dealing with an angry marriage partner would say something like this, “We should not allow this to come between us. Our love for one another should put it to rest. It must be repeated of immediately. God is not pleased with this being between us. Let’s pray together and not allow sweet and bitter water to come out of the same spring.”

If a tenderness of spirit toward God and toward each other would come after prayer than troublesome matter could be easily resolved.

Live Forgivingly

If you have sinned by what you have said or what you have done in regard to your spouse, ask the other party for their forgiveness. Afterwards, you need to go to the Lord in prayer and ask the Lord to forgive you for the trespass. If you will confess to one another and to the Lord, you should sense so much shame that it will discourage the same thing happening again.

If you follow these instructions, they will take care of dissention that can rob a marriage of its happiness and bring about its destruction.

Tom Walker is President of Foothills Baptist Bible College and Pastor of Zion Hill Baptist Church in Marion, NC.
Frozen
By Marlene Hoek
Burke County

Job 37:10 By the breath of God frost is given; and the 
breath of the waters is straitened (continued).

Sun shimmering on the water graces any day with its 
shining beauty, but I recently discovered that the sheet on 
frozen water carries its own glory. The wintry rays shine on 
the icy-covered patches that decorated this tiny lake in 
western North Carolina, and the 
opaque ice muted the glow of the sun’s brilliance. An 
edge stood as a lone sentinel on a huge slab 
of ice while raichels and ducks plunged into 
misted icy waters. The sun, the water and the ice all 
revealed the glory of Job 37:10.

God’s very breath brings us the 
beauty of a wintry day that 
is filled with His goodness. 
The ducks were foraging for food 
beneath the surface with their feet 
high in the air. The young people 
were fishing and laughing. And 
other were having happy 
walks and muddied patches on the walk-
way. But all were being blessed by 
the breath of God.

Lake Tomahawk in Marion, NC 
sits serenely in the mountain 
town and offers a respite from 
daily life. Its blue waters catch 
the sun’s rays and toss them into the 
crisp Spring-like air, causing a lift 
to our feet and hope for a new 
season. The little lake reminded me of God’s Son-Jesus-bringing 
the sunshine of His love and 
presence into our lives, melting 
the ice of our winters and 
toasting the glory of those troubles into 
the following verse affirms.

2 Corinthians 4:17 For our light 
affliction, which is but for a mo-
ment, works for us a far more 
exceeding and eternal weight of 
glory.

When we experience the icy 
freezer waters, we turn to the 
sunlight of His love and 
for the cold, trouble and 
understanding of His grace. 

Marlene Hoek is a regular contributor to Blue Ridge Christian News. Her passion 
is to write deeply into the truths of the Bible and to share those in Bible 
Studies called Backyard Faith to Bible Women. She and her husband discover joy, 
nurturing and challenge in their church. Her contact is marlenehoek@belk.com.

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Foothills BBC

Spring Quarter Upcoming
By Tom Walker
Al-Dowell County

The new spring quarter begins at Foothills Baptist Bible College on March 19th. New students can pre-register for the 
classes by calling 828-738-9997 or 828-442-7015 or for more 
information at the school facilities located at 1036 Zion 
Hill Road in Marion, NC.

Foothills on campus classes are on Tuesday evenings from 6:30 until 9:30 P.M. 
It’s difficult for many people to attend day classes. To overcome this problem, we 
are having evening sessions.

The courses for college credit which will be taught in the Spring quarter will be:

The Christian Life, 2/5, Book of Job III, Pastoral Administration II

An on-campus student can take one course at four in the quarter.

Dr. Tom Walker, pastor of Zion Hill Baptist Church, is president and founder of the 
Bible College. He says, “It is a joy to see our students apply themselves and 
gain a deeper knowledge of the truth of God’s Word. When one studies he or she 
is obeying the Word of God that says, ‘Study to show thyself approved unto God, 
a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth.’”

The school has a correspondence division for those who are not able to attend 
campus classes. At the present time forty-four courses are available through 
correspondence.

The school is a Fundamental Baptist institution. TBBC has a dedicated faculty 
that works toward academic excellence. It is evangelistic with an emphasis on 
missions and practical Christian service. Classroom instruction is based on the 
King James Version of the Bible.

Their website can be found at www.FoothillsBBC.org.

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

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Sudoku

Solution on page 14

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Toe River Arts

Annual Student Art Exhibit
Bring A Bit O’ Sunshine

By Kate Groff
Mitchell and Yancey County

As in years past, Toe River Arts opens its first exhibit of the year with Student Showcases. In Spruce Pine, the exhibit begins on February 16th, and on the 17th in Burnsville. Students in both Mitchell and Yancey counties display their talent and brighten this dreary time of the year with color and creativity. Student art is all about splashes of color and intriguing ways of capturing perceptions in artistic forms, and the shows promise to delight the senses.

Jumpei Katsura, the executive director of Toe River Arts, said that the annual exhibition is an opportunity for students to showcase their skills and creativity. “It’s a great way to celebrate the talent of our students and to inspire other young artists,” Katsura said. “We’re proud to be able to provide this platform for them.”

The exhibition features works from students in grades kindergarten through 12th grade, and it is open to all students in the Toe River Arts region. The works are judged by a panel of experts who look for originality, creativity, and technical skill.

Kate Groff is the Programs Coordinator for the Toe River Arts Council.

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Lana's Lines

Winter 2018
By Lana Ellis
Kingsport, Tennessee

In case you haven't noticed it's winter! Yeah, right! We've had record cold temperatures, often accompanied with brutal cold to the bone wind chills. Due to snow and ice, not only are the mountains but in the flatterlands, hazardous driving conditions have plagued many. An icy road in Carlisle was too big a challenge for even a professional race car driver! Schools have been cancelled and illnesses have kept many confined at home. Cabin fever, cloudy days and winter blues make the days go by slower but then it's February and things begin looking up! Following is a portion of an article I wrote a few years ago. Maybe it will help you endure the last month of Winter 2018 with a positive attitude.

The month of February is a link, a foreshadow, between winter and spring. It's a short month and with what comes hope - the winter woes will soon be gone and the joy of spring is on the next page of the calendar. The flower of February, the violet, brings encouragement, blooming even when there's snow on the ground. Amethyst is the birthstone for the month and amethyst means spiritual wisdom. The word "February" comes from the Latin word "februum" which means purification. Of course in the middle of the month is a day set aside for the expression of love. Even before researching the aforementioned information I had a feeling that the little month of February was put on the calendar for a reason. It contains hope, joy, encouragement, spiritual wisdom, purity and love. For those of us who prefer winter to be short lived it could easily become our favorite month of the year!

Of course all of us who know God and His promises are aware that He alone can produce in our hearts and minds the attributes that can be seen in the month of February. His Son, Jesus Christ, is our link to God. He is our birthstone from the "winter woes" of life to the promise of eternal newness of spring. It’s through Him that we have a hope that is far more real than just wishful thinking. A hope that produces joy unspeakable in our hearts. The presence of his indwelling Holy Spirit encourages us when nothing else can. His Word, the Holy Scriptures, instills in us spiritual wisdom and His forgiveness produces purity. His love... oh, His love - the love of God is greater than all I can ever know or think. I wish I had the understanding and the vocabulary to express the deep meaning of God’s love but I’m not the one who realizes the difficulty. To quote Frederick M. Lehman, "The love of God is greater than tongue or pen can ever tell!"

During this last month of winter think on these things: hope, joy, encouragement, spiritual wisdom, purity, and newness of life. If the winter blues become too hard to deal with take a look at your February calendar. It’s only a page away from the month of Spring!

Lana Ellis resides in Kingsport, TN, next door to grandchildren. Church is West Colonial Hills Baptist Church.

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Flashback to The Past
By Christy Lowman
Burke County

For this month, we are going to take a look at a popular animal that God created. To do so we must travel back through time. So, strap on your time traveler’s helmet, your aviator google, and grab your backpack. Don’t forget to pack some rice barnes, fruit snacks, and beef jerky for our trip across the universe. Are you ready? Okay, close your eyes and let’s start the countdown. We will be traveling in approximately 10 speed bumps. Count with me, 1 speed bump, 2 speed bumps, 3 speed bumps, 4 speed bumps, 5 speed bumps, 6 speed bumps, 7 speed bumps, 8 speed bumps, 9 speed bumps, 10 speed bumps. Phew! We are finally here! Wow, do you notice a difference in the climate and surroundings? We have arrived in the United States, the country we currently live in, but what is different? It’s summer time! It’s hot, humid, and sticky. I’m sweating, are you? Everywhere I look I see trees and plants. The sweet fragrance from the floral flowers makes me smile. It’s like a jungle out here with all the animal sounds. Can you hear them?

Come on and take a look. There are a lot of dangerous animals around. We must be very quiet so we don’t become someone’s lunch!

Are you looking for one of my favorite dinosaurs? She is the size of a dump truck, a plant eater, and has a helmet on her head. Do you know which one I’m talking about? Triceratops! Triceratops names means “three horned” face. For a land animal, she has one of the largest heads, reaching a total of 10 feet. On top of her head, her helmet is a solid bone called a “till”, which can grow up to 7 feet. On the helmet on the edge horns. Right above the eyes, she has two protecting 3-foot-long horns. This helmet extends all the way to triceratops’ mouth, where it ends in a pair of teeth with a small horn on top of her nose.

Why do you think God made Triceratops with such a fierce helmet? Triceratops was on the lunch menu for other dinosaurs. This God given helmet saved her from being a meal to the many meat eating lizards that lurked behind the trees. She also used her 2 large horns that were attached to her helmet, to bring down trees and bushes for her to eat. She sharp head broke small splaggers and plant stalks for her to eat. We have been told that their males during mating seasons using his horns against his rival, like moose and other horned animals do today.

You see Triceratops’ helmet kept her alive in many ways. Without it she would have not survived as long as she did. Her helmet is much like our own God-given helmet, the helmet of salvation. God has equipped us a massive, mighty helmet to save us from our number one enemy - the devil. You see, he likes to put terrible, unlikely, thoughts in our heads. We have to dismiss these, and ask God to take them away. It is very important to only have good thoughts. The more we read our Bible and talk to God the easier it is to keep our minds on track and to think good thoughts. We also need to make sure that what we watch on TV, the songs we listen to, and the videos we play are always pleasing to God. We want our heads filled with God's thoughts. Putting on the helmet of salvation, means that we are not only protecting our mind but that we are living in the hope and faith in Jesus Christ. That we are saved because we believe that Jesus died for our sins and will one day come back to earth to pick us up! Is that cool or what?

Oh Look! There is the most beautiful dinosaur you've ever seen! Check out that monster of a bameleon! And look at that cute short pointy tail. Oh, we better get back, I hear your mother calling you for lunch! Strap on your helmet, and goggles, and don't forget your backpack! Close your eyes and start the countdown now!

Most kind, heavenly Father I pray that you will be with each child here. Show them how important it is to guard their mind. Help them rest assured in the hope of salvation. And most importantly help them recognize the devil’s schemes when he puts bad thoughts in their heads, teach them to dismiss those quickly and replace them with thoughts of Jesus. In Jesus’ name I pray AMEN.

But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for the helmet of salvation. 1 Thessalonians 5:8

Bibliography


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 The Good Tidings. She discovered a love for God is everything she has. 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: http://www.amazon.com/.

You can reach her at http://www.brcnews.com/author/ChristyLowman/ or christy lowman@gmail.com
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