

BLUE RIDGE CHRISTIAN NEWS

MARCH FOR LIFE 2019



Adoption Not Abortion

Shock

By Cyndi Harrell McDaniel

When I first heard about the New York legislation on abortion I remained quiet while I tried to let what happened sink in. All day I read post after post on Facebook of outraged people expressing their feelings. I felt like I was kind of in shock. That whole first day I just kept thinking that this has to be a joke. How could someone abort a full term baby? As that first day ended and the next day dawned I began to let the reality of what COULD have been, run from my mind to my heart. I felt warm tears run down my face and I felt like I could barely breathe. I didn't audibly say anything to any one, yet I just silently cried out to my Heavenly Father. This one hit close to home for me. It was personal. This could have affected our family. Our boys. Our sons! Not just one son, THREE sons! I had already held one son in my arms as he took his last breath and it suddenly hit me we could have been minus three more. You see, my husband and I have three adopted boys from a special needs adoption agency in the heart of New York City. (Joseph) a Hispanic 26 week gestation micro-preemie who has spastic quadriplegic Cerebral Palsy and eats by G-tube, (Jaden) a 30 week gestation, Jamaican cocaine baby. A micro preemie with a severe lung disease and (Jacob) a Puerto Rican cocaine baby with severe ADHD. Two of the birth moms kept their pregnancies from their families so they could place the babies for adoption. To the best of my knowledge those grandparents do not even know our boys exist. All three boys' parents lived in New York City at the time of their births and chose life(adoption) for them when they were born. They chose Adoption not Abortion. Each mother knew that they carried a son who was special needs, there were disabilities present, or at least the strong possibility it would present itself after delivery. Thankfully each mother still chose Life. What if those birth moms were pregnant now? Each of them presented with a stereotypical (reason) for abortion. They could have been pressured or presented with the choice to abort our sons after they found out about the disabilities. I couldn't even imagine life without the light our boys shed on our family and those who know them. If you could just see (and hear) The sound of our severely handicapped son singing at the top of his lungs to praise music or hear him calling me from the next room "mom you gotta see this". Dance parties in his room. His teacher taught him the Christian praise song Flawless and that little boy will look at us and say, "God made Joe Joe Flawless" and know what? He did! God made our Joseph Flawless! Just like he is! And our other two sons. They are little caterpillars that we've watched become butterflies right before our eyes. Jacob



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Christian Action League

What Might Have Been

By Rev. Mark Creech

There is a youngster I know who is a beautiful human being. He's getting taller with each passing day as he grows into a fine young man. Still in his early teens, he's a good student and remarkably intelligent. A lover of sports, he can tell you about every team and their players, college and professional. He's quite grounded for one so young, a small repository of wisdom. It's a joy being around him, and I'm quite certain if he doesn't stumble along the way, he'll make a mark in life from which many will benefit.

This young fellow is the apple of his mother's eye. She adores him. No one or nothing is comparable to him in her estimation. But I'm one of the few persons who know something about the boy that even he doesn't know. His mother seriously considered aborting him before his birth. She was hardly more than a teen herself when she was pregnant with him, unmarried, unprepared, and terrified. Her friends urged to her to get rid of the problem. But providence arranged it so that I was able to have many opportunities to speak with her about that decision and urge her not to do it. She didn't. And now with her handsome son at her side every day, she rues the thought of what she once seriously contemplated.

Think of all she might have missed.

In his book, "Storm Warning," the late Dr. Billy Graham wrote:

"Almost without exception, the media have staunchly defended a woman's 'right' to abortion. One of the few meaningful expressions of disapproval I have found in any newspaper is this prophetic cry against this specter of immorality and suffering raised after the Roe v. Wade decision by an editorial writer in the Orlando, Florida, Sentinel:

"The devaluation of morality induced by abortion could, and in all likelihood will have far-reaching effects. Among them are the promotion of promiscuity, depersonalization of the concept of life and activating the destruct button on the family unit as we know it....And what of a woman herself? Abortion by whim could have grave future consequences to her.

There is enough unavoidable pain in living without inflicting on oneself, in a period of extremity, the haunting memory of a child that might have been."

Everything that insightful editorialist feared would happen with the practice of abortion has now become a reality, and nothing is worse than the absence of all the loveliness, magnificence, and benefit that "might have been."

Pro-Life activist, Randy Alcorn, notes an incredible story from "Reader's



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and Jaden. Little leaders. Little boys that are confident, smart and have fought against the odds to already be more than they were ever supposed to be. One of our sons was described by the adoption agency as "the ugliest baby we've ever seen" before the adoption agency placed him with us. It almost makes me laugh when I think about it. He's beautiful now! To the eyes on the outside but even more on the inside. What if his mother had aborted him because of malformed anomalies in utero? That's what we were told when they first called us about his placement.

Both Jacob and Jaden are Little Evangelists for Jesus at the ages of 11 and 13.. I KNOW God has big plans for each of them!! That's why I walked around in shock for the first 24 hours. I could not imagine them not here on this earth. Not in our family.

My Heart even hurts outside of my own family and My testimony runs much deeper than this. My heart breaks to think of what a mother will go through if she chooses a late term abortion. That might seem the right choice, the easier choice at the time but what will happen in her heart and in her mind afterwards?

All I can say is please choose adoption and not abortion. I know not everyone feels they can parent a special needs child, and some really don't think they have the money to add another child to their family. Unfortunately, rapes do still happen. I know some women feel like they don't have any other choice. I am not here to judge them even if abortion is the choice they've made. What I am here to say-- there is ANOTHER choice. Choose adoption not abortion. There are many women who've had abortions that regret it all their lives. They mourn that choice even if the abortion was at four weeks when there wasn't even a heartbeat yet. Some of those Women(or girls) don't even feel they deserve to parent a child after an abortion. If that torment happens at early gestation abortions I can not even imagine the torment and pain a mother will experience in late gestation abortions. There are so many couples waiting for a child to love. Not a perfect, healthy, white or black child, any child.

We have three sons that God knew before they born. Thankfully their moms who live in New York also chose them before they were born too!

"I knew you before I formed you in your mother's womb. Before you were born I set you apart and appointed you" Jeremiah 1:5.

And America, all I can say is Pray! We HAVE to pray!!! Some of the biggest churches in the world were founded on just a few people who chose to pray. God moves when we pray. God hears and he moves. *"If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and I will forgive their sin and heal their land"* 2 Chronicles 7:14

Cyndi has an undergrad degree from WCU and masters work from Liberty University in Student Ministry. She and her husband Jason have 3 biological children, 6 adopted children and 2 grandchildren. They have fostered over 70 kids for Buncombe County DSS and have a calling to the "least of these" locally and internationally. They attend Upward Christian Fellowship in Hendersonville, NC. Cyndi enjoys using her gifts homeschooling, caring for her large family, teaching, speaking, decorating and event coordination through her business She Shines Events.



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

Isaiah 52:7 KJV



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

Pastors - Tom & Tammy Anglin

Sunday Service 10:30AM
Wednesday Service 7:00PM
Church Office M-F
9:00AM-3:00PM

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

Pastor - Steve Williams

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

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Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church

2187 Jamestown Road
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828-684-8212

Pastor Rick Mercer

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

Faith Fellowship Church

Champ Ray Rd.
Morganton, NC 28755
(828)-675-9284
www.fccn.org
www.fccnradio.org

Pastor: David Gillespie

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

Altapass Baptist Church

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

Dr. Marcus R. Benfield

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

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793 Old NC 226 Hwy
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www.grassycreekbc.org

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Morning Worship 11:00am
Sunday evening 6:30pm
Wednesday:
J.A.M. (Jesus and Me) 7:00pm
Seekers (young adults) 7:00pm
Mid-week worship 7:00pm
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West Burnsville Baptist Church

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

Pastor: Terry Long

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

Church vision: Glorifying God through
knowing, growing, going, to build the church
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Burkemont Baptist Church

4668 Burkemont Rd.
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please visit
www.burkemontbaptist.org

Dr. Luke A. Lane

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

Plumtree Presbyterian Church

4527 Hwy 19E
Plumtree, NC 28664
828-765-6919
www.plumtreepresbyterian.org

Pastor Ryan Bridgeo
pastor@plumtreepresbyterian.org

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

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

Bear Creek Baptist Church

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

Reverend Bruce Cannon

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

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

Great Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church

2907d US Hwy 70 E
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828-475-2040

Pastor Barry Mahorney

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Bible Study-10:00am
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Wednesday - Praise, Prayer &
Proclaim - 7:00pm
www.greathopesda.com

Pine Branch Baptist Church

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Reverend Bobby Joe Greene

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Worship Service • 10:45am
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Wednesday Faith Formation
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First Baptist Church of Spruce Pine

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

**Dr. Rocky Branch
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Spruce Pine United Methodist Church

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

Pastor Rev. Jeremy Troxler

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

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211 Lenoir Road
Morganton, NC 28655
828-437-8206
www.faccmorganton.org

**Pastor Patrick Bradshaw
Associate Pastor Javier
Guzman**

Sunday School 10:00 AM
Sunday Worship 11:00 AM
Wed: Youth Meal 5:30PM -
Meeting 6:30PM
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Valentine's Day Special

Love
By Barbara Harrell
Mitchell County

Many of us think of February as the month of Love. Valentine's Day is a prominent holiday. Much money is spent at this time of year for flowers, candy and other gifts to show someone that they are loved. Let's explore two types of Love that we experience in our lives. (There are others)

Eros -The one most often thought of is the romantic love between a man and a woman. This love is certainly a God-given love that the Bible has a lot to say about. We can read many stories in the Old Testament—Jacob working for seven years for Rachel was a classic example. Song of Solomon is a beautiful example of Eros love. The New Testament has Mary and Joseph to show us what real love is about, but make no mistake, God planned for this love to be between a man and woman united in Holy Matrimony. A union that also included Him. Modern day examples for me would be Billy and Ruth Graham. She prayed for a mate that would be strong in the Lord. Listen to her poem of prayer to God for that man.

*Dear God, I prayed, all unafraid
(as we're inclined to do),
I do not need a handsome man
But let him be like You;
I do not need one big and strong
Nor yet so very tall,
Nor need he be some genius,
Or wealthy, Lord, at all;
But let his head be high, dear God,
And let his eye be clear;
His shoulders straight, whate'er his state,
Whate'er his earthly sphere;
And let his face have character;
A ruggedness of soul,
And let his whole life show, dear God,
A singleness of goal;
Then when he comes
(as he will come)
With quiet eyes aglow,
I'll understand that he's the man
I prayed for long ago.*

When she found him, her prayers changed and now she prays for him but also for their love to be pure and to grow over the years. This is her entreaty.

*Train our love that it may grow
Slowly... deeply...steadily;
Till our hearts will overflow
Unrestrained and readily.*

*Discipline it, too, dear God
Strength of steel
Throughout the whole.
Teach us patience, thoughtfulness,
Tenderness, and self-control.*

*Deepen it throughout the years,
Age and mellow it
Until, time that finds us
Old without, within,
Will find us lovers still.*



Doug and I have experienced this kind of love that grows and stays together for almost 55 years now. No, it is not perfect, but it has been close. There are always many adjustments in the beginning but if God is at the center, He will guide you and

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Four Things the World Needs to see from the Church

By Jason Koon
Burke County

The American Church seems to be in decline, and while this isn't the first time in American history that we have dealt with this, there is no question something is wrong in the Church today. People are leaving in droves and a majority of those who remain report that they rarely or never experience God at Church. This is the third article in a series looking at what the world needs to see from the Church if we're going to remain relevant in the coming decade.

Holiness

"When lost people come to Church," Dr. Tony Merida observes, "they expect to be taught the Bible." I was disappointed in myself at how surprising these words were to me, but it's true. Why would someone come to Church, if not to hear God's Word? Even a lost person, even an atheist – if they're going to take time out of their day to attend a worship gathering – it's probably because they're at least willing to hear what the Bible says.

This is radically counter-cultural today, however. For years, we've been told that we have to make the Bible relevant, be sensitive to non-believers, change our language so they'll understand what they're hearing. And certainly, all this does have its place, but in spite of this, one overarching fact remains. If someone doesn't want to hear what the Bible has to say, they're probably not going to come to Church regardless of what we say or how we say it.

In 2012, Pastor Jim Henderson and atheist Matt Casper wrote a book together called "Jim and Casper Go to Church." The premise is simple, Pastor Jim takes atheist Matt to twelve prominent American Churches and asks his thoughts on each one. They travel to modern Churches with light shows and fog machines, mega-churches with tens of thousands of attendees, prosperity Churches with seventy-million-dollar budgets, house Churches only a few dozen strong, and everything in between. And out of all



these Churches, the Church Casper liked most was...you'll never guess.

First Presbyterian Church Chicago, Illinois.

But don't they have choir robes and a stogy liturgical service? Yep, and Matt wasn't exactly a fan of the robes and had some trouble following along in the book. Isn't it kinda boring, with lots of prayer and long dry Scripture readings? Yes again, but what Casper said about First Pres. is as profound as it should be self-evident. "It's Church!" he said, "I expected to pray and hear Scripture read, if I wasn't ok with that, I wouldn't have come in the first place." He said he liked that First Presbyterian was honest about who they were. They didn't hide the fact that they were Christians and didn't try to dress Church up as something it's not.

The world expects to hear the Bible when they come to our Churches, they expect us to pray when we have a need or a struggle, and they expect to see God's people trying to live like God's people and having the humility to repent when they fail. The Church desperately needs to see holiness from the people of God. Not smug, nit-picky legalism, we've seen too much of that over the years, but holiness. Holiness that is born out of love, rather than pride. Holiness saturated with love for Christ, not a naïve fantasy of what America used to be. They need to see Christlikeness from us; Christlikeness lived out in love, humility, and integrity so that anyone who happens to be watching might see it and give glory to our Father in Heaven.

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



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Mine Creek Baptist Church

Just a Word from My Heart

By Preacher Chris Rathbone
Mitchell County



It's been a rough week in our small community. Another accident has taken another young person's life. This one was pretty close to home for me. God gave me the privilege to be this family's pastor for almost 14 years. When I received the tragic news early that morning my heart was broken. I cried and prayed. My heart was burdened heavily as I struggled to make sense of it all. I hugged my sons a little tighter. A good girl was gone. A good family was devastated. So many in our community mourned, even if they didn't know this family personally, many hearts were broken for them. Just an accident that no one saw coming.

Over the almost 20 years that I've been in ministry, these circumstances always trouble me personally. Our community has lost several young people in just the last 2-3 years. In my mind I always wonder about what might have been. My struggle personally is thinking of the lost potential. How these young people had so much life ahead of them. The contributions they could have made to this world. They could have gotten married, had kids, grandkids, etc. The church sure could have benefited in their service to the kingdom of God.

This particular young woman was certainly no different. I watched her grow from just a baby when I first met her. She grew up in church and her faith was in Jesus as her Savior. I'm looking now at the picture of when I baptized her. Beautiful, bright, and a smile that lit up her entire face when she smiled at you. Her family told me of how she had plans for the future. So many of her family and friends have spoken over the last several days of the impact she had already made in their lives. I confess to you, I struggle in these circumstances. Not that I've lost faith and trust in God, but sometimes it's just hard to understand why things happen the way they do.

This entire world is under the curse of the consequences of sin. Death entered in at the fall in the Garden of Eden and not a single one of us is immune to the fact that physical death can happen to any of us, anytime, anywhere, and regardless of what age we may be. That is a truth that cannot be changed while this earth remains and while we live in these bodies of clay. And even good Godly folks have to endure the hardships of this world.

However, we do not mourn as others who have no hope. Jesus always reminds me that our focus must be on the bigger picture. The eternal and heavenly plan that Jesus died to secure and fulfill. Even though Jesus gives an abundant life in Him while we live here, the sacrifice that He made on the cross and His resurrection from the dead was to give us hope for eternity. If our hope is only in this life, what kind of future would there be to look forward to. Even if we live a long life here it is not even a grain of sand on the timeline of eternity. The plan God has for us is not to live here eternally, but to live with Him eternally. Whether we go into His presence at a young age or a good old age, the outcome is the same for the person who is saved. For the believer, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

You know, my plan for this young lady would have been for her to live a long life and to experience many of the blessings that God gives us here. But when I listened to how this young woman had already impacted so many, I'm reminded that the days of her life were written before she was even born. She finished the race that Jesus had for her to run. Now, she is in the presence of the One who caused her light to shine so bright. Her faith is now sight and even if we don't understand it all, she now does. She is more alive today than she ever was while here.

Let us keep looking up. May we continue to trust God's eternal plan through Jesus Christ. Let us help those who are hurting. Keep on serving God and each other. Keep on praying for and loving one another. And most importantly, let us continue to exalt the Lord Jesus and what He has done for us. I'm looking forward to the day when He calls us all home to be with Him. I'm looking forward to the day when all questions will be answered, and all things will be made new. To God be the glory, great things He hath done.

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

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God Is Alive and Well

By Jody Griffin
Avery and Mitchell Counties

Periodically when the time is right, incarcerated men will request to be baptized. Though not a required religious accommodation, effort is made to solicit the assistance of Community Religious Volunteers who provide the wonderful service of worship that includes the baptisms as part of an existing worship hour. These services are always well attended by men who want to encourage the new believers who are making this profession of their faith.

As a way of assisting these men, I spend time talking with them about their reasoning for such a request. Not to talk them out of it, but to help them understand the power that comes when public testimony of faith is declared in obedience to the Scripture and accountability is created in the very fact that they have yielded themselves to God's Will for faith to be demonstrated as Jesus Himself did in the Jordan River when he came before John.

Baptism service in prison is perhaps the most inspiring thing anyone can witness. Dipped beneath the water, then lifted to an upright posture the faces of those baptized are always truly radiant! But they aren't the only ones smiling...

The men who have gathered to witness the baptism are beaming with joy themselves! They sing with a gusto not often employed! They pray with a fervor reminiscent of an old-time evangelist! They rejoice in the miraculous love of God expressed in Jesus Christ!

The moral of this story? God is alive and well within the walls of the correctional institutions that dot our common landscape! Lives are being renewed, souls are being saved, and the community of Christians is thriving!

On the day of this writing, this chaplain has enjoyed the incredible privilege of hearing from a young man who has been inspired by a fellow offender's testimony to pray and receive eternal life through salvation by faith in Jesus' Name! Requesting baptism, he desires to begin his new life now so that his life, his family, even other offenders can see what God has done for him and be inspired to seek the same.

Filled with excitement, he asked questions and soaked up answers. Something tells me his life in Christ will soon touch others. But how can this be? He is in prison. Obviously, he committed a crime and was convicted and sentenced for such.

But listen to me closely now, that crime does NOT define him. His new life, The Life he found in prison, through the witness and guidance of a fellow convicted felon, THAT is what defines him now! Though bound by walls and fences, he is now free indeed! He is free to grow and learn from his past errors and he is free to grow into the man God desires him to be. All through the witness of another convicted felon.

Why is ministry within the correctional institution important? Because it helps those who have fallen GET BACK UP. Because it helps those whose sin has trapped them to BE FREE INDEED!

I thank God for the privilege given to me as Community Funded Chaplain at AMCI to share in days like these and to be reminded that no matter what I've done, HOPE can be found in Jesus Christ! New life awaits! Eternal life awaits! Abundant life awaits! What are YOU waiting for?

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



When Silk Turns to Sackcloth

By Marlene Houk
Burke County



Imagine the caress of precious silk as you move through the richest rooms in the palace. Treasured and privileged, you will consult with the most sought-after designer to have a new robe spun from the Mulberry silkworms, the finest silk in the world. Some 6,000 silkworm cocoons later, a golden sheen of fabric catches the sunlight as you parade before the king, vying for his attention.

These rights and privileges of an opulent lifestyle belonged to Rizpah, an obscure woman in the Bible but the specially chosen concubine (acquired for her beauty and intelligence rather than political alliance) of the first king of Israel, King Saul. We catch a glimpse of her in 2 Samuel 3:1, and she glides fully into view in 2 Samuel chapter 21. Her looks and charm maintained a relationship with the king strong enough to produce two sons, Armoni and Mephibosheth.

Rizpah's story plunges from the heights of silken luxury into the grief of losing children to a violent death due to her husband's actions. King Saul, the father of her two sons, had killed some of the Gibeonites. In doing so, he had broken a sacred oath that his people, the Israelites, had made with them some 400 years earlier (Joshua 9). When a famine dragged on for three years in the reign of King Saul's successor, King David, he asked the LORD why, and in 2 Samuel 21:1, God said it was because King Saul had killed the Gibeonites. King David allowed the Gibeonites to set the punishment, and they chose to have seven of King Saul's sons hanged. Two of them included Rizpah's sons. What shock must have ripped through her as she learned that her two sons would be executed. But she did something that has resounded through millennia and that speaks to us today. She honored her sons in death by guarding their bodies from the vultures that would have picked their bodies clean. What a gruesome and morbid sight must have met her as she opened her eyes each morning. She had been cast down from her lofty position as the powerful concubine of King Saul. Now, her skin was dried and roughened from daily exposure to the elements. Her voice was raspy from driving the carrion away. And her once-legendary beauty had faded under the sun's relentless heat and the drought that plagued Israel.

However, her determination to send a message to anyone who lifted their eyes to the hill on which her son's bodies hung rang loud and clear. The beauty of her sacrifice transcended her physical deterioration, and the fierce shining light of her devotion has illuminated her message to us today, 3,000 years later.

2 Samuel 21:10 says, "And Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth, and spread it for her upon the rock, from the beginning of harvest until water dropped upon them out of heaven, and suffered neither the birds of the air to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night."

Samuel describes her movements. As she prepared for the hideous job of driving away the beasts and birds, she spread sackcloth on a rock. This fabric, unlike the value and beauty of her usual silks, felt rough. The ugly dull surface suited the purpose of wearing it as a symbol of grief and repentance. This was her life now, exposed to the elements of being ignored by the nation of Israel and descending into the depths of humiliation and shame. Even the dignity of burying her sons was denied. The people who once envied her and tried to copy her beauty and style turned their heads, denying her existence and ignoring her tragedy.

But where she placed that sackcloth became a turning point of grace and mercy. She carefully spread the sackcloth upon the rock, recognizing her grief and longing for restoration. The word, the, indicates that the rock was singularly qualified in her eyes to support her need. In the Bible, the word picture of a rock is often used to remind us of God's qualities.

Deuteronomy 32:4 uses the visual of a rock as it declares God's unyielding truth and granite surety of righteousness, "He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he."

2 Samuel 22:2 again uses a rock to visualize the protection and delivering qualities of God. It says, "And he said, The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer;"

In Psalm 40:2, God's Word assures us that God not only delivers but gives confidence compared to the solidity of a rock and a plan for our lives as solid as a rock. It says, "He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings."

God intentionally used the idea of the rock, a familiar sight to us, to send a message of one word. He underscores the life-changing focus that we can experience when we rest our sackcloth, the fabric of our hurt, upon our Rock of Ages.

When your silk turns to sackcloth and your life plunges into despair, spread the sackcloth of your sadness on the Rock that can deliver you, give you a sure-footed focus in life, and hope in the future!

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



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In All Things Give Thanks

Doug Harrell
Mitchell County

A lot is going through my mind as I sit down to write this column this morning. Yesterday, one year ago I was told that I had leukemia, and a week later was told that I had 2-4 months to live without treatment and 10-14 months to live with treatment. That news turns your world upside down to say the least, we all know deep down that our time here is limited, but when you hear those words directed in your direction, it makes you stop and think. Well, a year has passed, and I am still here writing life lessons for another month and am doing well considering. I am still having to do a chemo regiment that goes for three weeks each month, but the leukemia appears to be in remission, thank you Lord.

This past year has been one of the greatest learning years of my life, fancy that, you never know what priorities will change when you face the end of the road here on this earth. It has been a year of blessings that are hard to believe, new friends made, lives that have touched me and others I have had the opportunity to touch. Prayers that have been offered up for me and prayers that I have been able to pray for others around me. The opportunity to be a witness that would never have presented itself without the illness, and the treatment regimen of the leukemia. As the scripture says in Romans 8:28 "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose." At first it was hard to read this scripture and believe, but now I do! Not many weeks ago I was praying and actually gave thanks to the Lord for the leukemia, moments after I said that I thought, Doug you have gone totally crazy, you absolutely hate this disease! You see, the week before I received the news that I had leukemia, I had attended a funeral for one of my daughter's mother in-law who had died with leukemia and a year and a half earlier I had done the funeral for one of my dearest friends here on this earth, and who was also my business partner that had died with this dreadful disease. But today, as I look back over the past year, I would not change a thing! I know it sounds crazy, but the blessings outweigh the hurts, the relationship with my Lord today makes it all worthwhile. The song, "Just a Closer Walk With Thee" has been a theme song this year and when I hear it my eyes tend to leak, still today. Being willing to accept God's will, knowing that it might not be healing of this earthly body, was a challenge, and I have been blessed that God has seen fit to keep me here a while longer, it appears. The key has been to be able to say, either way, I am okay, and truly mean it. Now don't get me wrong, I am human and want to live as long as I possible can and have a decent life style, I truly enjoy most of my journey day by day, but do realize that there is a graduation day coming.

Deuteronomy 31:6 "Be strong and of good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." This has been a stronghold this past year, learning to lean on him and depend on him more than ever before in my life. I think many of us, myself included, at times think we can handle it, we can deal with it within our own strength, that my friends comes to an end at some point when we realize that we have no control over life's true meaning and direction. Now don't get me wrong here, God does not want us going around complaining and moaning all day long, we need to keep focused on the future with an attitude of gratitude, giving thanks and not fussing about the irritants that come our way. We need to pray for healing, believing that God has the ability to accomplish anything in His will. Jeremiah 32:27 "I am the Lord, the God of all flesh, is anything too hard for me." Make goals for your life, be willing to move forward in faith, and always be at peace in accepting his good and perfect will for your life, and your days will be blessed in ways you can only imagine.

Doug Harrell is a life-long resident of Mitchell County, Owner of Harrell Hill Farms, Inc, a member of Bear Creek Baptist Church and Publisher of the Blue Ridge Christian News.



But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrat / or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.
Joshua 24:15



Digest" about a young Italian woman named Catuzza, who lived in New York City. One day during the 1950s, Catuzza allowed an 11-year-old neighbor boy and his 3-year-old brother Joey touch her abdomen so that they could feel her unborn child kicking. Thirty-five years later Joey was dying until his life was saved by a skilled and dedicated physician. After recognizing the doctor's last name, Joey's older brother was able to put the pieces together. "Only then did the realization hit me," he said. "The unborn baby that kicked inside Catuzza all those years before on Irving Street had grown up to be the outstanding doctor who saved my brother's life."

The classic movie, "It's a Wonderful Life," seen often during the Christmas season, marvelously depicts the principle in parabolic form.

Jimmy Stewart plays George Baily, whose life is suddenly turned so topsy-turvy that he believes it would have been better if he had never been born.

When an angel convincingly demonstrates to George the importance of his life and how impoverished the world would have been without him, the angel concludes: "Strange, isn't it? Every man's life touches so many other lives, and when he isn't around he leaves an awful hole to fill, doesn't he?... You see what a mistake it would be to throw it away?"

January 20th was Sanctity of Human Life Sunday in churches across our nation. The next Tuesday was the 46th anniversary of the Roe v. Wade decision by the United States Supreme Court - the ruling that made abortion legal in America - the ruling that poked more than 60 million holes in our society.

It's impossible to calculate what we've missed or lost.

Children supply us with our greatest joys. They are our greatest national resource.

May God hasten the dawn of a new anniversary - the anniversary of abortion's end - when every mother who is able enjoys a beautiful son or a daughter at her side - when every Catuzza's unborn child kicking in the womb can fulfill his purpose - when there are no more holes.

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



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Good Gifts

By Pastor Bruce Cannon
Mitchell County



Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. (Luke 12:32)

February is known by many as the month for love although every day should be a day for love. And, we should take every opportunity to express love both to God and to man. The Scriptures teach that we love because He (the Lord) first loved us. (1 John 4:19) He placed within the heart of man the desire to love and be loved.

There are so many Scriptures which speak about love. Luke 12:32 states that the Father takes great delight in giving gifts to His children. James wrote, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." (1:17) Every gift the Lord gives is a "good" gift. Why does God give so many gifts? He loves us!

A couple of days ago I participated in the funeral of a beautiful 19 year old young lady who died due to an auto accident. During that service, her mom sang and spoke. How? God gave her, for that occasion, gifts of strength, grace, peace and comfort. She sang, with a praise team, a song entitled, "Surrounded" by Michael W. Smith. The message of the song is that when we think we are surrounded by battles, as children of God, we are instead surrounded by Him. In so doing, this mom touched so many hearts. She simply shared what God had given her.

The Lord gives so many tangible gifts, but it's the many intangible ones that really bless us and enable us to bless others. He gives peace which passeth all understanding (Phil. 4:7). He gives joy unspeakable (1 Peter 1:8). He, as stated above, gives the ability to love and be loved. He gives abundant grace.

These are the gifts that we must share with others. They are also gifts which, when given, come back to us in an abundant manner. When we give love, it comes back and increases our love and ability to love. When we demonstrate peace, we are able to help others experience peace. When we show forth joy we are able to help others have joy which further increases our own.

Take the month of February and give these wonderful gifts to others. Give them what God has so freely given us. And as you are doing so, make sure you do not forget the one's closest to you. Make sure you give abundant love, peace and joy to them as well. They will greatly love you for doing so!

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

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Snow Hill Baptist Church

No Regrets--"What Daughters Need to Hear, and Fathers Need to Share"

By Pastor Dean Honeycutt
Mitchell County

When I was at a For King and Country concert a few weeks ago they played a song about young ladies called "Priceless". And from this song God gave me a story to share with you.

What do you believe about yourself that others do not see about you? It is tough being a young lady because people are always judging you. She is too tall, too skinny, too much makeup, feet are too big. Why are young ladies so obsessed with taking pictures of themselves and are distraught when they do not get the attention from social media? Is it because many young girls do not get the affirmation and confidence from home that they so desperately need?

When you look in the mirror what do you see? For King and Country sing a song called Priceless. The song is about what God sees in all young girls and that you are "priceless."

*Mirror, mirror, mirror on the wall
Tellin' those lies, pointing out your flaws
That isn't who you are
That isn't who you are
It might be hard to hear
But let me tell you, dear*

If you could see what I can see, I know you would believe

*That isn't who you are
There's more to who you are
No matter what you've heard
This is what you're worth*

More than all the money or the diamonds and pearls

*Oh, this is who you are
Yeah, this is who you are
I see you dressed in white
Every wrong made right
I see a rose in bloom
At the sight of you
Oh, so priceless*

*Irreplaceable, unmistakable, incomparable
Darling, it's beautiful*

*I see it all in you
Oh, so priceless (For King and Country)*

Here are some things that God sees about every young lady. And truths you need to believe about yourself. It is based on God's word to Mary. Luke 1:45 (KJV 1900) 45 *And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.*

You see no one believed Mary, but Mary believed God.

1. I am beautiful.

Luke 1:28. You are highly favored. You are the recipient of God's grace. You need to understand that God looks on the inside. God sees you as you really are, and he accepts you for who you are. He does not accept your sin, but he accepts your person, who you are.

2. I am intelligent.

Luke 1: 48-54. Mary is intelligent because she ascribes to God who He is- His worthiness. That is what intelligence is -it is worship. Worship is acknowledging who God is and what He has done for you. Spend time getting to know God and He will help you face a cruel world. Mary spent three months with Elisabeth. You might say sheltered for a time, but now she must go back and face the world. What will give you strength to do that? Your relationship with Christ will give you strength to face the world.

3. I am Brave.

Luke 1:39; 56. Mary goes and visits her cousin Elisabeth who is six months pregnant with John the Baptist. Mary stays three months and goes back home. She is now showing and is obviously with child. Can you imagine what people are saying about her now? Here is a young lady that obviously loved the Lord before she became pregnant and now no one believes her. Not even Joseph. What do you think people are saying? Mary, she had us fooled, pretending to be something she's not. But Mary is brave, she remains faithful to God. You must be brave to follow God.

Young lady you must be brave. Sometimes you may be left out of the parties and social circles. You may not get that much attention on snap chat or Social media. That is ok God is on your side.

4. I am loved. 1 John 4:16 (KJV 1900)

16 And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

God loves you more than anything. Love God first. Does God care about what you do yes, He does. When you understand God's love for you and that you are "priceless" you do not need to seek affirmation from someone else. Young boys



can mislead you. True love waits, true love is kind, true love respects, true love is patient, true love will last, true love is God's love. I can only love others to the capacity at which I love God.

One of the most amazing things here is that Mary did not have to face this alone. God sends an Angel to Joseph. Matthew 1:24 God has a talk with Joseph through an angel and Joseph steps up to be the man God has called him to be. Joseph loves Mary.

5. I am engaged or espoused.

Luke 1:27; Matthew 1:18, 24, 25. What does this mean? It means you are promised to another. Mary and Joseph were promised to one another. Why is this important to you? You need to believe that somewhere, and at some time God has a spouse for you.

First, you are a Christian and you are promised to God. You are the bride of Christ. Second you are promised to your future mate. Why would you look for someone when God has planned someone special just for you? What are the odds of someone raised in Texas marrying someone from North Carolina? God brought Pam and I together. In the providence of God Pam and I met at Mars Hill College. Mary could have gone and found someone or even Joseph to legitimize her pregnancy, but she did not do that. Why not? Because her own chastity and purity with God was far more important than anything the world was saying about her. Dear mom and dad I hope you will affirm these truths in your daughter's life.

God bless.

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

And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD; and great shall be the peace of thy children. Isaiah 54:13

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Winter
By Allen Buchanan
Mitchell County

As much as I dislike rainy cold Winter days, I'm blessed with shelter and food, love and good health. In 2000, when doctors said I needed to take early retirement, I fought the decision. Even today I struggle with trying to occupy my time. I'm



reminded today that for over 20 years I went to work in all sorts of weather conditions. Walking or dragging my manual wheelchair in and out of my truck was okay in 60°+ temperatures. In freezing conditions the temperatures were detrimental to my health. Looking back, I clearly see where God's plan guided each breath, each decision for my survival. Knowing that I

press on because He will not forsake me. Do you have that assurance? It's so easy to obtain, just believe. Believe that Jesus is God's only Son and He came and died for ALL mankind's sin. You need to repent and ask for His forgiveness of your sin! BELIEVE!

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



God's Love Builds Bridges
By Rev. John B. Sorensen

When does eternal life begin? As Christians, we don't have to wait until the day we leave this earth to appreciate eternity. We can live with an eternal outlook even today.

John 10:10 tells us that we can have abundant life right here, right now. Isn't that great? But what does that mean? Abundant life changes every aspect of our lives. It impacts our marriages, our families, our jobs, our decisions, and our values. It also provides a natural bridge to share the Gospel with those we love and the people we meet.

When we accept Christ's love for us, we naturally begin to illuminate His love towards others. That love builds bridges. Our family and friends notice a change in the way we value them. Strangers we meet on the street should sense something different about us. These encounters give us the perfect opportunity to not only show God's love, but share it as well.

But how do you get started? Well, I'm glad you asked.

One way to enter a spiritual conversation is simply by asking. The most generous, loving thing that we can do is to ask the people in our lives about their spiritual convictions. There are many ways to approach this, but here is one question that I have found works well: "What gives you the most meaning in your life?" Another way to rephrase this is, "In your day-to-day living, what keeps you going?" Most people appreciate such questions. Asking shows you care deeply about them and what matters most in their lives.

Share your story. When we respond with Christ's love to the people around us, many people want to know why. They love stories. Sharing about our personal experiences deepens our relationships, and it allows us to share the message of salvation in a way that is non-threatening and very personal.



Be sure to mention the reason behind your actions. 1 Peter 3:15 tells us to always be prepared to "give the reason for the hope that you have." Our actions alone are not enough. Acts of kindness are wonderful, but they point no one to Christ. We have to use words. But 1 Peter also warns us to do so with gentleness and respect.

Finally, continue to build the bridge. If your friend doesn't make a commitment to Christ, don't walk away from the relationship. Continue to meet together, listen, and share. Pray for them. They might not be ready today, but they might be open to hear the Gospel from you or someone else in the near future.

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

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Facing an Unknown Future

By Billy Graham

Unspoiled and unsoiled, the new year lies before us—365 days of golden opportunity. We stand at the dividing of two streams; one called Yesterday, and the other, Tomorrow. We know every bend and every turn in the river Yesterday, but the river Tomorrow stretches out into an unknown future.

We are living in a world that is far different from our world of Yesterday. We are living in troubled and difficult times.

Too many people, this new year will bring suffering, sorrow and untold sadness. Many will be called upon to walk through the "valley of the shadow of death" (Psalm 23:4). During this new year, some will stand at the grave, blotting hot tears of bereavement as a minister says of a departed loved one, "Dust you are, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19).

Some people will be maimed by accidents on highways, and others will be victims of cancer or heart attacks. Some may fall victim to the attacks of terrorists, and others will experience financial disaster.

And millions of people, wandering aimlessly in life's struggles, will be filled with inner fears and frustrations and fail to realize their cherished dreams, hopes and ambitions.

These are cold, harsh, depressing facts. But we need to remember that the new year is a venture into the unknown, and we are going to have to rethink our lives. This new year affords us an opportunity to take spiritual inventory of our lives to see if our spiritual resources are sufficient for the needs and demands of the coming days of trial, temptation and sorrow. In the midst of all this, there is but one hope—the hope that Jesus Christ is coming again. Without that hope, we cannot face the future.

New Relationship

First, as we face the new year, we need to have a new relationship with God. It is imperative that we come into the blessed realization that God loves us, whatever our ethnic, religious or political background, and that Jesus Christ is Savior and Lord and Master of our lives.

The psalmist David, outwardly religious but inwardly corrupt, committed crimes of adultery and murder. Realizing that a mere profession of religion could not save him, David prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10). David had walked with God, but he wandered off the path of victorious living. He fell before God's face and said, "O God, cleanse me, make me a new person!" (Cf. Psalm 51:2). And God forgave him and cleansed him.

In an hour when the media applauds impurity, when it is the style to be unfaithful to marriage vows, when men and women of many matrimonial ventures are the idols of millions, I believe that down deep there is a heart hunger for the reality of Christian experience.

Jesus insisted that we become recipients of this experience with God: "You must be born again" (John 3:7). Jesus, who declared Himself to be the Truth (John 14:6), eliminated forever the possibility of man saving himself by respectability, outward honor or charitable works.

Not until we admit and confess that we are lost, that our entire existence is warped by deep-rooted sins, that our every imagination is continual evil, can we become conscious of the need of the new birth.

The Bible says, "having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever" (1 Peter 1:23). The regeneration of the individual is much more needed than the revolution of society. For when the individual is regenerated by the grace of God, that power will be felt throughout the society in which that individual moves, and it will have a continuous chain reaction.

Do you want to change the world? Then accept Jesus Christ as your Savior now, at the beginning of this new year, and live a life dedicated to Him.

Time's Importance

Second, as we face the new year, we need a new sense of time's importance. One of the most cherished gifts that God gives us is time. Many a person through carelessness and wasting time has seen opportunities slip away. The Bible says, "So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom" (Psalm 90:12). Again, it says, "[Redeem] the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:16).

Time is the dressing room of eternity. In the few fleeting days of life on this planet we are given the opportunity to prepare for eternity, and the Bible says, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation" (Hebrews 2:3).

We can waste time by idleness and by unprofitable conversations and excessive attachments to worldly amusements. But we can redeem time by employing it wisely, by attending to character-building, by meditating on the greatness of God and on His Word. Let us take time to pray in this new year, to read God's Word in this new year. Let us take time to be pleasant, to witness for Christ, to help the needy, to spend time with our loved ones, to develop a sunny disposition.

On the sundial at All Souls College, Oxford University, in Oxford, England, there is this Latin inscription: *Pereunt et imputantur*, which is translated, "The hours perish and are laid to our charge." Someday we must give an account of our time. What are you going to do with the 12 months that lie before you?

Life's Values

Third, as we face the new year, we need a new appraisal of life's values. Books on the market are designed to restore man's lost confidence in himself. "Believe in yourself" is the message of many a modern pulpit.

But a man who is drowning doesn't need faith in himself, he needs a lifesaver. A condemned man walking to the electric chair doesn't need faith in himself, he needs forgiveness. A man lost in the jungle doesn't need faith in himself, he needs



to know the way out.

The Bible says, "He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, but whoever walks wisely will be delivered" (Proverbs 28:26). If we are to face this new year with faith only in blundering, floundering mankind, then this year is destined to take us to new lows in human suffering and misery. Christ, indeed, is the hope of the world. At this new year let us ask our Father for a new sense of eternal values and live every day with those eternal values in view.

New Power

Fourth, as we face the new year, we need a new power.

The Bible says, "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you" (Acts 1:8). The world has

never been more ripe for harvest than it is at this very hour. Our nations are undergoing an unprecedented search for purpose and meaning, which God can use for good to turn individuals back to Him in repentance and faith. But we need Christ's power, the infilling of the Holy Spirit. If we are to have that power of the Spirit of God, we need to yield our lives unreservedly to Him.

I believe that God's judgment is falling upon our world, and that unrest in the world is causing people to think about spiritual things. People want to know more about who God is and if He really loves them. Many people are looking for consolation and hope—for the present and for the future—that transcend the moment-by-moment issues they see on TV or hear on the radio. We need to turn to God as never before. You can do that now by giving your life and your heart to Jesus Christ.

Scripture quotations are taken from The Holy Bible, New King James Version.

Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? Hebrews 12:9-11



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Sudoku Solution

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

Commanded to Love

By Jim Huskins
McDowell County



In Matthew 22:34-40, our Messiah lists the "great" commandment as: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." He added: "And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets." When I suggest that God expects his forgiven children to live lives of obedience to His commands, I am often told that Jesus only gave two commands, and that if we have a warm feeling toward God and our neighbors then we are fulfilling the law. But is that what scripture teaches? What does it mean to "love" God with our heart, soul and mind?

The Bible defines what it means to love God, and that definition has nothing to do with our feelings or best intentions. On the contrary, Biblical love is an active rather than an emotional process. Consider the following statements from the Apostle John:

John 14:15: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." John 14:21: "Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him." John 14:23-24: "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me." John 15:10: "If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love." 1 John 2:4-5: "Whoever says 'I know him' but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him." 1 John 5:3: "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome." 2 John 1:6: "And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments; this is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you should walk in it."

Our culture defines "love" as a warm feeling that requires no action. The Bible defines loving God as keeping his commandments. Which of these approaches should a Christian follow? When we intentionally disobey or ignore God's commands, we are showing Him that we do not love him. Only our obedience to His Word makes clear our actual love for Him. Neither good intentions nor sincere motives are enough. Jesus made this fact clear in Matthew 15:8: "This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me."

The father of lies takes merciless advantage of our Biblical ignorance. Only satanic influence could cause many preachers and teachers to refer to God's commandments as a: "Scary checklist of dos and don'ts." I am often told that I should focus more on grace—God's love for us—but how could I possibly accept His love for me without responding by loving Him in the manner which He has clearly stated.

Anyone who enjoys the blessings that come from a long-term, loving marriage relationship knows that your spouse has distinct preferences regarding how she or he prefers to be loved. While many of our spouse's preferences may be obvious or intuitive, it would be stupid to blatantly ignore her or his clearly stated preferences. Such an approach would guarantee that the happy marriage would rapidly deteriorate.

This same dynamic exists in our relationship with God. Regardless of how many times we have been told by some preacher or well-intended teacher that He does not expect us to follow his commandments, the Bible states the opposite. Regardless of those out of context verses cherry-picked from Galatians or Romans or Colossians, God's instructions for living found in the first five books of the Bible are neither a curse nor an impossible burden. Regardless of how much you treasure your "freedom" in Christ, that freedom does not include willful sin with impunity. Regardless of how convinced you are that Paul excused Christians from keeping God's commands, that is simply not possible since the Son of God says the opposite.

Paul never claims that God's law is a curse. To do so would be to contradict all of scripture. His references to the "curse" of the law are used in several ways. The most common is to make it clear that we do not have to keep the law for salvation. Our salvation is a free gift of grace through faith. Paul also refers to the "curse" associated with not keeping God's instructions. See Deuteronomy 11:26-28. Paul never claims that God's law is impossible to keep. See Deuteronomy 30:11 and Romans 10:5-8. Paul never claims that Torah is cancelled. He makes clear the opposite. See Acts 24:13-14 and Romans 7:12.

Of course, some of Paul's teachings regarding Torah are difficult to understand. Peter told us that such was the case while the Apostles were still living. The fact remains, however, that we are commanded to love God, and he tells us plainly that loving Him means keeping his commandments. I suggest that you choose this day whom you will serve.

Obedient Heart Fellowship believes that the entire Bible is true and relevant. We accept salvation by grace through faith in Jesus, and we attempt to love and serve Him by keeping his commandments. We meet each Sabbath—Seventh Day—at Abba's House, 72 South Main Street in Marion. 10:00 A.M. 828-460-7913

Jim & Beverly Huskins are members of Obedient Heart Fellowship.

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Clint's Chronicles on the Funny Farm

The Rest Of The Story

Doug Harrell

This one truly did happen, and it may have been the funniest event that Clint ever wrote about in his six month tenure on Harrell Hill Farms. The barn he tells about was an absolute mess and the manure was as he described it, awful! It was a total accident that the hose, and I was holding it, got turned on Clint. I would honestly never do that on purpose but once it happened, I have never seen a more hilarious sight than he was. Read, laugh and enjoy.

Clint's Chronicles on the Funny Farm

By Clint Pollard

Many of you have written or called about Clint's Chronicles on the Funny Farm. It seems that you take great pleasure in my many foibles and near -misses with danger. Also, some of you question my veracity - that would be TRUTH telling - regarding these tales. A couple things you should know: clearly the Lord is protecting me from myself and the myriad monsters and events that seek to snuff me out; and these stories are absolutely true (not to say I don't exaggerate a teeny tiny bit @) Now get a load of this.



Ancient Cow Manure!

My friend Doug, along with yours truly (Farmer Clint), set out one balmy morning to construct a new critter chute, or cow tunnel, or cow funnel, or whatever it is you call the slender little space where cows unknowingly go before they meet the head-gate. Ya know, this farming business gets pretty tricky if'n you don't know what you're doing so I try to stand back a wee bit when we tackle a new challenge.

Now one would imagine that constructing a narrow chute/tunnel/funnel would be fairly simple, some 2X4's, 4X6's, 3/4" plywood, screws and electric screw-driver, and a 2 ton headgate. Simple enough, right? Wrong answer!

Ya see the choice location for our construction project is the "Aunt Mae Barn", so called after Aunt Mae Byrd (Doug's Aunt). An aside, I've learned over the last many months that Doug and Barbara are related to everyone in Mitchell County and beyond. So if you're local please feel free to drop by for dinner with your distant relatives, anytime ☺. Really, tell Barbara that Farmer Clint sent you.

Anyway, the floor of the Aunt Mae Barn is really not a floor, of course. (Even I know you don't put floors in a barn, whatdya think I'm simple?) So the floor is really the ground, but in this barn it's not really the ground because GROUND IS DIRT. Oh no, we can't have dirt ground on Harrell Hill Farms – this GROUND is 100% cow patties, about 6 feet deep and at least 100 years old.

Now you are likely saying, "So what is your problem, Farmer Clint?" Hundred year old cow pies must be firm and packed down! True enough... unless the tin roof of the barn has holes in it the size of Haley's Comet and we've just had torrential rains. Another question I have for the Lord some day, how come it doesn't rain when you need it on the crops but it pours when you have to dig in cow manure?

As we walk – actually slog – into the barn it is clear this will be a story for the ages. I'm talking knee deep in ancient cow manure, so thick and gooey I can barely lift one foot in front of the other. And, naturally, when I take a step the bovine feces splatter all over me and the surrounding area.

Doug has another brilliant idea, we will submerge a small bilge pump in the liquid dung and pipe it right out the window. I am constantly amazed the ingenuity required to be a farmer...but I'm learning so very much!

Naturally it is MY JOB to hold the little pump under the water/prehistoric mastodon dung while Doug props the hose on the window sill. That was working just fine until I allowed the pump to rise slightly losing its vacuum. With a look of frustration and disdain Doug turned to tell me to hold the pump deeper in the muck and mire.

As he addressed me (a bit too harshly in my opinion) the hose pipe dislodged from the window and took dead aim at ME. I dropped the pump into the sludge, causing it to suck even harder, and I was blasted with the full force of a cow manure firehose! I was immediately blinded;



I ingested heaven only knows how much grainy, putrid cow droppings; my ears filled to overflowing...I was totally deluged by an E-COLI shower! I dared not scream lest I swallow a terminal dose, I could not run as my fully submerged boots seemed forever vacuum-held a foot below the surface dung. My shirt was bursting buttons, my pants heaped high, petrified manure dripping from my hair...I thought Doug was going to pass out! Once he finally regained composure he **FINALLY** aimed the manure stream back out the window.

Gasping for air I looked at my friend, "Ya know," I said, "if any other human on planet earth did that to me they would die right now!" With that crooked smile and a twinkle in his eye, Doug replied, "Yeah, but it's me, huh? And we are friends. Wanna go have some lunch?" (Lunch? How can anyone think about lunch after that? Hmmmmm, sounded like a good idea to me.)

Returning to the farmhouse I began hosing myself down, hose down my shirt, down my pant legs, head to toe, when Barbara peeked out the door, "What are y'all doing?" she asked. "Oh, just got into a bit of a mess," I explained, "and don't want to drag it into the house." Doug chuckled, "Pollard, you are a trip!" Indeed I am.

Comic relief on Harrell Hill Farms, once again I dodged a bullet – death by e-coli emersion. Thank you Lord!

Humbled in the Hills.

Farmer Clint



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How to Recover Your Conscience

By Alan Griffin



The first time the word "conscience" was mentioned in the Bible is John 8:9 (NKJV) we have the Pharisees trying to trap Jesus into disagreeing with the laws of Moses. They brought to Him a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery, and according to Mosaic Law she should be stoned to death. They asked Jesus what He has to say about the matter, and he said, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. John 8:9 (NKJV) Most, if not all of these men, were guilty of the same sin so being convicted by their own conscience they left.

When mankind fell from God through sin he began to think of himself as having a soul instead of being one. Many today view themselves as a body, but in all reality we are a soul of thoughts and emotions that resides in a body of flesh. Our body grows old and dies, and our soul lives on forever. Man wanders around the world today a moral fool saying to himself, "If I go to hell, I will have plenty of company." Nothing could be further from the truth. If, by your own foolish desires, you end up in hell you will be alone in total darkest with only your regrets to occupy your mind. It is a place totally devoid of the Spirit of God, and the loneliness there will crush your heart for the concern of your loved ones.

Today we do everything in our power to block our conscience. Drugs, alcohol, food, relationships, work, shopping, social and entertaining media, are all part of Satan's plan to block the voice of our conscience. This has led to an unprecedented abundance of mental illness in today's world. There are not many sane people left who are grounded in reality. Most of us struggle with one or more of the problems above, and this has led to mass murders, suicides, and uncontrollable depression. Every facet of our lives reveals the inner strife of mankind. If we have any kind of conscience at all, it is weak from neglect and ignored on a daily basis.

I would like to take you down the road to reality for one minute. If sin and hell is what God says it is, if God had to send His Son down to earth to be crucified on a cross, and had to die a horrible death, is it asking too much for us to believe that these things are true? We have the witness of the Holy Spirit inside of us, and if we have difficulty believing the word of God then it is evident we have sin in our life. The Holy Spirit of God operates in three different fields inside of a healthy mind. It convicts us of sin. Whether past or present, a healthy conscience tells us when we are doing wrong. It leads us to righteous living, and makes us aware of present and future judgment.

A healthy conscience guides our inner life away from sin and encourages us to do what is right. It touches our heart, and encourages us to put others first. It isolates us from the sin in our life, and separates us from evil. Man's fear resists his conscience because it proves we are lost, and our soul is destined for universal loneliness. We stand before the anger of God, and realize our just punishment is to spend eternity in hell. We realize our mind is corrupted, and it is in need of a cure that only Jesus Christ can provide. The conscience is always on God's side, and the inner voice will always instruct you to do what is right. It is our sonar, our radar, and our GPS to rightful living. It helps us remove the roadblocks of sin so we can have fellowship with our Creator. It is one of the main ministries of the Holy Spirit, which lives inside our mind.

All of us have had moral illumination because the Holy Spirit's presence lights the way for the inner man to follow. It is up to us to absorb that light and take heed of its guidance. *So, we renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.* 2 Corinthians 4:2 (NKJV) The purpose of a good conscience is to achieve a pure heart, having sincere faith, and setting an example for others to follow. We are all guilty of doing wrong. It is time we try to do what is right, and give the Holy Spirit of God an opportunity to lead us in righteous living. We start by believing what the Bible says is true, living according to the word of God, doing what the Bible says, and restraining ourselves from doing wrong.

When we take the first step there is a transaction within our human spirit, and we grow in confidence that we are forgiven . . . forgiven because God paid the ultimate sacrifice for our wrong doing. He placed His Son on a cross to pay for our sin debt, and to free us from the curse that has been on mankind since the fall of Adam. By faith, God awakens our soul from its slumber of death, and touches our conscience to expose us to the conviction of our sins. This is the beginning of the process of regeneration where the Holy Spirit cleanses us from all wrong doing. He transforms us into a being of light, and in time removes all darkness from our inner being, and exposes us to the wonderful world of eternal life.

We can start this process with a simple prayer. Dear heavenly Father, I have let the confusion of this world blind me to Your presence. I believe that blocking the inner voice You have given me is a fatal flaw of my being. I pray, Father, that You remove the sin from my soul so that my conscience is once again in working order, leading me to a path of righteous living, and making it possible for me to have fellowship with You. In Jesus Christ's name I pray, Amen.

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

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Love Shouldn't Hurt

By Tracy Black
Mitchell County

February is a month for love. It is the promise of a fresh start with the new year and the ultimate day for lovers and sweethearts is upon us. As we exchange the Valentine cards and chocolates let's not lose sight of reality. The reality is not everything that seems like love is. Here are some of the signs of an abusive relationship.

- **JEALOUSY** – Jealousy is not a sign of love as the abuser would have you think. It is a sign of possessiveness and lack of trust. The abuser will question you about who you talk to and accuse you of flirting or be jealous of the time you spend with family, friends or children.
- **CONTROLLING BEHAVIOR** – The batterer may question you about where you went, who you talked to, insist on making the decision about what you do, what you wear, limit phone use and who you can talk to on the phone, who your friends are, etc...
- **QUICK INVOLVEMENT** – The batterer may insist on a commitment very early in the relationship. Many battered women knew their abuser less than 6 months before they were engaged, married, or living together.
- **UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS** – Expects you to meet all his needs, to be the perfect wife, mother, lover, or friend. He will say things like "If you love me, I am all you need," etc...
- **ISOLATION** – The abuser will try to cut you off from all resources. If you have men friends, you are a whore. If you have women friends, you are a lesbian. If you are close to family, you are "tied to the apron strings." He may try to keep you from working or going to school.
- **BLAMES OTHERS FOR PROBLEMS / FEELINGS** – He thinks someone is always out to get him or doing him wrong. He may make mistakes and then blame you for upsetting him. He will tell you that you are at fault for almost anything that goes wrong. He will tell you, "You make me mad." "You make me happy." "You control how I feel." Although he makes the decision about what he thinks and feels, he will use feelings to manipulate you.
- **HYPERSENSITIVITY** – The abuser is easily insulted claiming you "hurt his feelings," when he is really very mad or takes personal setbacks as attacks against him. He may rant and rave about things that have happened which are a part of everyday life.
- **CRUELTY TO ANIMALS OR CHILDREN** – The abuser brutally "punishes" animals and seems to be insensitive to their feelings. He may expect children to be capable of doing things beyond their years, tease children until they cry, beat the children, keep them isolated in their room, etc...
- **FORCED OR PLAYFUL USE OF FORCE IN SEX** – Many like to throw you down and hold you during sex. May act out fantasies where you are helpless. Lets you know the idea of rape excites him. Shows little concern about whether you want to have sex and will manipulate you into complying. May have sex with you while you are sleeping or demand it when you are tired or ill.
- **VERBAL ABUSE** – The abuser will say things mean and hurtful to you. He may degrade you, curse you, call you names, tell you you're stupid and unable to function without him, and running down any of your accomplishments.
- **DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE** – The abuser may have sudden mood changes. One minute he is nice the next he is exploding in anger. Explosiveness and moodiness are typical of people who beat their partners.
- **PAST BATTERING** – The abuser may tell you he has hit a woman in the past, but they made him do it. You may hear from his relatives or friends, past wives or girlfriends that he is abusive or has been before.
- **THREATS OF VIOLENCE** – This could be any threat of physical violence meant to control you. Ex: "I'll slap your mouth off." "I'll break your neck." "I'll kill you." The abuser will tell you that they do not really mean it that everybody talks like that.
- **BREAKING OR STRIKING OBJECTS** – The abuser may break your prized possessions. This is used to terrorize you into submission. He may beat on a table or furniture with his fist, throw objects around, etc...
- **ANY FORCE DURING AN ARGUMENT** – The batterer may hold you down, physically restraining you from leaving, pushing, shoving, etc...

Despite what anyone tells you, none of these characteristics are part of a healthy relationship. If you recognize your relationship here please reach out for help. Mitchell County SafePlace is available to talk via our 24 hour hotline, 828-765-4044. We're here to listen, you don't even have to tell us your name! Remember, love shouldn't hurt!

Tracy E. Black, Interim Executive Director Mitchell County SafePlace

Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered. 1 Peter 3:7



Receives Grant to Support Workforce Development Initiative

By Patti Jensen
Mitchell County



The Mitchell County Chamber of Commerce has been awarded a grant from the NC Department of Commerce "Maximize Carolina" program. The \$75,000 grant (with 15% of the amount being provided by matching funds from local partners) will assist in kicking off a Mitchell County workforce education and awareness initiative.

The project was developed in response to many existing companies indicating they are struggling to find and retain employees. This is especially true in the manufacturing industry. Feedback from local industry and employers has established that there is a lack of understanding on what career opportunities are available in Mitchell County and that locating the information when available is extremely difficult. The new workforce initiative funded by the Maximize Carolina Grant and other partners will begin to address the gaps in information on types of jobs available in the marketplace now and growth areas anticipated in the future. It will tie these opportunities to the training required to successfully attain these positions (much of the training being available through Mayland Community College) and provide information on possible assistance with funding the required training.

The program is modeled after the Work In Burke program facilitated by the Burke Development Inc. The Burke County program was addressing the same issues that the industry in Mitchell County is facing and became a great resource for the project. The project was referred to the Mitchell County Chamber by the regional NC Economic Development Partnership Industry Manager, Bill Slagle. "The staff at Work in Burke have been very supportive in seeing their project become a model for Mitchell County," said Patti Jensen, Director of the Mitchell County Chamber of Commerce. "The Work in Burke program has been very successful and we appreciate their program staff being such a great resource for replicating their project in Mitchell County."

The campaign is a joint effort with partners from across the county, region and state, including: local business and industry, Mayland Community College, Mitchell County Public Schools, Mitchell County Chamber of Commerce, High Country Workforce Development Board, Mitchell County EDC and others. Work will begin immediately with a partnership with Mitchell County Schools CTE program to survey students and parents in the school system to gather their input and feedback on workforce issues. The next steps will include creating the content for a robust website and a multi-media outreach plan aimed at providing needed information to primarily middle and high school students and their parents. Plans are to expand the reach of the program as more resources become available. Plans are to work with the students in the school system to have them be a part of the branding of the project as well with their input and feedback.

"When meeting with our industry partners, we were hearing of the issues they were having in finding qualified workers to meet the needs of their business and also their concerns about the future workforce pipeline that would feed their future expansions and employment needs," said Jensen. These conversations with business leaders led to the Chamber researching opportunities to help and respond and this led them to the Work in Burke program and the Maximize Carolina grant. "We appreciate the assistance provided by the NC Department of Commerce to our efforts," said Jensen. With the fast changes taking place in the workplace, it is increasingly important for all students to continue their education beyond high school whether through certification programs or degrees. With all our partners engaged in these efforts, we believe we can close the information gap that exists and assist more of our students in finding a career that is right for them right here in Mitchell County."

The Maximize Carolina Sector grants are designed to "address skills gaps in robust and emerging industry sectors" according to the NC Commerce website. These grants can be used to address challenges such as applicants lacking specific skills, lack of sector brand awareness and work-based learning opportunities. "The CTE program in Mitchell County Schools and the workforce development programs at Mayland Community College are doing an excellent job in working with our students and our community. Our local industry is stepping up to the plate to be engaged partners with our education systems as well. This new initiative will be a piece of the puzzle to support these programs in the community and try to fill any gaps that our education and business industry partners feel are needed," said Jensen.

In addition, the Chamber has also received support for this initiative from the NC General Assembly as well as Duke-Energy and the Mitchell County Economic Development Commission. "We appreciate the General Assembly, Duke Energy and our EDC office for coming on board so early in this project, showing their support for workforce development in our communities and their confidence in this initiative," said Jensen.

About Mitchell County Chamber of Commerce

The mission of the Mitchell County Chamber of Commerce is to support business and promote community. The Chamber is made up of hundreds of businesses, industries and individual members whose goal is to promote Mitchell County, the surrounding region and its economy.

The Chamber operates two locations in Mitchell County. The Mitchell County Visitor's Center is located in the Museum of N.C. Minerals, just off the Blue Ridge Parkway. The Visitor's Center greets tens of thousands of visitors each year and provides them with information about the county. Administrative offices for the Chamber are located on Crystal Street in downtown Spruce Pine.

Contact: Patti Jensen, 828-765-9033 pjensen@mitchellcountychamber.org

Patti Jensen is Director of the Mitchell County Chamber of Commerce.

Veteran Visits Wife's Grave Over 1,300 Times

By Dr. Jim Denison

Ted Richardson is a ninety-three-year-old veteran. He and Florence met as teens, then he left to serve as a Marine in World War II. But he took her picture with him everywhere he went.

They got married after the war. Ted says Florence always took care of him—for seventy-two years. So, now it's his turn to take care of her.

Ted visits his wife's grave six days a week, without fail, taking three buses to get there. He cares for it meticulously, trimming weeds and brushing away leaves. He has already arranged for his church to bring flowers to Florence's grave after he dies.

He has already visited over 1,300 times. He says it's worth it to be close to the love of his life.

Adversity is opportunity

As you look back over 2018, what events come to mind?

If you're like most of us, your challenges and problems loom large. If someone you loved passed away, their death marked your life.

History feels the same way. When we think of David, Goliath is followed immediately by Bathsheba. Our first thought about Abraham Lincoln or John F. Kennedy is usually their assassination.

But we don't have to let our losses define us. Like Ted Richardson, we can choose to honor the past by the way we live in the present. And we can view adversity as the opportunity it is.

In Zechariah 13, the Lord foretells of a day when "one third" of the people will survive the judgment to come (v. 8). Then "I will put this third into the fire, and refine them as one refines silver, and test them as gold is tested" (v. 9a).

With this result: "They will call upon my name, and I will answer them. I will say, 'They are my people'; and they will say, 'The LORD is my God'" (v. 9b).

Three ways to redeem our challenges

Gold and silver must be refined to be useful to the craftsman who employs them. Water must be purified to be healthy for those who drink it.

We should view adversity as opportunity, for three reasons.

One: Adversity helps us evaluate the health of our souls.

Charles Spurgeon, commenting on the fact that reeds depend upon water for survival (Job 8:11), asked himself: "Do I only serve God when I am in good company, or when religion is profitable and respectable? Do I love the Lord only when temporal comforts are received from His hands?"

He then observed that "a godly man of ten grows best when his worldly circumstances decay."

In fact, this is an excellent way to know that a person is godly. As C. S. Lewis noted, turning on the light doesn't create rats in the cellar—it merely reveals them.

When we respond to adversity by turning away from God, we discover that we sought his blessings more than his presence. But when we trust him in hard times, we discover that our faith is deeper than our circumstances.

Two: Adversity provides a platform for persuasive influence.

The Christians whose faith has most impressed me are those who have suffered the most while remaining faithful. We think of Joseph in prison, Daniel in the lion's den, and John imprisoned on Patmos. I am remembering parents who lost children, patients who endured horrific physical pain, and spouses who walked loved ones to the gates of paradise.

A skeptical culture watches Christians suffer to see if we believe what we say. Hard times can be powerful times for the gospel.

Three: Adversity invites us to recalibrate our life purpose.

Robert McFarlane was Ronald Rea-



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YOU WERE ON
HIS MIND



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continued on page 47

Mitchell Yancey Substance Abuse Task Force Coordinator

Free Home Remedies

By Jeff Spargo
Mitchell and Yancey Counties

Free Home Remedies Program Helps Prevent Substance Use & Helps with Recovery

Pain and stress can often lead people down the path of substance misuse as they turn to prescription opioids or other substances in the attempt to find relief. Though substances may dull the pain or stress for a time, more and more must be taken to continue the feelings of relief, which can eventually lead to addiction.

The best way to manage pain and stress is to address the health of the whole person – mind, body and spirit. As readers of the Blue Ridge Christian News, you know the importance of spiritual wellness which comes through relationship with God and with other believers. The First and Great Commandment calls us to love God with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind, and all our strength. We could all stand to build our capacity to supplement our spiritual work with increased mental clarity, emotional intelligence, and physical discipline. Yet, attending to physical and emotional/mental needs is sometimes difficult due to a variety of reasons like busy schedules, no time off from work, and cost.

Thankfully, local residents have the opportunity to take part in a free program that helps people address the needs of the whole person through safe and effective pain and stress management techniques. Home Remedies: Community Options Addressing Pain and Stress is a collaborative effort by the local non-profit organization Partners Aligned Toward Health, the Mitchell-Yancey Substance Abuse Task Force (a program of PATH), RHA Health Services, and Blue Ridge Regional Hospital. Home Remedies' overarching goal has been to reduce opioid use for pain relief.

"I'm excited to say we have served over 75 individuals and have a core group of 15 faithful attendees since starting last May," notes Program Director Margot Rossi. "The program is meeting all of its objectives: helping participants relate to their experience of pain with more coping tools and positivity; and alleviating pain or suffering through complementary health practices, including mindful attention practices, movement, and health coaching."

"Home Remedies provides information and support for patients and providers to work together on bridging a gap that exists in pain management," Rossi says. Physicians at chronic pain rehabilitation centers across the country emphasize that we need to consider how to treat pain via different modalities other than pain medicines alone. These proven options include mindfulness practices and alternative medicines such as anti-inflammatory diet, movement therapy and massage, which are shared through Home Remedies.

"Mindfulness, or mindful attention, is simply the practice of stopping, noticing and reflecting on what one is experiencing in the moment, with curiosity and free of judgment," Rossi explains. "Mindfulness practices are mental exercises that focus our attention, for example on our breathing or sounds around us. Regular practice is proven to positively affect our choices, improve our concentration and memory, build compassion and shift our response to stress and pain."

This innovative program connects participants to local complementary health-care providers who share strategies and benefits of complementary practices that can be used in addition to or in place of pharmaceutical pain medication, or more invasive procedures like surgery.

While studies clearly show mindfulness-based programs and alternative medicines relieve pain and stress, it's even more convincing when friends and neighbors agree that it works for them. Just ask area residents who have attended Home Remedies about their experiences.

"Sometimes I felt like throwing in the towel," explains participant Barbara Banks. "This program has given me the courage to go on, especially when I see others dealing with the same sort of problems. This is a great support group."

Another participant, who asked to remain anonymous, has attended nearly all of the sessions. He had been relying on opioids for knee and back pain, forced to plan his days around their impact and side effects. "The pain from my neuropathy often felt like someone was putting a lit cigarette on my feet," he says. "One night I set the leg of my coffee table on my toe to create a constant pain versus the stabbing." This participant no longer takes opioids and says his knee and back pain is greatly reduced thanks to alternative therapies.

While he still feels pain, he is living the lessons he is learning in class. "I've been reading more and more about mindfulness since the program has started," he says. "I think that's part of what has helped my blood pressure drop, along with losing weight, something my doctor also appreciates. My attitude has also changed and I'm trying hard to keep making lifestyle changes that can continue helping."

A faithful participant who comes to support a loved one in chronic pain believes she has also benefited from the program. "The speakers have been wonderful. I've gotten a lot of good ideas for things I can do to keep myself in good condition. I particularly enjoy the mindfulness exercises we do every week."

"It's rare that a community has an educational opportunity to access this information at no cost directly from licensed or certified professionals who practice locally," Rossi adds. "Many doctors are not aware of the benefits of alternative medicines for pain management or haven't developed a network of trusted alternative medicine providers to share with patients. Home Remedies supports



providers and patients alike as they seek alternatives to address pain and improve quality of life."

To learn more, support our work, or get involved as a volunteer, contact PATH staff at (828) 682-7899, info@pathwnc.org, or www.pathwnc.org. For questions specific to Home Remedies, visit www.path-homeremedies.org or contact Jeff Spargo at jeff@pathwnc.org.

Jeff Spargo is the Director of the Mitchell / Yancey Drug Abuse Task Force.



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

The Source of the Gospel

By Dr. Tom Walker
McDowell County

This is first in a series of studies on the gospel. The word "gospel" basically means "good news." It seems today for something to sell it has to be bad news. Most news today is an attack on a governmental leader's character, about someone killing, fires that destroy many people, or floods that leave people homeless. We all long to hear good news but most of what we hear is bad.

I want to think with you on the "good news." It is good news that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8). We deserve to be eternally separated from God forever, but God in mercy and grace let us know there is salvation in and through His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. For a person to get to the Father, he or she must realize the truth of what Jesus said in John 14:6: "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

Let's think together about the source of the gospel. Where did it originate? Who began it or brought it about? I can easily answer that question from the Bible. Seven times in the Bible the phrase "Gospel of God" is mentioned (Rom. 1:1; Rom. 15:16; 2 Cor. 11:7; 1 Thess. 2:2,8,9; 1 Peter 4:17). The little word "of" in the Scripture is a source Word. When the Bible says the gospel is the "Gospel of God" it simply tells us the gospel did not originate with man, but it is God who provided it to poor lost sinners on their way to Hell.

The "Gospel of God" involves the death burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 says: "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures."

It Was Provided From a Personal God

God sits upon a heavenly throne, rules the universe and has all power in Heaven and on Earth. Yet, He wants to be personal in the life of every person on the earth. Through the gospel we can know the Lord Jesus Christ personally. Christianity is a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

God of course is an everlasting God. Man had a beginning in the Garden of Eden but his creator, but God Almighty never had a beginning. He is the eternal God who owes His existence to no one. Deuteronomy 33:27 states: "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them." He is called the "everlasting God" in three different passages in the Bible (Gen.21:33; Isa.40:28;



Rom. 16:26). Someone said, "God stepped out of nowhere and created everything out of nothing."

I used to hear a song often many years ago, which lyrics said, "He's a personal Savior, He's mine I know, he loves me so, He did my soul a personal favor, that's why I'll tell it out, where ever I may go."

The Bible does not seek to prove the existence of God, in Gen. 1:1 it assumes the existence of God. Gen. 1:1 says "In the beginning God created the heavens and the Earth."

The gospel came from a personal God who wants a personal relationship with mankind.

It Was Provided With A Heart of Love

The Bible says clearly in 2 Peter 3:9: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

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

It is clear that the Lord doesn't want anyone to go to Hell. He wants everyone who will trust the blood and sacrifice of His Son to go to Heaven. Justice demands sin must be paid for to be forgiven, but grace says you can have a free gift of eternal life through Christ. He paid the penalty of sin that we could be forgiven and that the charges that we have against us could be dismissed.

The love of God is such a mysterious fact and yet it is a blessed fact. Two main things prove the love of God. One of those is what Christ did for the sinner at Calvary and the other is that He provided the Gospel of God for helpless, Hell bound sinners.

It Was Provided as the Only Solution for Man's Sins

There are not many cures for man's sin. Years ago, it was said of civilization that all roads led to Rome, but all roads do not lead to God.

My life's verse is 2 Corinthians 5:21, which says, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

Man, in his human nature is unquestionably unrighteous. The only way for a person to become righteous before God is to be made the righteousness of God in Christ.

Christ took the sins of the world upon Himself so that we could be saved and be reconciled to the Lord. He was able to be our Savior because He was absolutely sinless. He made the payment for our purity. In the process of God's imputation, our sins are not imputed or credited to our spiritual account, they are put on Christ. The righteousness of Christ is imputed or credited to us. When God looks at the Christian, He sees the righteousness of His Son. This is why we can have eternal life.

It Was Provided to Give Hope in a Dark World

John 1:5 tells us, "And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not."

There is so much darkness within the lost sinner and there is certainly a great deal of darkness in society. Society is so corrupt and so anti-God and anti-Bible. Today people are guided by situation ethics. Instead of just following what the Bible says, they say you let the situation guide you. In other words, much of society says, "If a man and a woman love one another, it is alright for them to live together rather than getting married." No, the Word of God says it is wrong to live a sexually immoral life. The Bible says, "Flee fornication" (1 Cor.6:18).

Jesus and His gospel shine as light in darkness. When Jesus comes in through belief in Christ and the "Gospel of God", it is then that light and hope enter into the darkness of the heart.

Light produces warmth. Thank God for the warmth and security our faith in the Gospel has brought into our lives. If you don't have Jesus you have missed the warmth of His presence in your life.

We should be so thankful for the Gospel of God. God is the source of it. If you have never trusted Christ as your Savior, it is the desire of the Lord that you do so.

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

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Grow and Learn

Pastor Terry Cheek
McDowell County

While studying God's Word, I am constantly seeking growth and maturity as a Christian. I believe there are many Christians out there who are seeking the same growth and maturity. In addition, talking with others I learn there is a lack of understanding about how to get there. We now have two very serious problems, both of them linked together. First, there is a need to grow and learn; second, there is a lack of direction.

Recently, while in God's Word I ran across a passage of scripture, which I feel answers both questions. The Apostle Paul while writing to the church of Thessalonica had these words to share. "First Thessalonians 5:16-18 *'Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.'*" The church of Thessalonica was growing and maturing. They had many questions and needed direction. Let's expound three obvious points that Paul makes.

First, we are to rejoice. Don't just read this and move on, it is a building block of our Christian growth. We're not talking about just being happy, or satisfied or even content. Paul is telling us to be thrilled about Jesus! In addition, we should be this way daily. Notice the word evermore. Evermore refers to a continuous process that builds upon itself and in this case it is founded upon Jesus Christ. Do you remember the moment and days immediately following your salvation? Do you remember how thrilled you were? Paul is reminding the church this can be and should be our daily attitude toward Christ. If I focus daily on Jesus and make time daily to read His word, I can live rejoicing in my Lord and Savior. When I can't find this, I know to look at my heart because I have something between my Lord and me. Find an attitude of rejoicing and experience it on a daily basis.

Second, we are to pray. Prayer I feel is the most neglected part of many if not most every Christian's life. If we do not have a good prayer life we do not study God's Word well, neither do we walk close to the Lord. Prayer is the key that unlocks the treasures of a Christian life. Jesus tells us in Luke 11:9 *"And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."* Do you see how prayer is the key that unlocks the treasures of a Christian life? If we don't experience the fullness of God, it is because we do not seek it. Actually, we can truthfully say an effective prayer life will help foster the attitude of rejoicing evermore. Prayer keeps our relationship with God fresh and well grounded in Jesus Christ. However, our prayer life should be constant. The term "without ceasing", in my opinion is terribly misunderstood by many Christians. Paul isn't talking about us going through our day constantly talking aloud to God. Paul is, I believe, referring to us having a heart that is sensitive to the needs of others and being able to readily identify prayer needs as they come before us. Do we want to lift up people and circumstances that need God? If the answer is yes then our heart must be paying attention to what is going on around us. Having the proper attitude and supporting it with a proper prayer life will greatly improve any Christian's walk with the Lord. It will encourage us, edify us, and motivate us to seek an even closer walk tomorrow, not because we have to, but because we want to.

Third, we should be thankful. This should be understood for the Christian. Christians are a thankful people; I really believe that, however, I believe we slip when it comes to the depth of our thankfulness. This depth takes on many different perspectives. For example, I am amazed when I sit in a restaurant and watch people receive their food and without giving a thought to being thankful, they just dig in. Lori and I are approached occasionally by folks thanking us for being thankful in public for the food and service we receive. Yes, we pray in public. We have never been told we couldn't give thanks, if the restaurant would not allow it, then we have already decided we cannot dine there. We also pray at home. Does that mean we are the measuring stick for prayer? No, not at all, we are a work in progress. I'm certain there are many who can help us grow closer by displaying a deeper thanksgiving for us. I share this to encourage your exploration and examination of your prayer life. It's not only necessary, it's crucial to your walk with the Lord.

Paul closes by reminding us this is God's Will in Jesus Christ and it concerns you. It is very personal and very deep but very achievable. To grow and mature in our relationship with God requires us to have a heart that is evermore rejoicing, that is praying without ceasing and that is thankful in all areas of life, public and private. Until next month, I pray for God to richly bless each one of you!

Terry Cheek is pastor of Calvary Missionary Baptist Church in Marion NC. You can contact Terry by email at terrycheek63@gmail.com or by phone at (828) 460-6120.

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. John 13:34-35



4-H Robotics Team Astro Bros Compete at Regional Competition

By Kim Slotnick
Mitchell County

The 4-H robotics team Astro Bros competed at a regional competition in Hendersonville on Sun., 12/16. They presented their solution for alleviating the social impact that astronauts face when spending long spans of time in space travel to a panel of judges. This year's FIRST Lego League challenge was to identify a social or physical problem that astronauts face in long term space travel, then propose a solution to that problem. Each year FIRST releases a real life scientific challenge for Lego League robotics teams to research. They are also judged on a set of Core values such as professionalism, graciousness, and teamwork. The fun part of the challenge and the part where true sportsmanship comes into play is the robot game. This is where the teams build an autonomous robot to compete in accomplishing themed obstacles for points. Participants gain many life skills during their exploration of the scientific theme, such as, problem solving, critical thinking, and public speaking. They learn engineering concepts and basic computer programming while creating an autonomous robot. The Astro Bros brought home the 1st place Award for Teamwork at this recent competition and we are proud to have this team represent Mitchell County 4-H.

If you want to know more about this program and others like it, please contact Mitchell County 4-H at 828 688-4811.

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



Astro Bros L-R: Troy Gouge, Barrett Potter, Samuel Jones, Riley Silver, and Bransen Pittman.

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

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Weddings, Graduations and Saving the Best Until Last

By Dr. Tracy Jessup



"On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. John 2:1-2

Our family eagerly is anticipating several celebratory milestones in 2019. Our son's fiancée will graduate from Gardner-Webb University with her degree in Elementary Education on Mother's Day weekend. Two weeks later, on Memorial Day Weekend, she and our son will be joined together as husband and wife. Two weeks later, our daughter will graduate from Crest High School. And two weeks later, my wife and I will celebrate our 30th wedding anniversary.

I am hopeful that these events will go more smoothly for us than the news I read of a Swedish couple whose honeymoon was plagued by six natural disasters. An April 8, 2011 online story published by Business Insider reported on the honeymoon of Stefan and Erika Svanstrom.

"First, they were stranded in Munich, Germany, thanks to a terrible snow-storm. Then when they finally arrived in Cairns in Australia, the area was struck by a ferocious cyclone. Soon after, they journeyed to Brisbane. But that city was struck by floods, so they went to Perth - only to be greeted by bush fires. They must have been extremely relieved to land in Christchurch, New Zealand. Until the 6.3 magnitude earthquake struck the city, causing huge devastation. The couple then travelled to Japan, which was rocked days later by the March 11 earthquake (www.businessinsider.com/honeymoon-from-hell-plagued-by-natural-disasters-2011-4).

While not as disastrous, today's passage conveys a potentially embarrassing situation at a wedding, providing the setting for the first miracle of Jesus. The hosts ran out of wine. In The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament, Craig Keener writes, Weddings lasted seven days, and hosts invited as many people as possible, especially distinguished guests like prominent teachers. To run out of wine at a wedding was a social faux pas that would become the subject of jests for years [since] the host was responsible to provide his guests with adequate wine for seven days" (p. 268).

Jesus, at his mother's request, intervenes and instructs the waiters to take six stone water jars, which were used for ceremonial purification, and fill them with water. He then told them to draw some out and take to the chief steward. "When the steward tasted the water that had become wine...the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, 'Everyone serves the good wine first...But you have kept the good wine until now'" (John 2:9-10).

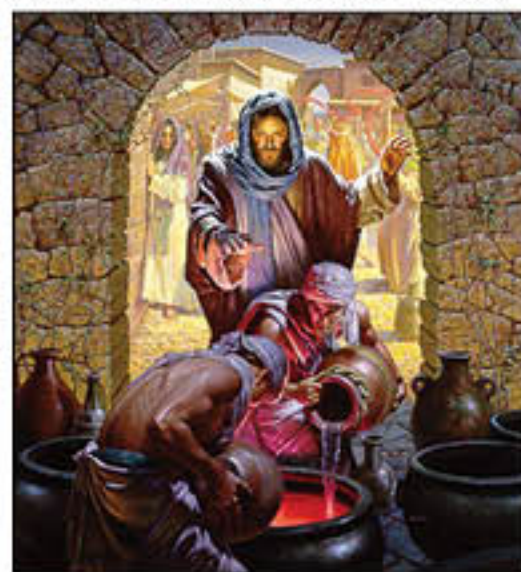
John refers to what Jesus did as a sign, a sign that only a few people saw and those who believed already were his disciples. New Testament Scholar George Beasley Murray writes, "The concept of sign...is used especially of events...that demonstrate the truth of God's word through his prophet...and so authenticate the prophet himself, it also denotes events that herald things to come, especially in relation to the eschatological future" (Word Biblical Commentary: John, p. 33).

Not only is the miracle a sign, but a sign that revealed the glory of Jesus. It is difficult to hear the word "glory" following the celebration of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany, without recalling the prologue to John's gospel, "And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth" (1:14). God's glory is not always what we expect it to be, and this is seen most vividly at Calvary. Again, Beasley-Murray writes, "The hour that struck in Cana leads on inexorably to the moment of the exaltation of the Son of Man to heaven via his cross, when the wine of the kingdom of God was made available to the whole world" (p. 36).

Prayer: Lord, may our lives overflow with the awareness that you, who saves the best until last, have the power to redeem our past, transform our present, and hold our future in your hands.

Located in the North Carolina foothills, Gardner-Webb University is a private, Christian, liberal arts university that prepares students to become critical thinkers, effective leaders and compassionate servants in the global community. Emphasizing a strong student-centered experience and rigorous academics, Gardner-Webb ignites learning and service opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students. Ignite your future at Gardner-Webb.edu.

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



Tossed on the Seas of Life

By Tim Tron
Burke County

The boat had been adrift at sea for days. Grown men began to weep for fear of dying. Their assumed fate was up to the mercy of the storm. The vessel was one of the largest of its time, a cargo ship carrying grain to the starving city of Rome. The captain, a seasoned veteran of the sea, knew the risks of sailing in the late season on the Adriatic. No man sailed this ocean in the winter and lived. Yet, due to dire circumstances of his city's plight, Nero had offered large bonuses to any captain that brought grain at their greatest time of need. So, even against Paul's warnings, he pushed on. Besides, who was this Paul, and what did he know about sailing? Paul was under arrest and in the custody of Julius, a Centurion of the Augustan Legion, who was in charge of his prisoner. So, when Paul spoke up, even though most of the crew, and likely even its captain, knew of his story, the captain chose to keep going; the lure of this world's reward was greater than his trust in the man of God.

Once they had thrown caution to the wind after pushing past Cauda with a southerly wind, it was as the nature of the season, the deadly Eurakylon struck. The crew managed to keep the bow pointed into the gale that pounded their ancient vessel. All tackle had been taken down, the lifeboat secured into the ship's hold, and the ship secured with ropes to keep it from being torn apart. Two hundred and seventy-six people were on board that vessel. All of the 276 souls thought they were going to die, except for one. The one held fast to his faith. His belief was as strong as the raging seas in which they were tossed. If anyone knew better, the Apostle Paul was certain that this was not where he was to die, nor anyone else on board; this much he was told. *"For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee."* Acts 27:22-24

In life, we are simply nothing more than a minute vessel cast upon a vast ocean of time, waves of trials, and currents of torment. We cannot know our destiny any more than the raindrop knows where it may fall. God's purpose in our life is that wind, driving our ship toward where he has planned our journey long before we were formed in the womb. When we choose to follow the path He has chosen, those winds become our compass, regardless of where we think we should go, his will is the ultimate guide.

The passengers and crew on that fateful trip bear many resemblances to those of our own voyages in life. Although Paul was a prisoner being transported to Rome for trial, it was his choice to be on the journey. He had allowed himself to be tried by Festus in the presence of king Agrippa and his family. The account we are told is that of their hearts being changed, and in the end, was the sacrifice Paul had made in order to share the gospel with those who might never hear the truth. His appeal to Ceaser, a mere consolation and maneuver at using his Roman citizenship, all but granted him a sentence of death, not in the presence of Festus, king Agrippa, and his court, but rather in the heart of the Roman empire, Rome. In other words, while serving God, he knowingly placed himself in that boat, so that he may continue to follow the path to which he had been called; a higher purpose, one greater than his own, or anyone else in that vessel.

The other passengers and crew are like those people in our lives whom Jesus had warned us against keeping in our lives, and those who become part of our journey unknowingly. When many began following Christ in his earthly mission, he warned them saying, *"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple."* -Luke 14:25-27 The consequences of being called and stepping out in faith are more than a personal decision; it is a choice that will affect all whom you call family and even those whom you don't. Stepping into the boat requires a realization that where you are about to go is no longer up to you; rather, it is up to the Lord. When we pray to God and say such things as, "Lord, I put everything into your hands. Wherever you lead, I shall follow," we literally become bound to all that He will require; be it good or bad. As Paul would tell Luke in his last days of imprisonment, "To live is Christ, to die is gain."

Like the captain and crew on that grain ship headed for Rome on which Paul was a passenger, we can try to convince ourselves that we have it all under control, but they soon found out that God's power was beyond anything they could fathom. Their fate was out of their own control. They were at the mercy of the Almighty. In our own world, when we face the storms of life, some believe, unlike Paul on that fateful passage, no matter the difficulty, that they are in control. They believe, they are the captain of their own ship. How foolish their plight. When we become so self-absorbed, we are only kidding ourselves. For if we say we know, we are a liar, just as if we say we have not sinned, we also are likewise as much the same. In the end, we make a mockery of what God wants for each of us, and in that moment, disgrace all that he has done to give us the hope of eternal salvation. *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."* - 1 John 1:9-10.

When the storm had finally bored down upon them, the crew took measures to physically secure the ship as much as humanly possible. They took down any protruding masts and sails, brought in the lifeboat, and did something we might consider odd by today's standards, tied ropes around the bulk of the vessel to keep it from falling apart. In ancient times, ships were not made as they are today. They were crude boats that often fell apart in strong storms. To keep the wood from tearing apart, they literally wrapped the main body of the boat with strong ropes



so that it might endure. In our own lives, our spiritual bodies are as frail as those ancient sailing ships. Left alone, it doesn't take much of a tribulation, a storm, to begin to tear our world apart. We become desolate, lost, and feel abandoned. We can feel as if we are being torn asunder. Yet, there is a choice we can make to forgo this destruction of our inner being.

Yes, we have a choice.
We can choose life; eternal life
Accepting Jesus into your heart is the very essence of wrapping your soul in secure bindings that will hold you and keep your world from falling apart in the most arduous tempests of life.

When we confess, we are sinners with our lips, believe with our hearts that Jesus died for our sins and that he arose from the dead to sit at the right hand of the Father, we allow the Holy Spirit to indwell. We become one with Christ, and it is then we find we are no longer alone on our journey. When the seas crash against the bow of our little boat, we can take comfort that He is with us, no matter the result. We can find comfort in the scriptures and hear the voice of God speaking to us through those ancient writers. The passages of the Bible become the ropes that bind our world together.

It may sound easy, but it never is.
Once you begin that journey, that path of righteousness, it is then Satan will come at you like a roaring lion, seeking who he may devour. The headwinds will become stronger, the challenges will now come from all angles, not one. The feeling of despair may haunt you like the shadow of death. Be ye not dismayed, for this is only a sign that you are on the right path. When the headwinds are the strongest, you are guaranteed the direction you are heading is most certainly the one in which you are called by God.

Some will hear the calling and step out thinking they are alone. Yet, if we have a family, our decision will affect all of them as well. Our choice becomes a ripple effect which will permeate their entire existence. Jesus knew this would happen. The way becomes more complicated when we cannot do as Christ insisted. To include more than just yourself puts others in jeopardy. The choices you make will impact everyone in the boat. As Paul found, his passage and all those on board were assured. Yet, for some, we bring those on our journey who are not ready. We must choose wisely, lest we put their salvation in jeopardy. The angel who assured Paul of everyone's safety was like a spiritual life preserver. When we are called, we must provide our loved ones with a similar protection in case our boat capsizes and, seemingly, all is lost. We cannot take for granted that they know Him. We must ask, and know that each member has sought Christ, and know him in their heart. If we truly know that they are safe, then we should not fear, but allow His grace to be sufficient. In Christ, we shall never be lost, for, in Him, we have the hope of life eternal. *"For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?"* -Luke 9:24-25

My own ship is in the midst of a storm as strong as any I have known. My lashings are firm, the Word of God keeps my hold from breaking apart, yet the darkness has never been more prevalent around my life than before. In the distance, I can hear the lion roaring, but I fear not. The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want, his rod and staff comfort me. What can man do to me? My ship is being driven by the currents and winds created by His divine hand. He leads me down the path of righteousness for his namesake. Where my ship will land, I do not know. In fact, I don't need to know. Instead, all I need is to trust in Him, for when we do, when we trust in our Lord, we can know that wherever we come ashore is exactly where He wants us to be.

Our purpose will become evident in time; time not of our own, but in God's time.
Yes, there will still be storms, just as Paul, Job, and so many more experienced. No, it will not be easy.
But the first step is to get in the boat.
Choose Christ and begin your journey today.
Thanks be to God.

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



There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.
1 John 4:18

Nostalgia

By Josh Reed

Evoking a sense of nostalgia is an integral part of Disney's filmmaking strategy. We see it in recent films like the Star Wars franchise, Beauty and the Beast and Mary Poppins Returns. This brilliant strategy involves crafting movies that both mirror the storylines of the originals and stand on their own for a newer generation.

Nostalgia is defined as "a sentimental longing or wistful affection for the past, typically for a period or place with happy personal associations." It has the unique ability to carry a person to the past like nothing else. In essence, nostalgia brings what is familiar to the forefront of a person's heart.

When appropriated correctly, nostalgia can powerfully connect generations of people to a greater, common good. But if mishandled, nostalgia can take a darker, more sinister path.

Consider that after the Lord delivered the children of Israel from Egyptian captivity, God was teaching them to trust Him by miraculously providing for their needs. The Israelites were set to take hold of all God had promised until they started longing wistfully for many of the foods they enjoyed in Egypt.

However, while in Egypt, the Israelites were slaves. But the uncertainty of the future led them to long for the familiar. Nostalgia had blinded them to the full truth of their past, and they began to weep over all they had lost, which did not please the Lord.

God never calls His people to nostalgia. He always calls us to remember His faithfulness. The psalmist declares, "I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart; I will recount all of your wonderful deeds" (Psalm 9:1). The psalmist doesn't long to return to the past but remembers the Lord's faithfulness to him in order to step into an uncertain future with hope and confidence.

Nostalgia often leads to despair because it promises something it cannot deliver — a world that never changes and a life that seems simple and comfortable.

There is only one problem — the world is always changing. That's why the Lord says, "Remember Me" rather than "Remember how it used to be."

The Bible, in fact, condemns such thinking. When our great hope is in a person rather than a timestamp, our greatest days are always ahead of us. Here's how some biblical writers speak of Him:

• *The Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change (James 1:17).*

• *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever (Hebrews 13:8).*

• *For I the Lord do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed (Malachi 3:6).*

And this God who never changes promises always to be with His people and to watch over their comings and goings both now and forevermore.

So instead of looking back to what is familiar for ultimate hope when things get tough, we can always look ahead into what feels uncertain knowing the Lord will meet us and guide us through it, because He has been faithful to us along the way, and He's already there waiting on us.

Perhaps the Lord has been patiently waiting on your church to make the shift from nostalgia (a longing for the past) to remembrance (a longing for Him). Then He can unleash His people to do a new thing in 2019 for the sake of His great name.

Josh is the Leader of Adult Evangelism and Discipleship for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina.



GWU Hunt School of Nursing

From Jackie Bridges

GWU Hunt School of Nursing Adds New Doctor of Nursing Practice Programs in August 2019

Degrees will be Offered in Family Nurse Practitioner and Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—The Hunt School of Nursing (HSN) at

Gardner-Webb University is pleased to announce the beginning of new entry level post baccalaureate Doctor of Nursing Practice programs for Family Nurse Practitioners (DNP-FNP) and Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioners (DNP-PMHNP). The DNP-FNP will be a transition of the currently offered Master of Science in Nursing – Family Nurse Practitioner to a doctoral entry level program.

Pending approval by The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) and the Accreditation Commission on Education in Nursing (ACEN), the new programs will enroll their first cohort of students in August 2019.

The Doctor of Nursing Practice – Leadership program has been offered in the HSON since 2010. The DNP-FNP and DNP-PMHNP will continue the school's tradition of leadership in nursing education programs and further the HSON distinction of preparing healthcare providers in a community of faith and learning.

"The addition of the Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP) Program to the Hunt School of Nursing builds upon the strong foundation of our current Family Nurse Practitioner Program," observed HSON Dean Nicole Waters. "We will continue to strive to provide an advanced practice nursing education in a caring and faith-based environment. The PMHNP will meet the current needs of our community partners and expand mental health services within our community."

The HSON has achieved several recognitions for its nursing education programs. Recently the school's online programs were ranked ninth in the nation by OnlineColleges.com. Additionally, the Master of Science in Nursing program has also received multiple honors from such sources as College Choice, the U.S. News & World Report and RNtoBSN.org.

While providing an exceptional learning experience, faculty and staff promote the school's mission to "enhance the health status of the global community by preparing individuals to practice holistic and professional nursing through the provision of student-centered programs of study for a diverse student population that promotes academic excellence within a Christian, private, liberal arts setting utilizing teamwork and community engagement."

For additional information on the proposed new programs, please contact the Gardner-Webb University Graduate Admissions Office at gradschool@gardner-webb.edu or visit: www.gardner-webb.edu/nursing.

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Help Is On The Way!!!

By Christy Young
Mitchell County

Wow! How assuring to hear that help is on the way in times of disaster or distress? It's a sense of security, safety, and comfort to know that help will soon be arriving. The past few months has been somewhat difficult for my family. My dad is having a lot of health complications, and I have been overwhelmed with emotions. As I have begun to pray and ask for God's guidance and comfort in this situation, He has revealed himself over and over. God is always good! As we travel through this life, it is often easy to focus on the trials we are faced with. But, God reminded me lately that my blessings way exceed any hardship that I have ever faced. Hebrews 4:16 says, "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace in the time of need." The door to the throne is always WIDE open to God's children, us. We can come anytime, we don't need an appointment. Wow, that means that we can walk straight to the throne of grace when we need help. We have a direct line to the Father! I have realized that I am weak, and I am in such need of God's strength in both the good times and bad. But, it is so great to know that in our time of despair that we serve a God that is always faithful, compassionate, and able to calm our storms. I don't know what the future will bring, but I do know with complete confidence that I serve a God that will hold my hand to the end. God promised that he will never leave us nor forsake us. So, no matter what storm, hardship, or trial that you may be facing...Our God is always near. Find your strength and refuge in HIM and believe in faith that help is on the way.

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



April Craft Market

By Morrissa Angi
Burke County

Valdese, NC – January 23, 2019 – The Historic Valdese Foundation is excited to announce the spring craft show. The annual April Craft Market will be held on April 13th, 2019, at the Old Rock School in Valdese, and craft vendor applications are currently being accepted. Vendor applications are available for download at visitvaldese.com. This event is strictly for handmade items only.

The April Craft Market will feature a variety of handmade crafts and gifts, and feels very similar to the annual "Christmas in November Craft & Gift Show" that is held in Valdese on the second weekend in November. "We are very excited for this event," states Morrissa Angi, Director of the Community Affairs and Tourism Department in Valdese. "Our spring craft show continues to build and build with amazing vendors and attendees! We are thrilled to bring this event back this year for our community to enjoy."

The craft show will be held at the Old Rock School from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm with approximately 45 vendors offering handmade crafts, gifts and baked goods. The first 100 shoppers will receive a complimentary shopping tote. Shoppers are also invited to visit the Piedmont & Western Railroad Museum the day of the show for their special open house. Door prizes will be offered including furniture, show tickets, gift cards and home décor.

All proceeds from this event will go towards the Historic Valdese Foundation which is a 501C-3 non-profit organization dedicated to helping with special projects and events in Valdese.

For more information about the April Craft Market, visit www.visitvaldese.com, or call 828-879-2129.



Morrissa Angi is Director of Community Affairs and Tourism

"Faces you know."

"Faces you trust."

We cannot change the outcome, but we can affect the journey.

~ Anne Richardson

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Women's Conference

By Carolyn Dotts
Mitchell County

Ladies, please add this date to your calendar! Saturday, March 2, 2019 Western Carolina Church will be hosting its annual Women's Conference, Fill My Cup, Lord. This event, now in its 3rd year, is open to women of all ages in the community. It is part of Western Carolina Church Women's Ministry, led by Sandra Pitman. The conference is at the church, located in The Whitson Building, 31 Cross Street, Suite 289 in Spruce Pine. It begins at 9:00 am and will conclude at 3:00pm.

The team is busy planning and praying. Each member of the team has committed to pray daily for the conference at 3:02pm each day, which is the date of the actual conference, 3/02/19! Members are praying that the heart of each woman attending will be open to be filled with the love of God and with the hope found in Him, no matter what circumstances they are currently walking through.

This year's theme is Wrapped in the Names of God. The conference begins with praise and worship music led by Morgan Hall, Janelle Hollifield and Amanda Buchanan, followed by several local speakers who will share own their journeys with you. Speakers include Angela Atkins, Debbie Benfield, Sharon Anderson and Carolyn Dotts. Door prizes are also presented throughout the day. A catered luncheon, prepared by Tommy and Wanda Freeman, is provided at no charge for all attendees. Each woman will take home mementos from the conference. Childcare with lunch is also available for children up to the age of 5 with reservation. Conference T-shirts will be available for ordering. For more information, to obtain tickets or make a reservation for childcare, please call the church office at 828-765-4633. Tickets are also available from members of the Women's Ministry.

Carolyn Dotts makes her home in Ledger and is a teacher of Exceptional Children at Greenlee Primary School. She is a widow with two sons and five grandchildren. She is a member of Western Carolina Church in Spruce Pine.



You Make a Difference Award

By Elaine Percival
Mitchell County

The Rotary Club Spruce Pine recently presented Chris Westveer with the club's "You Make a Difference" Award. He was nominated by Rotarian Reid Duncan in recognition of Westveer's longtime community service. He has been a member of both Parkway and Spruce Pine Fire Departments as a Fireman and EMT. He joined as a junior member at the age of 17. In addition, Westveer has devoted thousands of hours to youth programs especially high school football and for twenty years he has been a member of the Sugar Mountain Ski Patrol. Both Chris and his wife, Elizabeth, have devoted their lives to Service Above Self, the motto of Rotary. , right, was presented the award from Club President, Floyd Styles at a club meeting in December.



Elaine Percival lives in Little Switzerland and is a member of the Rotary in Spruce Pine.



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Enjoying Everyday Life

The Key to Fulfill Your Purpose in Life!

By Joyce Meyer

God loves you and He has a good plan for your life. You are a wonderful creation made by Him and you have a unique purpose to fulfill in this world.

Ephesians 2:10 (AMP) says that as Christians, "we are His workmanship [His own master work, a work of art], created in Christ Jesus...for good works, which God prepared [for us] beforehand [taking paths which He set], so that we would walk in them [living the good life which He prearranged and made ready for us]."

It's so exciting to know we are each created with a purpose and God has a good life that He has prepared in advance for us to live. But it's important to understand that we have an enemy, Satan, who wants to keep us from having the life Jesus died to give us.

Yes, Satan has a plan for us, too, and his plan is destruction and death. John 10:10 (ESV) says the enemy "comes only to steal and kill and destroy."

The good news is we have everything we need through Christ to overcome the enemy. We just have to know who we are in Christ, believe that we have His authority, and know how to release the power God has given us.

The Measure of Your Faith

Faith in God is required for us to release the power and authority we have in Christ. Romans 12:3 (ESV) says each person has a "measure of faith that God has assigned." This means God has given you enough faith to do His will, whatever it may be and no matter what the enemy throws at you to stop you.

There are many challenges and difficult situations we have to face in life. You may have a child with special needs to care for, or maybe you're in a difficult marriage. You could be facing a devastating illness or have serious financial problems. Whatever your situation is, God has given you everything you need, through Christ, to keep you moving forward in His plan for your life.

We need to always remember that God is greater than our problems—nothing is too hard for Him and nothing catches Him by surprise. When we're going through hard times and the enemy is attacking us, we don't need to ask, "What can I do?" The question is, "What can God do?" The Word says all things are possible with God, and greater is He who lives in me than he who is in the world. (See Matthew 19:26 and 1 John 4:4.)

I want you to really get this in your heart today: In Christ, you have enough faith and the strength you need to do whatever you need to do in life! Get rid of "I can't" thinking and focus on the truth of God's Word, which says, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!" (See Philippians 4:13.)

The Simple Solution to Overcome Enemy Attack

Prayer is a simple, powerful way to interrupt Satan's plan because we release our faith through prayer. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 (ESV) says, "Pray without ceasing." This basically means prayer can be as natural as breathing, and our first response in every situation. It's so amazing that we can talk to God all the time.

Now the enemy doesn't want us to pray, so he will do everything he can to discourage us. He wants us to think prayer is hard, that we need to use eloquent speech and sound poetic, that we need to be careful what we ask God for so we don't overload Him with too many requests, or that we have to be in a certain place with a certain posture (on our knees, head bowed, eyes closed) for God to hear us. But it's actually simple to pray effectively.

James 5:16 (ESV) says, "...The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working." God wants you to come to Him honestly, with a sincere heart, and just talk to Him as a friend. Be yourself and don't approach conversation with God as a religious activity. Humble yourself before Him and open your heart to Him. He loves you and wants you to walk in His will for your life victoriously.

As a believer in Jesus Christ, you are God's child and He is always with you. He is Almighty God, and if God is on your side, who can be against you?

In Christ, you have what you need today to live in victory. Put your faith in God constantly. Pray, take God-inspired action, and fulfill your true purpose in life!

For more on this topic, order Joyce's three-CD series Unleashing the Power of Faith. You can also contact us to receive our free magazine, Enjoying Everyday Life, by calling (800) 727-9673 or visiting www.joycemeyer.org.

Please note: The views and opinions expressed throughout this publication and/or website are those of the respective authors and do not necessarily reflect those of Joyce Meyer Ministries.

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



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Burke County

Catawba River Baptist Association - The churches of CRBA are concerned with the vast drug abuse present in Burke county and we want to help by beginning a Celebrate Recovery ministry. If God has put this type of burden on your heart and you are willing to help us begin and lead this ministry, please give us a call at 828-437-0137. You may also contact Robby at rsmith@crbanc.org. Your help and prayers are greatly appreciated

Our Association is partnering with Joni & Friends ministry in an effort to provide wheelchairs for those in need around the world. If you have a wheelchair you are not using (condition does not matter) please consider bringing it to our CRBA office in Morganton. We will be collecting wheelchairs over the next few months and then will repair them and give them to a person in need. This new ministry will bless families in locations around the world. To God Be the Glory!

We have an exciting mission opportunity for folks in our Association. There are many people in the eastern part of our state who are still recovering from recent hurricane devastation and we want to take a team of men and women March 18-22, 2019 to do clean-up and some construction in Lumberton, NC. This trip will not cost you anything as all supplies, lodging, and food will be provided free of charge through our partnership with Baptist on Mission. If interested, please call our CRBA office at 828-437-0137 for more information and to register.

In partnership with the Baptist Foundation of North Carolina, we are offering assistance for ministers and their spouses for the purpose of preparing Wills and Estate Planning. In addition, the first 10 couples scheduling their free one-hour appointment will be awarded \$100 to help with any legal fees. To Schedule your 1-hour appointment February 18th or 19th please call our CRBA office at 828-437-0137.

Because of the financial gifts of individuals and CRBA churches, the above pastors were blessed with "pedals for pastors" to help them do ministry in India more effectively. Thank you CRBA for your generosity and willingness to do missions locally, nationally and around the world. We will continue to collect money for "Pedals for Pastors" in the months ahead. Remember, a gift of \$80 will provide a bicycle for a pastor in India.

Green Street Baptist Church, High Point, NC -Disciple-Making Conference The conference will address some "hot-button" issues in our culture, such as gender and sexual identity, substance abuse, technology and other topics through 40 minute breakout sessions. Join us on Tuesday, February 26th from 9am to 4pm. A \$10 registration fee covers program materials and lunch. Register at <https://bit.ly/2RuXFke>.

Mount Home will be hosting "The Encounter Tour" on February 14th, 2019. The program will begin at 7pm. Tickets are available online at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/the-encounter-tour-morganton-nc-tickets-49989587201> or through Mount Home Baptist Church.

Great Hope Seventh Day Adventist Church - Reversing (& preventing) Diabetes Classes will again be offered for 6 Mondays, January 7 through February 11, 6:00 pm. Scientific evidence will be shared in a group setting, along with healthy and tasty food samples. These classes are worth much but are offered free at the Great Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church at 2907 US Hwy 70 in Drexel (across from the Foothills Thrift Store). Class size is limited so please pre-register by calling Sharryn at 828-334-0084.

Morganton Seventh-day Adventist-Burke County - The Giving Heart Thrift Shop - Offers gently used and brand new clothes of all sizes and for all ages! As well as, furniture and small home goods! Winter Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. Location: 402 East Main Street in Glen Alpine, N.C. 28628 Like The Giving Heart Thrift Shop on Facebook @thegivingheartthriftshop The Giving Heart Thrift Shop is a ministry of the Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Town of Valdese - The "Italian Christian School for Pastors and Missionaries SELIM" in Torre Pellice (Waldensian Valleys, Italy) organizes a second six-week intensive language course for beginners (see attachment for more information): from Monday 18 February 2019 to Friday 29 March 2019.

If you are in contact with or you know Missions engaged in Italy or Pastors or Missionaries preparing to come to Italy, we ask you the courtesy to turn them this email with its illustrative attachment: our school SELIM has sprung up just to help these brothers to prepare linguistically themselves in the best possible way for their mission in our country (see also our internet-page: <https://romussi.wixsite.com/sorgenteim>). For this reason, the Missionaries and Pastors engaged in Italy and their accompanying families benefit from a significant discount of 33% on the price of the course! (And private missionaries from poor countries in the world can apply for scholarships!)

But our courses are also open to all those who have pleasure or need to learn Italian well and desist to do it among believers in an environment of faith. If you know in your community or among your acquaintances persons who like, as a beginner, a six-week intensive language course in Italy, in a Christian environment and in a very interesting place of the history of faith (Torre Pellice, official "City of the Reformation" and capital of historic Waldensian Valleys, a very friendly small town in the quiet foothills of the Alps, with low rental prices for furnished apartments), we are very grateful if you forward this offer. In all cases we would be very grateful if you would make this offer known in your community. We thank you for your help!

McDowell County

CarePartners: Want to make a difference, touch lives, and impact your community? If so, several Volunteer opportunities are available in the following positions! Administrative Office Volunteer, Patient/Family Support Volunteer, Bereavement Support Volunteer, We Honor Veterans Volunteer, Special Events Volunteer, and a newly added position, Pastoral Care Volunteer! For more information about these positions, please contact CarePartners Hospice and Palliative Care McDowell Volunteer Services Department at 828-652-1318 ext.303. You can make an everlasting impact with just a few hours of your time a week! Call today to learn more!

Cross United Methodist Church - Saturday, February 9th, 2019, 11 A.M. - 2 P.M. at Cross United Methodist Church 85 W. Cross St. just past Blue Ridge Terrace Apts. in Marion Proceeds will benefit the ministry of Cross Sharing Food Pantry

Lots of delicious sweets including cakes, cookies, candy and more! Jewelry and other items will also be for sale. Bring a non-perishable food item for pantry & get a cookie! For more information call 803-8790 or 442-8098

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

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

Asheville Street Baptist Church is in need of a pianist. Please call Lynn Burnette at 828-439-2421 for more information.

First Baptist Morganton currently has 55 adult choir robes that they would like to make available to another church. If your church is interested please contact David Thayer @ 828-437-2544 ext. 16.

First Baptist of Marion - Malachi Bible Study Led by Lisa Harper Thursdays, February 7- April 4 5:30 p.m. - Fellowship Hall Call the church office 652-6030 to sign up. Deadline is Thursday, January 31. There is no workbook to purchase for this study.

Belize Mission Trip February 5-12, 2019 FBC's relationship with the Baptists of Belize will continue this winter by sending a mission team to work in the western region of the country. Our construction crew will continue work on the Santa Elena Baptist Primary School, helping complete a second story addition. The medical team will provide free medical clinics to underserved communities near the Guatemalan Border, where there is a large immigrant population. Our team will stay in Santa Elena at the Aguada Hotel. The week will end with two nights at San Pedro on the coast. Funds to cover our ministry costs are already raised. However, each team member provides their own travel costs, which is estimated at \$1,100 per person, covering airfare, ground transportation, lodging, international travel insurance, T-shirt, and most meals. For more detailed information, promotional flyers are available near the Chapel or see Scott Hagaman. A minimum of 10 persons are needed to launch this mission trip with a maximum number of 25. A valid passport is required, which should not expire within 6 months of travel. Registration Form and \$100

The Children's Committee is creating a library for the children and families with the church and daycare. We are accepting donations of new and gently used books for children of all ages and reading levels, as well as resources for parents. The donations will supplement the selection of books currently on hand. Please leave donations in the main office. Thank you!!!

Grace Community Church - Vacation Bible School June 24-28, 2019 More information to come SOON! Night to Shine - Buddies Needed!

On February 8th we will be hosting Night to Shine, a prom for people with special needs. This is our 3rd year to host. It is such an amazing night! There are 2 ways you can be part of this night.

First, we need buddies, people to hang out and enjoy the night with one participant. We currently have around 160 attendees signed up, but only 90 buddies. If you would like to register as a buddy, please click here.

Second, you can sponsor one attendee for only \$25. This will help with the cost of their food and gift bag. Please click here to become a sponsor.

Mitchell County

Bear Creek Baptist Church - Thursday, February 14, 11:30 a.m. - Senior Adult Valentine Lunch in Fellowship Hall Feb 24 at 6 pm The Hayes Family of Boone, NC March 31 at 6 pm Landmark Quartet with Ronnie Webb Women's Prayer Breakfast FEB 8th, 8:00am at DT's. Celebrate Recovery

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

385-0061

There will be a meeting every Thursday night with someone there to talk to men, women, and their families

Mitchell County Baptist Association Happy New Year. Baptist Mission Rally--Baptist Men Region 9, Tuesday, February 19, 2019 Newbridge Baptist Church at 199 Elkwood Ave. Asheville, NC—Meal at 5:45 and Program at 6:50
Associational Mid-Year meeting on February 25, 2019 at 7:00pm—First Baptist Church in Spruce Pine, NC
Associational Bible Drills will be Saturday, March 16 at Bear Creek Baptist Church

Altapass Baptist church invites you to their Annual February Bible Conference February 17-20th.
Sunday Services 10:30 to 7:00pm, Mon-Wed Morning 10:00am Evening 7:00pm
Guest speakers and Special Music. For more info contact Rev. Marcus Benfield at 828-850-3346.

Mitchell County Chamber - YaYa Village We are announcing the Opening of YaYa Village Commercial Share Kitchen!
We've realized there's a gap that needs to be filled between the production of local food and their consumption. That's why we started YaYa Village Commercial Shared Use Kitchen so that we could provide a certified area at a reasonable cost for locals trying to sell their products. This way we strive to help community entrepreneurs with their part-time business.

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

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

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

Sign up for 2019 After Hours!

Business After Hours are held to provide an opportunity for Chamber members to network while allowing the Member to sponsor a chance to address and/or showcase their facilities. Business After Hours are held monthly to bi-monthly, and generally on a Tuesday or Thursday (unless other arrangements are made). The Member sponsor and the Chamber representative will coordinate the event. After Hours begins at 4:30 p.m. and ends at 6:00 p.m. (unless other arrangements are made). Send your questions and reserve your month by emailing Kelly at kjones@mitchellcountychamber.org.

February: NC Mineral Museum

March: Toe River Arts Spruce Pine Gallery & The Mitchell House

April: The Mitchell News Journal

May: Loafer's Glory Rafting and Tubing, Bakersville, NC

June: The Brian Center

July: KB's

August: Mitchell County Animal Rescue

September: The Switzerland Inn

October-November: OPEN

We do not have After Hours in December.

Summer 2019 Workshops at Penland!

Summer 2019 workshop descriptions are here!

A few fun facts:

- * We're offering 103 workshops this summer.
- * Scholarships are available for all 103 workshops!
- * Registration opens January 15.
- * Scholarship applications open January 1 and are due by February 18.

Mitchell County Historical Society We are happy announce that Mitchell County Historical Society will be holding SCAN DAYS on Saturday, February 9 at our office in the Historic Courthouse in Bakersville, and Saturday, February 23 at the Spruce Pine Main Street Visitor Center.

These sessions will be from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Our genealogists will be there to help you scan your old photos of family, letters, and/or documents to be stored electronically to a computer. You can then send these old treasures to friends and family from your home computer. Also, you will be adding to MCHS's visual archive of historical people, families, important letters, etc. You can also get answers to your genealogy questions.

You can, of course, keep your materials to take home with you.

If you have any questions, please give us a call at 688-4371 (Weds.-Fri., 10 to 4)

Toe River Arts June Studio Tour Applications- Open to all current Toe River Arts member artists/craftpersons. A self-guided art/craft studio tour and open house. Toe River Arts provides Tour Guides, road signs, exhibition of participants' work, and other promotion.

Deadline: Wednesday, March 6th .

Giftshop Jury Applications

Open to current Toe River Arts members living in Avery/Mitchell/Yancey counties. Submit up to 3 pieces for review for one or both galleries. Work must be original, handmade, professional, ready for display, and sellable in the Toe River Arts venue.

Deadline: Friday, March 16th

Interested in volunteering? Contact us at info@toeriverarts.org

Run For Holland - I have exciting news that I couldn't wait to share! After 5 years of being organized Run For Holland has finally received it's 501(c)(3) status. This means that we are recognized by the IRS as tax exempt and that we can give donors tax deductions when they make charitable gifts. The ability to apply for grants and other public or private allocations available only to IRS-recognized, 501(c)(3) organizations.

With that being said, I want to ask you all to consider donating to Run For Holland as 2018 comes to a close. To date, we have been able to give over \$53,000 in grants to the local disabled community and hope that being "official" will allow us to do even more in the years to come. Run For Holland started with a small vision to help the local disabled community through awareness, whatever that meant. Because of people like you it has grown into a Non-Profit organization that is reaching thousands of people per year through awareness, education, and financial support.

Can you help us grow our budget for 2019?

PS registration is open so feel free to sign up for the 2019 race on Saturday May 18th, 2019.

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.

Comprehensive Transportation Plan - Mitchell County, the towns of Bakersville and Spruce Pine, the High Country Rural Planning Organization (HCRPO), and the North Carolina Department of Transportation - Transportation Planning Division (NCDOT TPD) are working together to develop a Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) that will identify transportation needs and long-term solutions for the next 25 to 30 years. The study includes alternative modes of transportation (bicycle, pedestrian, and public transportation). The public is encouraged to provide feedback for the Mitchell County CTP by taking an online survey at the link below. The deadline to take the survey is November 9th.

Hard copies of the survey are available at

-Mitchell County Administration building

-Bakersville Medical Clinic

-Bakersville Medical Clinic/Spruce Pine

-Mitchell County Chamber of Commerce

-Mitchell County Transportation Authority

-Museum of NC Minerals

You may return the survey to Bakersville Medical Clinic (BKVL or SP Office) or Mitchell County Administration Office.

Yancey County

Higgins Memorial Sunday, February 3, the youth are sponsoring the "Super Bowl of Caring". We will be watching the game, which kicks off at 6:30, and invite you to join us. (EVERYONE IS INVITED) Tacos and all the fixin's will be provided by the Family Life Committee. Would you consider bringing in a tray/pan of your favorite football hors d'oeuvres or finger food? If so, please see David Bush Sunday morning at the Welcome Wagon or call the church office.

We also ask you to bring canned goods for donation to Reconciliation House next Sunday, January 27th, or February 3rd. See the drop-off box at the kitchen window.

ABIDE Invitation: Ladies! Please save the date of Friday, February 22, 2019 (date changed) from 6:00 to 8:00 pm for the next ABIDE Women's Ministry Big Event! Come and find out about your "Perfect Love" in Jesus, our Lord and Savior! Dinner will be provided so come and join the worship, food, fellowship, door prizes and fun! Please invite your friend or neighbor as all are welcomed! In order for us to have an accurate meal count, please RSVP on or before February 18, 2019. Let us know the total number attending by calling the church office at 828-682-2835 or by emailing Kathy at elginmom2013@gmail.com

ASAP - Join ASAP on February 23 for our 16th annual conference hosted at the AB Tech Conference Center in Asheville, NC. This one-day business and marketing conference provides beginning and established farmers tools to grow their farm businesses. The conference includes workshops led by experienced farmers and agricultural professionals, a Grower-Buyer Meeting, one-to-one consulting, exhibitor hall, a new farmers market manager track, and much more. Learn more about the 2019 Business of Farming Conference.

Want to promote your business to local farmers? Consider sponsoring or exhibiting at the conference! It is a unique opportunity to reach farmers who are seeking resources to grow their farm businesses. Contact Robin Lenner for more information.

Street Ministry in Burnsville.--Hello, I'm Roc Robinson a local Christian Rapper/ Street Minister out of Burnsville NC. I have had my ministry going since 2015 and now working on my 3rd album. My ministry host events to raise money for different local nonprofits and to share testimony. I also go around to these different churches and share testimony/perform for free or a love offering. I have done shows at Higgins, Mount Pleasant, Griffith Chapel, and 3 at the Burnsville town center. My music is produced by Ryan Anglin at The Bridge Church there in Spruce Pine. I am looking to expand my testimony of hope thru Christ to our neighboring counties then states. I'm letting. If you would like to talk more about my ministry and aim in our community you can contact me on my cell or email.

continued on page 35

Intentional Compassion

By Dan Qurollo
Burke County

Without a doubt, it is disheartening to observe the spiritual downward trend in America. The news is filled with tragic stories that reflect a society that has turned its back on God. Having rejected the authority of God and His Word, mankind has placed themselves in authority. It can be said of America that "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25).

Tragically, many Christians sit idly by watching society continue its rebellious path. Some seem unmoved by it; others claim to pray for opportunities. To those seeking an opportunity, I would ask what more of an opportunity do you need? Would you know an opportunity if it presented itself? Tragically, I find this is often an excuse for idleness.

As believers, we must determine to display intentional compassion. We cannot continue to sit idly by doing nothing; rather, we must determine that we are going to be intentional in our display of compassion. In doing so, we will readily take advantage of the many opportunities to display kindness to those whom God directs into our lives. Learning how to become intentional in our compassion is vital for the Christian life.

Intentional compassion begins first in becoming intentional in our love for God. Every devout Jew recited the Shema twice daily. Part of that included Deuteronomy 6:4-9, where we read of the importance of a right view of God that demonstrates itself in a genuine passion for God. The Bible states in Deuteronomy 6:4-5, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: 5 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." The fact that only one God exists demands that He be served exclusively and loved wholeheartedly. Until a person regards God exclusively, he cannot serve and love Him wholeheartedly. Loving God with this passion is the first step in becoming intentional in our compassion.

Such love for God will inevitably manifest itself towards love for fellow man. John wrote in 1 John 4:7, "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." We have an obligation to love one another. That does not mean that we eliminate the boundaries of separation that truth inevitably forms. But we must still have the proper attitude and demeanor towards one another, even those with whom we might disagree. The implications of the words "one another" suggest that our love for one another contains no exceptions, allows for no bitterness, and is demonstrated with no hypocrisy. Such love does not happen by accident; it requires that we be intentional. Such intentional compassion invests itself in the lives of others as the parable of the Good Samaritan so aptly teaches in Luke 10. The religious leaders observed a need, yet were unmoved by it. To them, this man's problems were too much of an inconvenience. But a despised Samaritan did what was necessary, sacrificing his own time, energy, comfort, and resources to display compassion.

While intentional compassion requires great investment, the rewards are infinitely greater. Those who love as the Bible teaches will discover they have great reward in Heaven, a place where "neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal" (Matthew 6:20). Intentional compassion is what ministry is all about. It begins with a passion for God that is evidenced in obedience and service to Him. Such love inevitably manifests itself to others, realizing the time and energy it will demand. But such service is not too great for the one who loves God wholeheartedly.

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



My Heart, His Dwelling Place

By Jerry Lewis
McDowell County

*For the LORD has chosen Zion;
he has desired it for his dwelling place:
"This is my resting place forever;
here I will dwell, for I have desired it.
I will abundantly bless her provisions;
I will satisfy her poor with bread.
Her priests I will clothe with salvation,
and her saints will shout for joy.
There I will make a horn to sprout for David;
I have prepared a lamp for my anointed.
His enemies I will clothe with shame,
but on him his crown will shine." (Psalm 132:13-18, ESV)*



Psalm 132 is clearly about David's desire to move the tabernacle to Jerusalem. When David became king, the tabernacle (and by extension the Ark of the Covenant) was in Shiloh. It took two years for David to make Jerusalem the capital of Israel and move the ark there.

However, the Psalmist is also clear that God had chosen Jerusalem (Zion) before David brought the ark there. David was simply doing what God had already ordained. So how is this Psalm applied to you and me today?

This morning, in my time with the Lord, this is what I did. I do not think I'm off base with this. The reality is, if you belong to Jesus, it is because God chose you. He called you and redeemed you. This is not a treatise on predestination and election. Books have been written to tackle the profundity of the passages on both election and the free will of men and women. I believe both. But read this passage like this:

*For the LORD has chosen me;
he has desired me for his dwelling place:
Then God speaks...
"You are my resting place forever;
here I will dwell, for I have desired it.
I will abundantly bless you;
I will satisfy you with bread.
You I will clothe with salvation,
and you will shout for joy.
There I will make a horn to sprout for you;
I have prepared a lamp for you.
Your enemies I will clothe with shame,
but on you my crown will shine."*

In the New Testament, our hearts become Christ's home. He no longer dwells in the temple, but we become the temple. What if we truly believed this! Lived out of it! Appropriated this into our lives!

Is your heart His resting place? Has it occurred to you that, if you are born again, He has desired to dwell in you? He longs to satisfy you. He longs to clothe your naked sinfulness with his salvation. Your enemies (the world, Satan and your sinful nature) he will clothe with shame.

We are, of all people, most blessed. Dwell on this today.

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



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Does New Gillette Ad Insult Men?

By Dr. Jim Denison

Thirty years ago, Gillette made famous the tagline, "The Best A Man Can Get." The company launched the slogan at Super Bowl XXIII in January 1989, kicking off an \$80 million campaign in nineteen North American and European nations. The slogan was translated into fourteen languages.

Procter & Gamble acquired Gillette in 2005 and continued to use its iconic tagline. This week, the company released a new ad calling on men to reject bullying and sexism. "The Best a Man Can Be" is the theme.

Reaction has been overwhelmingly negative. The ad currently has more than twice as many dislikes as likes. Critics say it insults men and is filled with stereotypes. And, as Forbes notes, consumers are skeptical of profit-motivated companies telling them how to behave.

Is "traditional masculine ideology" the problem?

The Gillette ad is just the latest skirmish in a growing battle over masculinity in America. The facts are alarming:

- Men commit 90 percent of homicides in the US and represent 77 percent of homicide victims.
- More than 73 percent of those arrested in the US are male. Men outnumber women in prison by more than ten to one.
- They are 3.5 times more likely than women to die by suicide. Male suicides have risen from about 20,000 a year in 1981 to 35,000 in 2016.
- Life expectancy for men is 4.9 years shorter than for women.
- Men are more likely than women to use illicit drugs.

In response, the American Psychological Association recently released Men. "The APA's publication is founded on the postmodern belief that "masculinities are constructed based on social, cultural, and contextual norms."

According to the APA, "It is critical to acknowledge that gender is a non-binary construct." In other words, we are not simply men or women—gender is "fluid" and determined by a host of factors, only one of which is a person's biological sex at birth. As a result, the APA wants to help men "create their own concepts of what it means to be male."

The APA identifies the problem as "traditional masculinity ideology," which it characterizes as "anti-femininity, achievement, eschewal of the appearance of weakness, and adventure, risk, and violence."

The Colson Center's John Stonestreet responds: "That's not how I define traditional masculinity. Anti-femininity? Violence? That sounds like being a jerk." He's right.

"It is not good that the man should be alone"

David French notes in National Review that "grown men are the solution, not the problem." He calls on men to shape their inherent aggression, sense of adventure, and default physical strength for virtuous ends.

In his view, we need more fathers to raise sons with discipline, respect, and encouragement. I encourage you to read his thoughtful analysis in its entirety. While I agree with French, I'd like to point to a biblical balance vital to the well-being of all people.

On one hand, "the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it" (Genesis 2:15). Work and keep translate Hebrew words meaning to improve and guard. Men were created to produce and protect, to work and provide.

On the other hand, men were not intended to be self-sufficient. Immediately after creating the first man, God created the first woman, explaining: "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him" (v. 18). To fulfill their life purpose, men need women, other men, and especially their Father.

"One thing a clenched fist cannot do"

Self-reliance is a destructive illusion. "No man is an island" is not just a poem—it's a fact.

As I have often noted, self-sufficiency is spiritual suicide. It cuts us off from the only true source of abundant life (John 10:10).

Frederick Buechner: "To do for yourself the best that you have it in you to do—to grit your teeth and clench your fists in order to survive the world at its harshest and worst—is, by that very act, to be unable to let something be done for you and in you that is more wonderful still. The trouble with steeling yourself against the harshness of reality is that the same steel that secures your life against being destroyed secures your life also against being opened up and transformed by the holy power that life comes from."

Buechner adds that "the one thing a clenched fist cannot do is accept, even from [God] himself, a helping hand."

How to become "the best a man can be"

Jesus Christ was the perfect male.

He was strong enough to drive money changers from the temple (Matthew 21:12) but gentle enough to embrace children (Matthew 19:13-15). He was courageous enough to confront the corrupt leaders of his nation (Matthew 23) but compassionate enough to weep for them (Luke 19:41).

Now he is praying for us (Romans 8:34) as his Spirit works to transform us into his character (v. 29). He is ready to help every man become "the best a man can be." And every woman to become the best she can be as well.

Nick Foles is proof. The Philadelphia Eagles quarterback is anyone's defini-



tion of a "true man." He has set NFL passing records, been named Offensive Most Valuable Player in the Pro Bowl, and won last year's Super Bowl, where he was the game's Most Valuable Player.

He wore his WWJD bracelet in the championship game. More than 100 million people saw his faith on display. I noticed the bracelet on his wrist again during last Sunday's playoff game with the Saints. Foles plans to become a student pastor when he retires from football one day.

Let's ask "What would Jesus do?" all through this day. Then let's ask him to help us do it. We will be our best and the people we serve will be blessed, to the glory of God.



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

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YOUR GOVERNMENT PAGES

NC Senate District 46



Sen. Warren Daniel
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919-715-7823

Rural North Carolinians already face a number of challenges in their day-to-day lives including access to basic needs like medical care and broadband. But now they face a new challenge as well: Democrats are waging a war on small towns, trying to take away the value of their vote through Judicial Gerrymandering.

In states across the nation, Democrats face the same problem that they do here in North Carolina: too many of their voters are concentrated in the urban centers of the state, resulting in lopsided victories in a few districts and modest defeats in the rest.

Rather than convincing more voters in rural areas to vote for them, Democrats are pushing a flawed "proportional representation" argument in lawsuits that seek to have liberal judges strip rural voters of their political influence and change 200+ years of geographic diversity in government. Democrats would love nothing more than to have a system that gives cities outsized influence where they can just ignore rural voters, but our government doesn't work that way. In fact, our system is specifically designed to protect against that scenario. The votes of citizens in rural areas count just as much as those of citizens in cities. In November, North Carolina Democrats jumped on this bandwagon, filing a lawsuit asking the Democratic-controlled North Carolina state courts to draw new legislative maps to favor Democrats and reduce the influence of rural voters. They argue that a 50/50 Republican-Democrat statewide vote should result in a 50/50 party split in the legislature.

Democrats conveniently turn a blind eye in instances where this argument would benefit Republicans. Based on their own logic, Democrats should be up in arms about the fact that Wake and Mecklenburg County Republicans have no representation in the N.C. State House despite winning about a third of the vote in each county during last year's elections. Yet they remain silent.

The fact of the matter is, while Democrats may claim their goals with this lawsuit are just "fair maps" and ending "partisan gerrymandering," their real goal couldn't be any clearer: get liberal judges to judicially gerrymander the maps to elect more Democrats and reduce the political power of rural North Carolinians.

According to a report released Thursday by the nonpartisan Fiscal Research Division, NC collected \$188 million more in tax revenue than projected over the first two quarters of the fiscal year. Corporate tax collections exceeded expectation by \$37.1 million over the 6-month target. In fact, corporate income tax collections are up 16.5% over last year. The state has reported six consecutive revenue surpluses, including a \$580 million surplus in May 2017, a \$456 million surplus in May 2018, and a \$400 million surplus in August 2018. This has been a trend that coincided with the NCGA historic tax reforms. The report also predicted a forecast for stronger wage growth in 2019 and suggests that salary gains are ahead of projections. "Current data on income and overall economic activity (i.e. Gross State Product) indicate that the State's economy is growing at a steady, solid pace."

The 2019 Session of the NC General Assembly is underway, and I am privileged to continue serving in the NC Senate on behalf of the people of Avery, Burke, and Caldwell counties. We enjoyed meeting with the family of Tim and Naomi Smith, who traveled to Raleigh for the Senate's Opening Day Ceremony.

Here are some excerpts from Senate Pro Tem Phil Berger's remarks:

"Since 2011, we have adhered to bedrock conservative economic policies: low taxes, responsible spending, and reasonable regulations that accomplish their purpose without unnecessary red tape.

"We returned the people's money to them through historic and balanced tax cuts. Today, 99% percent of state taxpayers pay less or nothing at all compared to before 2011. And today, the private sector is creating jobs by the thousands in our state, in part because of lower taxes and a more reasonable regulatory burden.

"And people outside of North Carolina have noticed. In almost every major category, North Carolina ranks at or near the top. Forbes has ranked us the best place for business two years in a row. We catapulted in the Tax Foundation's business climate rankings from 44th to 12th. Unemployment is at 3.6%, below the national average. More people work in North Carolina today than ever before in our history. Our population growth last year was the fifth-highest in the nation.

"We've outpaced the region and the country in job creation since 2011. Poverty's down. Income growth is up. By almost every metric, North Carolina is booming, and now is not the time to change our conservative economic policy approach."

As always, if I may be of assistance to you, please contact my Raleigh office via phone or email. It is a pleasure to serve you in the state Senate.

NC Senate District 47



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

Opening day of the new session for the 2019-2020 biennium of the North Carolina General Assembly convened on January 9th in Raleigh. I was honored to be sworn in for my fifth term as Senator of the 47th District and thankful for the opportunity to continue serving my constituents in Mitchell, Madison, McDowell, Polk, Rutherford, and Yancey counties for another term. In addition to being sworn in for a fifth term in the Senate, I was also sworn in for my first term as Deputy President Pro Tempore. Both oaths of office was administered by North Carolina Supreme Court Chief Justice Mark Martin.

I am proud of the legislative accomplishments of the North Carolina Senate over the past eight years and look forward to the work ahead in this biennium. Following are my top legislative priorities:

- Control spending to no more than inflation plus population growth
- Reduce and reform our franchise tax
- Increase rural access to health care, including expanding the scope of practice for nurses and eliminating CON (Certificate of Need)
- Expand work requirements in Medicaid and welfare reform

For this legislative session, I have been appointed co-chair of the Finance Committee and the Redistricting and Elections Committee. I was also appointed to the following standing committees: Appropriations on Health and Human Services, Health Care, Pensions and Retirement and Aging, and Rules and Operations of the Senate.

I look forward to continued work on keeping our state a great place to live, work, and raise a family. As always, please share your thoughts with me on these or other issues related to state government by emailing me at ralph.hise@ncleg.net or calling me at 919-733-3460.



GOD BLESS AMERICA

YOUR GOVERNMENT PAGES

NC House District 86



Rep. Hugh Blackwell
919-733-5805

Hugh.Blackwell@ncleg.net

The newly elected General Assembly convened on January 9th. The first order of business was the reelection of officers: Senator Phil Berger of Rockingham County as the President Pro Tem and leader of the state senate and Representative Tim Moore of Cleveland County to serve as Speaker of the state house. I look forward to continuing my work for the citizens of Burke County. Of course, there are a variety of concerns that we will likely address over the next several months. However, as this session begins, there are two issues that I will single out at this stage on which I plan to work:

I was pleased with the General Assembly's progress in addressing school safety during the last session, including the millions of dollars in grants established to assist local school systems in protecting our state's children. Protecting our children includes ensuring that our state is able to recruit and retain school psychologists to care for increasing mental health needs within the classroom. Last session, the legislature took some important steps in this area. However, I will continue to work this session to improve our process of recruiting and retaining school psychologists to keep our students safe.

In 2015, I was proud to be the lead sponsor of our state's Right-to-Try law that gives terminally-ill patients access to therapies not yet approved by the FDA and a chance at life should the therapy work for them. Last year, the federal government passed a similar Right-to-Try law. Now, this session, I will work to enhance terminally ill patients' access under the law by examining ways to allow even earlier access to life-saving drugs. Specifically, I am studying Texas's expansion of their Right-to-Try law, which expanded access for not only terminally-ill patients but also the severely, chronically ill.

US House of Representatives NC District 11

Washington, D.C. - Congressman Mark Meadows (NC-11), Chairman of the House Freedom Caucus, and a member of the House Oversight and Government Reform and Transportation and Infrastructure Committees, and Congressman Joaquin Castro (TX-20), Chairman of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, and a member of the House Foreign Affairs, House Intelligence, and House Education and Labor Committees, have reintroduced the Global Electoral Exchange Act (H.R. 753). This bipartisan measure would authorize the Secretary of State to administer exchange programs for electoral authorities with overseas partners, promote best election security practices, and strengthen democratic institutions abroad.

"Fair, trustworthy, and accountable elections are critical to defending democracy among our international partners—and they are fundamental to who we are as a nation," said Rep. Meadows. "America is equipped with the needed expertise to bolster good governance and freedom in the world's democracies, making the world safer for Americans and bolstering our national security. Under this bipartisan bill, American election administrators and experts will be better able to share sound election administration practices abroad, helping to prevent the rampant violence that all too often follows poorly-run, unfree elections. Anything we as a nation can do to promote healthy and secure election practices in other countries is a welcome development, and I want to thank Rep. Castro of Texas for his work on this critical initiative."

"We've seen in all pockets of the world how insecure electoral mechanisms can lead to deadly violence and tainted election results. That's why the United States should assist democracies abroad in designing and preserving strong electoral institutions. This supports their quest for an inclusive society based on the principles of democracy," said Chairman Castro. "The Global Electoral Exchange Act seeks to help the United States share our best election security practices abroad, which in turn will strengthen democracy worldwide and advance bipartisan U.S. national security interests abroad. Free and fair elections indicate democracy health, and I'm glad to lead this legislative effort that will help improve global security and promote democratic institutions."

Background: This legislation seeks to establish a Global Electoral Exchange Program that would promote international exchanges of best election practices on cybersecurity, transmitting results, data transparency, election dispute resolution, eliminating any discriminatory practices, and making voter education information and polling places easily accessible. The Global Electoral Exchange Act would require the U.S. Department of State to brief the House and Senate on status of activities as well as provide a summary of all exchanges.



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

Billy Graham's Answers on Abortion

By Billy Graham

*Know that the Lord, he is God!
It is he who made us, and we are his;
we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.
Psalm 100:3 (ESV)*

With recent abortion laws changing in our country, it's important to note what the Bible says about the issue. Throughout God's Word, it's clear that human life is precious to Him. More than ever, we need biblical answers to questions regarding abortion and the sanctity of life. Billy Graham once said, "I know it's common today to think of abortion as a simple answer to an inconvenient problem—but it is actually a far more serious issue. Your child isn't simply a mass of tissue; he or she is a human being in God's eyes." Here are a few My Answers from the evangelist.



Q: Why is abortion such a big issue for Christians?

A: The spiritual condition of man is at the root of the abortion issue. Until man's spiritual condition is changed by the power of Jesus Christ, we will not find a full solution to this problem. It is sin that produces the problem of most unwanted pregnancies, as well as all the other disorders which plague the human race. It is also sin that produces the misbelief that women have a "right" to take the lives of unborn babies. The apostle Paul writes, "The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like" (Galatians 5:19-21a).

Life is sacred, and we must seek to protect all human life: the unborn, the child, the adult, and the aged. Several Bible passages tell of the sacredness of life and speak to the subject of abortion.

Since the Supreme Court removed restrictions on abortion in 1973, abortions have risen to an alarming level. Mr. Graham strongly opposes "abortion on demand" and was instrumental in the founding of the ministry of Care Net, one of largest networks of pregnancy centers in North America. Care Net seeks to provide the most accessible and effective abortion alternatives possible. For a discussion on the alternatives to an unwanted pregnancy, you may visit Care Net's

website, where there are opportunities to call, email or live chat with someone confidentially.

Some of abortion's unseen consequences are deep regret and guilt over what happened. If you've had an abortion and are experiencing this, you're not alone. What you did was wrong in God's eyes—but He has not rejected you or abandoned you.

Know more about God's love for you today.

Q: I'm single, pregnant, and don't know what to do.

A: Two wrongs don't make a right (as the old saying goes), and I pray you won't compound your problems by making another wrong decision about your future. Yes, it was wrong for you to get pregnant—but it also would be wrong for you to end the life of the little child who is growing inside you. I know it's common today to think of abortion as a simple answer to an inconvenient problem—but it is actually a far more serious issue. Your child isn't simply a mass of tissue; he or she is a human being in God's eyes. God told Jeremiah, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart" (Jeremiah 1:5).

What should you do? First, you need wise counsel from someone older than you—someone who can talk with you about your options (including placing your child for adoption). Ask God to lead you to the right person or agency (your pastor may be able to help you). You may also find it helpful to contact Care Net, one of largest networks of pregnancy centers in North America. Care Net seeks to provide the most accessible and effective abortion alternatives possible. For a discussion on the alternatives to an unwanted pregnancy, you may visit Care Net's website, where there are opportunities to call, email or live chat with someone confidentially.

Then I urge you to turn to God—not just to put this problem into His hands, but to give your whole life to Him. God loves you, and no matter what you've done He wants to forgive your past and guide your future. Make your commitment to Christ, and then ask Him to help you do what is right—including mending your relationship with your parents.

Are you in trouble? There is hope. Find peace with God today.

Q: Would it be wrong for me to pray that my girlfriend will be open to getting an abortion?

continued on page 46

During the Winter Months

By David Burleson
Burke County

The winter months bring many challenges to Burke United Christian Ministries (BUCM) and the clients we serve. Recent snow and very cold temperatures have created a higher than usual 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 have also been able to take care of the food and clothing needs of our clients.

The winter months are particularly difficult for our homeless clients. During the last year, BUCM served 399 homeless clients. Of the 399 homeless clients, 54 were under 18 years old. With the support of the Homeless Outreach Warming Initiative (HOWI) committee and other committed community members, winter has been a little warmer and comfortable for our homeless community.

The amount of food needed at BUCM for the soup kitchen and food pantry also increases during the winter months. 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.

We are very thankful that several church youth groups plan to collect food during the annual national Souper Bowl of Caring event. This year's event will be on Sunday, February 3. This is one of the largest food drives of the year. We also appreciate the Burke County Schools for doing a Souper Bowl of Caring Food Drive for BUCM and other agencies in our county. A huge thank you to Dr. Larry Putnam, the staff and the students of the school system for doing this drive for our community.

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

During the winter months, we have seen God at work in tremendous ways at BUCM. When there have been needs, we have what is needed show 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, February 9 at Friday Friends. The All-You-Can eat Breakfast will be from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. and the cost is \$10. 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, reception and food harvest. If you would be interested in discussing being a volunteer or making a donation to BUCM, please call me or Elizabeth Norris at (828) 433-8075 or visit our webpage at bucm.net.

Burke United Christian Ministries is very excited about what God is planning to do in 2019.

David Burleson is Director of Burke United Christian Ministries



Commitment

By Pastor Steve Williams
Mitchell County



Commitment, where has it gone? It looks like in the day we are living, commitment is a thing of the past. People used to be committed To God, To the church, To their husband or wife, and To their friends and family. But that is no longer true. All it takes in this day and time is to let a little hiccup, or setback come by and it's over. What has amazed me as a pastor in the last twenty three years of preaching is how many people I have seen start their walk with Christ only to turn back and return to their old life. I asked myself why is that? As I studied over that question, God began to speak to my heart. He said, Steve do you not remember how you used to play with your relationship with Me. He reminded me how close I would get to Him and then how quick I would be fall away. He also showed me how my commitment to Him was like a thermometer, up and down, rather than the continual relationship He desired to have. He showed me that commitment has a price. The price is not cheap, and the payment is not easy. God showed me that the problem I had when I first started my journey with Him was that I failed to "Burn the ship." What are you saying? I don't understand. You have to forget the things that are in your life, that keeps pulling you back from being committed to God. I'm not saying it's wrong to have hobbies and do things, but when they become more important than your relationship with God you have to make some important choices.

The Bible says in Philippians 3:13-14 "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Paul is talking about his relationship with God. If Christians would just work on this one thing and that is their relationship with God. The rest of the things that will come along in our lives God will help us deal with, and even have victory over. See-- commitment is extremely important in our Christian relationship.

I believe if you look back into history the Vikings can show us what truly being committed is. When they would raid countries, they would burn their ships on the shore. The theory behind this is thought to be threefold. First, it would strike fear and panic in the hearts of their opponent. Second, the burning ship was a strong signal to the enemy that the Vikings were serious and committed. Given that they had destroyed their only way home, the enemy must have taken that a sure sign that this was going to be an extremely tough battle. Third, it was a signal to the Vikings themselves. The burning of their ship clearly made the point that the only possible way home was to win the battle. It reinforced their own level of commitment. See what happens when we fail to burn our ships, it makes it easy for us to return to them and sail off again. In my walk with God I have had to burn a lot of ships in my life. I had to let go of a lot of things that had a hold on me. But the moment that I started burning ships my commitment to God became stronger. When you get saved it is going to be a constant battle to be committed to God. The reason I say that is, I still find myself having to burn other ships along the way, so that I can remain committed in my walk with God. If you don't believe that being committed to God is a battle, just look at how easy it is for people to turn their back on their commitment to God and just walk off.



Words of Wisdom

- The difference between commitment and involvement, is like Ham and eggs, The chicken is involved; it lays an egg, the pig is committed, he gives his life. N/A
- The true heart of a Christian is someone who is committed to God and His Kingdom. N/A
- You can be committed to Church but not committed to Christ, but you cannot be committed to Christ and not be committed to church. N/A
- One has to be fully committed to one's faith. Otherwise, there's no point. N/A

Are You Committed?
What Would You Have Done?

The two thousand member church was filled to overflowing capacity one Sunday morning. The preacher was ready to start the sermon when two men, dressed in long black coats and black hats entered thru the rear of the church.

One of the two men walked to the middle of the church while the other stayed at the back of the church. They both then reached under their coats and withdrew automatic weapons.

The one in the middle announced, "Everyone willing to take a bullet for Jesus stay in your seats!"

Naturally, the pews emptied, followed by the choir. The deacons ran out the door, followed by the choir director and the assistant pastor.

After a few moments, there were about twenty people left sitting in the church. The preacher was holding steady in the pulpit.

The men put their weapons away and said, gently, to the preacher, "All right, pastor, the hypocrites are gone now. You may begin the service."

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



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Financial Help

By Dave Ramsey



Dear Dave,
My husband and I have about \$20,000 in credit card debt, plus payments on a new truck. We also have a camper he bought before we got married that we're still making payments on. I recently received a \$50,000 inheritance, and I'd like to use that money to help get us out of debt and open a savings account. My husband says he is onboard, but he keeps buying things we don't have the money for. I don't want the inheritance to go to waste, so what can I do? Tessa

Dear Tessa,
I want you guys to get control of your finances and have a better life, too. But until your husband is willing to get rid of the camper and the truck, I'd hang on to the inheritance money.
Right now, you need more than his words—you need his actions. At this point, the real issue isn't the debt or the idea of using the gift you received to pay off the debt. The issue is you can't see a future where your husband isn't going to repeat the same financial stupidity. You need to have that future cleared up, and it isn't going to be cleared up until he proves he has changed his heart and his ways. In his case, that means showing he has become a grown-up and isn't buying toys he can't afford anymore.
I know where you are, and I know where he is right now. I've been there. Years ago, I was a "grown man" but I was still really a little boy buying things I couldn't afford to impress people I didn't even know. This guy likes stuff. He likes shiny trucks, shiny things to pull behind shiny trucks, and that sort of thing. But it's time for him to sell all the crap, grow up, and start putting you and your family first. Keep talking to him. Explain how important it is to you that you're both on same page financially and in every other aspect of your marriage. Until he proves he's ready to do that, though, I'd say just hold on to the inheritance money.
—Dave

Dear Dave,
How do you feel about timeshares, and the free trips and dinners they offer as part of their sales pitches? Is it possible to win with these things? Dan

Dear Dan,
In my opinion, timeshares are a complete waste of time and money. Lots of folks go into this kind of thing believing they'll play the game and win. They think they'll get a vacation weekend and other free stuff, then just say "no" when the time comes. The problem is, most people aren't as tough a sell as they think. Besides, do you really want to waste a weekend of your life letting some pushy salesperson twist your arm? That's not my idea of fun.
As a whole, timeshares have an incredibly high dissatisfaction rate. It's almost impossible to find anyone who's happy they bought into one, and there are good reasons for this. Why would you pay thousands of your hard-earned dollars for a tiny place you may or may not get a chance to visit once a year? Add to this the fact that you have no equity in the place, and you're stuck paying ongoing maintenance fees.
My advice? Don't take a chance playing the game, Dan. There are much better uses for your time and money!
—Dave

Dear Dave,
I've been late on a credit card bill several times, and it was turned over to a collection agency. They have offered a couple of different payment options. If I agree to one of these, does that mean the original creditor gets paid, too? Carter

Dear Carter,
A collection agency either owns the debt outright, or they're directly representing the credit card company in these kinds of situations. It's not unusual for things to be handled this way when someone has defaulted on a loan.
Unless you have the cash to make good on the debt outright, I'd go ahead and accept whichever deal makes the most sense for you and your current financial situation. You've already got a mark against you on your credit report for having this turned over to collections, so an indication of settlement on a credit card you defaulted on is really no big deal.
But here's my best piece of advice—stop using credit cards!
—Dave

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



I'm giving you a link to my first Christian Rap Tracks Called "Vision" thanks and God Bless Y'all!

Mitchell Yancey Substance Abuse ---Stay Alert!

Mayland Community College
Mayland Earth to Sky Park—Join us at the Earth to Sky Park and Bare Dark Sky Observatory as we take part in the 2019 NC State-wide Star Party! Watch the groundbreaking for the new planetarium and enjoy astronomy related activities for children, a food truck, and plenty of star gazing hosted by the MCC Astronomy Club. The event is FREE and open to the public.
Allen Cook
Director, Mayland Small Business Center
Mayland Community College
(828) 766-1295
acook@mayland.edu

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

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Unashamed of Our Identity

By Rev John McCoury
Roan Mountain, Tennessee

The key verse to understanding the entire epistle of Romans is found in Romans 1:16. Here, Paul declares that he is not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes. Today, the reason so many churches are blessing same-sex marriage, neglecting the call to evangelism, approving other "paths" to God, and preaching self-help instead of the doctrines of sin and salvation is because they have not taken this verse to heart. They are ashamed of the Gospel, so they change it and redefine it—blunting the two-edged sword of God's Word and deactivating its power. And our society is reaping the consequences. My friend, the call on your life and mine is to remain unashamed of the Gospel, to lovingly lift high the Truth of our Savior, and to trust Him with our lives. All of us will, at one time or another, be tempted to hide our light under a basket. In fact, as you seek to serve and witness for Christ more and more, this temptation may become even stronger. Satan will try to convince you that it's not worth the effort. Beloved, stand firm in that evil day. Remember that it is the Gospel that breaks the iron yoke of sin, shatters the chains of addictions, and flings open the heavy gates of darkness. May God grant us each the grace and understanding to remain unashamed. Have you had moments when you wanted to hide your light before others? Ask God for courage to be a faithful witness. The call to live loud for Christ, unashamed of the Gospel, is clear in Scripture. But how do we live with such boldness? The answer is threefold, and it comes from a close look at Romans 1 and the life of the apostle Paul. The first reason Paul could live unashamed of the gospel was because he knew who he was and to whom he belonged. He knew that Jesus was Lord Christ and he knew that he had been set apart by Him to be His apostle (vv. I, 4). Paul knew that his identity was in Christ, and nothing could take that away from him. In a day when so many people are mixed up about who they are, when it is fashionable to question your gender or define yourself by your political party, it is refreshing to see the apostle Paul hold so tightly to his blood bought identity. He was not confused about what his purpose on earth was supposed to be. He knew his identity—he was a servant of Jesus Christ. My beloved friends, this is the healthiest self-perception you can have. Remember, "You also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ" (v. 6). Firmly root yourself in this glorious identity today, and you will be anchored regardless of what opposition comes your way. Don't miss out on the peace that come from knowing who and whose you are! How do you define yourself? Does this align with who the Lord Jesus Christ says you are?

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



A Bold Start in 2019

By Kristy Etheridge

"And he said to them, 'Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.'" —Mark 16:15

The year 2019 will be the first full year the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA) will exist without Billy Graham.

His oldest son, Franklin Graham, has spoken often about how much he misses his father, who went to be with Jesus in February at the age of 99.

"We rejoice and praise God that my father was given the privilege of preaching the Gospel to more people face to face than any other person in history," Franklin said. "But the job isn't finished. We have another generation who needs to hear this wonderful message."

In 2019, BGEA President Franklin Graham, his son Will Graham, and several other associate evangelists will advance the mission Billy Graham dedicated his life to carrying out.

In addition to taking the Gospel message to the Northeast U.S. next spring, Franklin will travel to major cities on at least three other continents where local Christians have invited him to come and preach.

Please join the BGEA in praying for God's Word to move hearts and souls around the world.

Thailand

The first Festival of the year has taken place in Bangkok, Thailand, on Jan. 19-20. With a population of more than 8 million, the riverside capital is about the size of New York City.

Bangkok is dotted with shrines—visible reminders of the nation's strong ties to Buddhism. But the small population of Christians is passionate about sharing the hope of Jesus Christ. That passion may be due in part to the consequences they often face for putting their faith in the Lord.

"If a member of a Thai family becomes Christian it is often seen as a rejection of the family and their Thai heritage," said Viktor Hamm, BGEA's vice president of Crusade ministries.

Thai Christians have faced difficulties over the years, including a royal prohibition against Christianity in the early 1700s and persecution under the Japanese occupation during WWII. But what could have pushed Christ followers away from their faith seems to have brought them together in unity.

"Although Christians make up about 1 percent of the population, they are vibrantly sharing the message of Christ," Hamm said. "More than 540 churches were involved in the Festival."

Australia

On the 60th anniversary of Billy Graham's historic tour of Australia, Franklin Graham will share the Gospel in half-a-dozen cities from one end of the continent to the other.

In 1959, Billy Graham traveled across Australia and New Zealand sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. More than 3 million people—nearly a third of Australia's population at the time—attended a Crusade event.


The Sydney Morning Herald called the tour "one of the most remarkable religious phenomena ever experienced in this city."

"Australia today is a nation in need of spiritual revival," Franklin Graham said. "Secularism has put down roots, and almost one in three people claim to have no religion at all. The Bible says, 'God was moved by prayer for the land' (2 Samuel 21:14, NASB)—pray that God will touch that land and open many hearts to the life-changing power of the Gospel."

BGEA is partnering with more than 1,200 churches throughout Australia for the Graham Tour, which will stop in Perth, Darwin, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Sydney from Feb. 9-24. "Much has changed in the world in the past 60 years, but Franklin Graham delivers the same life-changing message his father



continued on page 37



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delivered in Australia all those years ago," Hamm said. "The tour across Australia is singularly focused on sharing the Gospel—the Good News of Jesus Christ—so that lives, and the nation, may be changed."

Colombia

On Easter weekend, April 19–20, Franklin Graham is scheduled to hold a Festival of Hope in Cúcuta, Colombia, on the border of Venezuela.

Preparations for the Festival come at a time when millions of people in the region are searching for hope.

In what has been called the Venezuelan Exodus, up to 20,000 Venezuelans are streaming out of their country each day, fleeing unprecedented levels of poverty and violence. Cúcuta is often one of the first stops on the refugees' long and dangerous journey to a better life.

In October, Franklin traveled to Cúcuta and visited an aid station set up by Samaritan's Purse to provide food, water and basic supplies to Venezuelans passing through in droves.

"People are leaving by the millions," he wrote. "It is a heartbreaking situation. Some people in Colombia are opening their homes to assimilate those fleeing into their communities, and the churches are opening their arms and their doors to help."

As believers around the world pause to celebrate the resurrection of Christ, the BGEA will partner with many of those local churches to share the hope of Jesus with people who desperately need it.

"They're coming to Colombia looking for hope," Franklin said. "We want to share not only [relief] with them—we want to share our faith and trust in Jesus Christ. God has not forgotten them."

Cambodia

In November, Franklin Graham will hold his first Festival in Phnom Penh, Cambodia's bustling capital city of 1.5 million people.

This historic event will give Christians a chance to celebrate and share their faith in Christ—something they have not always been able to do without risking their lives.

"Christian history in Cambodia has been written with blood," Hamm said. "Atrocities committed against Christians in the 70s [under the Khmer Rouge] are well documented. Yet, the Word of God can't be bound, and God's remnant will always be present, no matter the circumstances and opposition."

Cambodian Christians are a tiny minority in the primarily Buddhist Kingdom of Cambodia. Much like their Thai brothers and sisters in Christ, the Cambodian believers have faith that can't be contained.

"The Church in Cambodia is vibrant," Hamm said. "A delegation of senior Christian leaders came to invite Franklin to Phnom Penh. Without hesitation, Franklin accepted the invitation."

A public launch of Festival preparations is set for mid-February. Hamm said discussions with government officials are currently underway to secure a proper venue.

"We are asking all Christians to pray for this historic effort."

Kristy works with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.



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Crossword

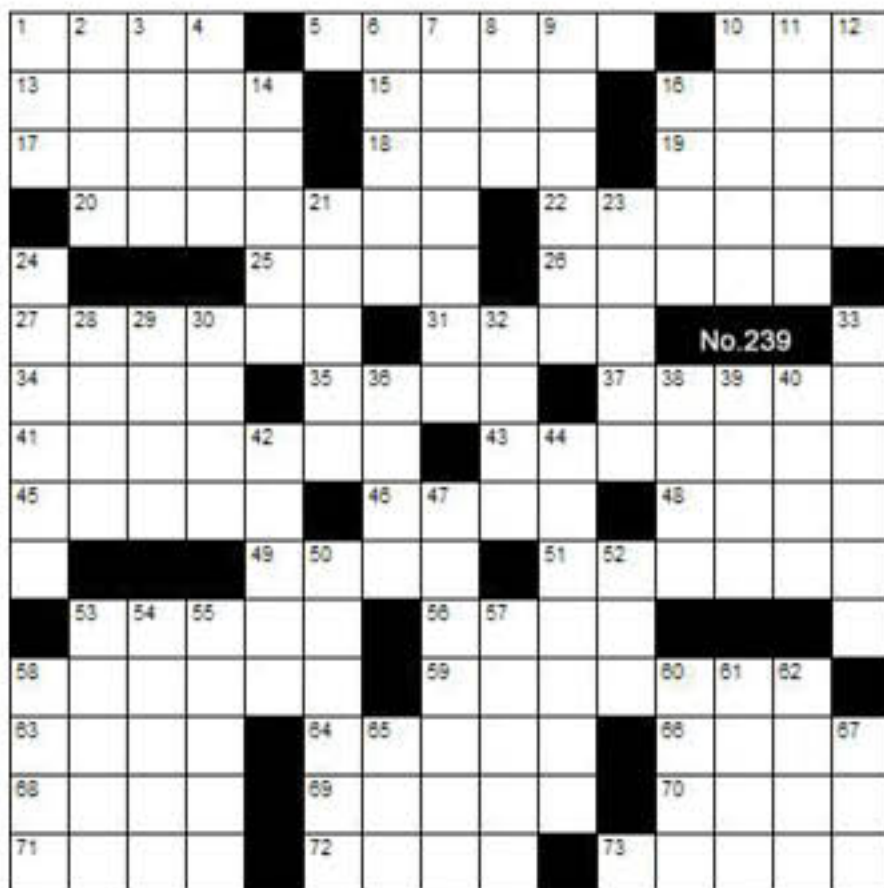
ACROSS

1 eyes they have closed; ____ at any time they should see (Matt 13:15)
 5 Therefore, rid yourselves of all ____ and all deceit (1 Peter 2:1)
 10 that I might preach him among ____ heathen (Gal 1:16)
 13 They make many promises, take false ____ and make (Hos 10:4)
 15 he was given a crown, and he ____ out as a conqueror (Rev 6:2)
 16 he took ____ the Sodomites out of the land (1 Kings 15:12) KJV
 17 like plants in the field, like tender ____ shoots (Isa 37:27)
 18 It had large ____ teeth; it crushed and devoured (Dan 7:7)
 19 David chose ____ smooth stones from the stream (1 Sam 17:40)
 20 Though the arrogant have ____ me with lies (Ps 119:69)
 22 the patriarchs, and from them is ____ the human ancestry of Christ (Rom 9:5)
 25 I will ____ you with filth, I will treat you with contempt (Nah 3:6)
 26 figs, which are so bad they cannot be ____, says the LORD (Jer 24:8)
 27 For through him we both have ____ to the Father (Eph 2:18)
 31 I have given you every ____ bearing seed (Gen 1:29)
 34 merchants who ____ these things and gained their wealth (Rev 18:15)
 35 The man who was healed had no ____ who it was (John 5:13)
 37 a barber's razor to shave your head and your ____ (Ezek 5:1)
 41 Why did the heathen rage, and the people ____ vain things? (Acts 4:25)
 43 a man of Tyre, ____ to work in gold, and in silver (2 Chron 2:14) KJV
 45 in Bethany in the home of a man known as Simon the ____ (Matt 26:6)
 46 all the trees of ____, that were in the garden of God (Ezek 31:9)
 48 If someone forces you to go one ____, go with him two (Matt 5:41-42)
 49 Ahab son of ____ became king of Israel (1 Kings 16:29)
 51 intending after ____ to bring him forth to the people (Acts 12:4) KJV
 53 the turtle and the ____ and the swallow (Jer 8:7) KJV
 56 with the words of David, and of Asaph the ____ (2 Chr 29:30)
 58 whoever drinks the water I give him will never ____ (John 4:14)
 59 They were ____ with each other about everything that (Luke 24:14)
 63 they made braided chains of pure gold, like a ____ (Ex 39:15)
 64 he sent out ____ to see if

the water had receded (1,4) (Gen 8:8)
 66 which is gone down in the sun ____ of Ahaz (Isa 38:8) KJV
 68 was what looked like ____ of glass, clear as crystal (1,3) (Rev 4:6)
 69 they pursued Joshua and were ____ away from the city (Josh 8:16)
 70 and it vomited Jonah ____ dry land (Jonah 2:10)
 71 a bull from your stall or of goats from your ____ (Ps 50:9)
 72 silver in two bags, with two ____ of clothing (2 Kings 5:23)
 73 Jehoshaphat built a ____ of trading ships to go to Ophir (1 Kings 22:48)

DOWN

1 the priest shall take some of the ____ of oil, and pour it into (Lev 14:15)
 2 Speak now in the ____ of the people (Exodus 11:2)
 3 there shall come forth a rod out of the ____ of Jesse (Isaiah 11:1) KJV
 4 Thou art my beloved Son; in ____ I am well pleased (Luke 3:22) KJV
 6 I will besiege ____; she will mourn and lament (Isa 29:2)
 7 Praise be to the ____, ____ God of Israel (4,3) (1 Sam 25:32)
 8 ____ not forget your precepts (1,2) (Ps 119:141)
 9 Jerusalem, which I have set in the ____ of the nations (Ezek 5:5)
 10 they gathered ____ as much, two omers for each (Ex 16:22)
 11 Zebulun will live by the seashore and become a ____ for ships (Gen 49:13)
 12 one official is ____ by a higher one, and over them both are (Eccl 5:8)
 14 as a piece of string ____ when it comes close to a flame (Judg 16:9)
 16 the woman had calf in the house (1,3) (1 Sam 28:24) KJV
 21 The manna was like coriander seed and looked like ____ (Num 11:7)
 23 teacher (John 1:38)
 24 Benjamites chased them and ____ overran them (Judg 20:43)
 28 How the oppressor has ____ to an end! (Isa 14:4)
 29 ____ your hands, all you nations; shout to God (Ps 47:1)
 30 they shall fall by the ____ of the sword (Luke 21:24)
 32 now therefore ____ thou somewhat the grievous servitude (2 Chr 10:4) KJV
 33 not only do they become ____, but also gossips (1 Tim



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5:13)
 36 the roebuck, and the fallow ____, and the wild goat (Deut 14:5)
 38 burn incense upon the hills, under oaks and poplars and ____ (Hos 4:13) KJV
 39 send him away by the hand of ____ man (1,3) (Lev 16:21) KJV
 40 he shall ____ them with a rod of iron (Rev 19:15)
 42 his feet with shackles, his neck was put in ____ (Ps 105:18)
 44 he ____ upon his knees three times a day (Dan 6:10) KJV
 47 do not use deception, nor do we ____ the word of God (2 Cor 4:2)
 50 I have made you a tester of ____ and my people the ore (Jer 6:27)
 52 There went in two and two unto Noah into the ____ (Gen 7:9)
 53 So Lot ____ for himself the whole plain of the Jordan (Gen 13:11)

54 very good figs, like those that ____ early (Jer 24:2)
 55 Forts and towers in the wooded ____ (2 Chron 27:4)
 57 from foundation to ____, were made of blocks (1 Kings 7:9)
 58 Let their table be made a snare, and a ____ (Romans 11:9)
 60 took away the strange gods, and the ____ (2 Chr 33:15)
 61 Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other ____ (Luke 17:17)
 62 for wide is the ____, and broad is the way (Matt 7:13)
 65 If I am a master, where is the respect ____ me?" says the LORD (Mal 1:6)
 67 they took ____, Abram's brother's son (Gen 14:12)

Solution on page 14



Healthy Neighbors Network

Churches to Take Next Steps to Share Resources, Support Neighbors

By Colby Boston
Mitchell County

Spruce Pine, N.C.) – A room full of pastors and church leaders from Mitchell County gathered on January 15 to learn more about Healthy Neighbors Network (HNN), a program that is helping to coordinate resources and services to support people in need in Macon County, and talk about opportunities to develop a similar program in Mitchell County.

Amy Hoilman of the Neighbors Feeding Neighbors Food Ministry shared the experiences she and her husband, Allen, have in visiting people in their homes across the county and helping them to find the resources they need. Pastors and volunteers from churches were excited to hear about the Macon County HNN program and brainstorm how they could work together to share resources and serve in ministry.

Healthy Neighbors Network uses software to connect churches and allow them to communicate about people in need, keep track of who needs help, and coordinate volunteer support.

HNN is modeled after the Congregational Health Network (CHN) program in Memphis, Tennessee. CHN started in 2006 and now has 500+ churches and 700 volunteers working together to support their community.

Colby Boston, Volunteer Engagement Specialist at Blue Ridge Regional Hospital, was on the team of representatives from across western North Carolina who traveled to Memphis in 2015 to learn about the program. Since then, he's been eager to bring those ideas home to Mitchell County. Once he started having conversations with local pastors, they too became excited. "This program is going to be great for Mitchell County," said Pastor Clay Dale from Liberty Hill Baptist Church. "Sometimes the churches feel overwhelmed by the need in our community. By working together, we can do more and encourage more people to work in ministry with us."

Ten churches have indicated an interest in joining the program and will be sending representatives to a training on Tuesday, February 12. To learn more or sign your church up to participate, contact Colby Boston at 828-766-1872.

Colby works with Blue Ridge Hospital and will be heading up the HNN.



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Brian Center

Hospice General In Patient Room

By Heather Steuer
Mitchell County

On January 24th, 2019 we had the pleasure of opening our Hospice General In patient room. The Brian Center and Hospice & Home Care of the Blue Ridge have partnered to offer this service. The room is dedicated to patients in our facility and in our community that have special needs. We are thrilled to have the opportunity to partner with such a dedicated organization. The ribbon cutting ceremony was such a special day for everyone involved, it means so much when you get to see a vision come to fruition!

I would like to take this opportunity to talk about the heart of our leader/administrator, Shelley Tinsley. Shelley started at the Brian Center in April 2017. Initially she came as an interim administrator. It did not take long for her to fall in love with the residents, staff members and the mountains (her words). Shelly came to us from South Carolina and for over a year she lived in a hotel in Marion. She sacrificed time with her husband and fur babies because she believed in our building so passionately. Every Friday she commuted 5 hours home and every Sunday evening she drove 5 hours back. I wanted to share those things because I firmly believe actions speak louder than words. Shelley's commitment is evident and her intentions for the residents, staff and community are pure. We are thankful for Shelley and excited to say that she is now officially a Mitchell County resident.

As a team we will continue to focus on improving our current services in addition to introducing new resources that our community can benefit from. We look forward to 2019 and the positive changes to come.

We would like to thank Hospice and Home Care of the Blue Ridge for supporting us!

Thank you, Mitchell County Chamber for helping us with the event, it truly was a success!

Heather Steuer has been in Healthcare for 18 years. She loves all the things that bring people together. She is passionate about the golden rule, treat others as you would like to be treated.



left to right Shelley Tinsley Administrator Brian Center, Lisa Boone, Clinical Operations Officer Hospice and Home Care of the Blue Ridge, Heather Steuer, Director of Care Transitions Brian Center, Lori Hicks, Programs Coordinator Hospice and Home Care of the Blue Ridge, Shirley Topper, Unit Manager Brian Center, Kris Gaforth Community Outreach Liaison HH of the Blue Ridge, Christina Jenkins, Executive Director HH of the Blue Ridge, Kim Cuthbertson, Director of Community Development



Lisa Boone, Clinical Operations Officer HH of the Blue Ridge, Shelley Tinsley, Administrator Brian Center, Christina Jenkins, Executive Director HH of the Blue Ridge, Shirley Topper, Unit Manager Brian Center



Pause...and Consider

Love Gifts

By Ken and Jan Merop
Avery County



It has been said that we can give without loving. But we can't love without giving.

Giving may manifest itself in words of gratitude and praise; in acts of selfless service to another; in giving one's time; in giving presents that reflect someone's personality or interests; or in simple hugs and kisses.

It's wonderful to be the giver of such gifts and equally so to be the unexpected receiver – especially when a yearning in one's heart is acknowledged and then acted upon by one who loves you.

My recent interest in sketching scenery from photos is a relaxing pastime that I pursued fairly regularly. But, not wanting to leave pencils, sketch pad, eraser and the like on the dining table, I'd gather everything together and put it away each time.

Eventually, my pastime became a thing of the past. Out of sight, out of mind. I imagined how fun it would be to have a simple easel set up permanently near a window. Then in seeing it each day, I'd take a few moments to add to the picture – or to plan more concentrated sketching time.

I like drawing scenes with trees and thought a book that could teach me how to achieve more authenticity would be helpful.

I mentioned this to Ken and he immediately said, "Let's go see what we can find."

We had fun that evening just looking and trying to figure out what would be best for me. I didn't even know if an easel was appropriate for what I was doing – that's how uninformed I am in this type of art.

In fact, because of my uncertainty, I began to back away from my request. Perhaps, we shouldn't invest in these things. After all, it's just a simple hobby.

However, on Christmas morning, I opened two special gifts: a beautiful table top or lap top oak easel and a book on how to draw trees. The easel has a place to hold the picture from which I'm sketching along with my sketch pad. It also has a drawer to hold my supplies.

I doubt I would have ever purchased these things for myself. But my husband acted upon the wondering and yearning of my heart. I felt so special receiving that gift and knowing he believed in me.

Love expresses itself in many ways. I Corinthians 13: 6 it says, "Love...rejoices in the truth." Such rejoicing in truth happily celebrates the achievements of another – no matter how small or simple they may be.

With Valentine's Day approaching, let's read I Corinthians 13 in the Bible (the Love Chapter) and examine how we are to love. Selah

FAMILY PORTRAIT

Buttercup feathers announce the growth of these new Sandhill Crane arrivals.

Mama and Papa set the example so their babies are well nourished and able to grow to maturity.

May our family portraits be legacies of biblical love and maturity.

"You shall teach them diligently to your children...in your house... walk by the way...lie down...rise up."

Deuteronomy 6: 7



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

Check out our new Website
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The Backyard Creeper

By Christy Lowman
Burke County

This month I thought we would discuss a creature that creeps in your backyard at night that most people despise, hate, and think is totally gross. They do not like this animal solely based on their looks. Maybe I'm weird but I have always thought they were fascinating and cute especially when they're babies. Hopefully after I tell you some facts about this animal you will look past their looks and like them as well!

This animal is one of the best animals to have in your backyard regardless of how they look. They protect you by eating around 5,000 deer ticks each season! Deer ticks are harmful to people because they can carry Lyme disease that can make us very sick and can lead to death if untreated! This animal has beady eyes, 50 sharp teeth, and white grayish fur. Have you guessed what this despised but helpful animal is?

The opossum! The only marsupial that lives in North America. Do you know what a marsupial is? Marsupials are animals that raise their young in a pouch, like a kangaroo. Opossum babies are also called joeys just like baby kangaroos. Opossum babies, when born are the size of a honeybee. They live in their mother's pouch for 2-3 months. After this, they will roam around in their den but when they go out they will catch a ride on their mother's back for another 1-2 months.

Opossums don't only eat ticks, they eat venomous snakes that linger in your yard, and rodents. They clean up spilled bird seed from your bird feeders, eat over ripe fruit from your fruit trees, berries, vegetables, snails, and even carrion. Carrion is dead animals and roadkill. Can you see how opossums are an important clean-up animal that visits our backyard and roads?

The adult opossum grows up to 12 lbs., about the size of a house cat. They are one of the shortest-lived mammals for their size. Two to four years is their normal lifespan. Predators unfortunately include people and cars, dogs, cats, owls, and larger wildlife. Thankfully God gave the opossums an involuntary mechanism that is triggered when the opossums feel stressed or threatened. They can not trigger this mechanism on their own, and do not know when it will happen. This reaction is what we call "playing possum". Have you ever been accused of playing possum? During this state, the opossum quits moving, falls to the ground, their eyes are left open, unblinking, and their tongue hangs out of their mouth. When this happens, the opossum secretes a terrible, stinky substance for their behind. By doing this, their predators think they have died and will decide to look for dinner elsewhere. This passed out state can last from 1 min. up to 6 hrs.

Opossums have very bad eyesight and hearing, but have an incredible sense of smell and memory. Their pupils dilate very large at night to help them see better in the dark. Scientists have discovered that opossums remember where they found a tasty meal better than rats, cats, dogs, and pigs. They also remember the smell of poisonous substances up to a year after eating them.

Another reason opossums should be welcomed in your yard is they normally do not catch rabies. Their body temperature is too low for the virus to grow in their bodies. They are also immune to all poisonous snakes in their native habitat except for the coral snake. Scientists are trying to develop antivenom drugs from the opossum to heal people when they get bit from these poisonous snakes.

It is not true that opossums hang from trees while they sleep. However, their tail is like an extra arm to them. When opossums are young they can hang from tree branches with their tail for a short time. They can climb trees with their sharp claws, graspable tails, and gripping thumbs on their hind feet.

Ultimately, this misunderstood animal that God made is more than likely not going to attack your pets, or carry rabies. They will however keep your yard tidy by getting rid of dead animals, discarded birdseed, dangerous snakes, rodents and ticks.

Have you ever seen a person, maybe at school or church, that is a little different? Maybe the other kids think this person is ugly, gross, dumb, or just plain weird. Maybe they are misunderstood like the opossum. This kid might like things that you find unusual. Maybe he or she likes to draw, or listen to opera. Maybe they sit by themselves and have no one to talk to. Perhaps you are uncomfortable around this person or don't know what to say, so you avoid them. Ask God to help you with this and He will. If you see someone that is being left out for being different go up and be their friend and pray for them. That is what Jesus did when He walked on earth. He treated everyone the same, even the despised, hated people, the ones that had diseases and were ugly. He showed them love and compassion and died on the cross for them just like He did you and me.

God made this person just like He made you. Not everyone is popular, or beautiful in our eyes, but everyone is loved and beautiful in God's eyes. He made each one of us different. This world would be boring if we looked the same, acted the same, liked the same things. Ultimately God made each of us unique and gave each of us a different job to do. Treat everyone like you would want to be treated.

Dear Lord, please give us the compassion and desire to reach out and love everyone that you have given the gift of life. We are all equal in your eyes. You made each and every one of us unique and have tasked us with a certain job to



do. It doesn't matter if we are not as handsome or cool as other people. We are still loved and valuable just like the opossum. I pray that others around us will see your love through us. Help us be an example of your unfailing love. In Jesus' precious name, AMEN.

"You will never look in the eyes of someone God does not love." Anonymous

John 15:12NIV "My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you."

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



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Appalachian Sustainable Agricultural Project

Moving Ahead

Compiled by Barbara Harrell
WNC

Learn the Business of Farming

Our 16th Annual Business of Farming Conference is fast approaching on Feb. 23! Act quickly to register before the early-bird deadline on Feb. 1. Several new workshops will be offered this year, including "Hosting Events and Dinners on Your Farm" and "Developing Your Farm Brand," along with the return of popular networking opportunities and sessions such as "Community Supported Agriculture Opportunities," "Farm Business Planning," and "Improving Sales at Farmers Markets."

New this year, the conference will include a farmer's market summit and leadership training, led by ASAP's Mike McCreary. "Farmers markets in the mountains face unique challenges and opportunities," he says. "We are looking forward to bringing together market managers from across Western North Carolina to support and build successful farmers markets."

Register online or over the phone by calling ASAP at 828-236-1282.

Wrapping Up in Burke County

Since 2016, our Growing Minds team has been working with five elementary schools in Burke County Public Schools, with grant support from Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust, implementing farm to school activities in the classroom, cafeteria, and community. The project officially wrapped up at the end of 2018, but BCPS has plans in place to keep the



momentum going.

"Taste tests have always been my favorite," says Program Coordinator Kim Knoppel. "I have so much fun sharing students' experiences trying something local. Sure, apples are usually an easy win...but to witness them have fun and enjoy daikon radishes, that puts a smile on my face. I build their trust with more familiar items, such as local cucumbers, before introducing the more 'exotic' local items—and it works! When I walk into the cafeteria, their hands eagerly shoot up willing to try whatever I'm offering."

Over the past three years we:

- Conducted 36 local food cafeteria taste tests, totaling 14,315 student interactions.
- Handed out 17,520 stickers and 14,370 recipe cards.
- Trained 66 educators in farm to school activities.
- Distributed \$7,500 in mini grants to the schools.

Tracy Cotton

ASAP likes to share the stories of people who help us fulfill our mission. This month, we talk with Tracy Cotton, a farm and small business account executive for Morrow Insurance Agency in Marion, NC. In addition to speaking at the Business of Farming Conference, Tracy is a dedicated ASAP volunteer!

Q: How are you involved with ASAP and local food and farms?

I began volunteering with ASAP in 2016. I am a Farm to Fork Insurance Agent in WNC, so I am connected to the community by occupation, but also by passion. I chose to focus on farms, food manufacturing, craft beverage, restaurants, and food retailers because I love being part of protecting and connecting. Personally, I grew up in middle Tennessee with farming cousins and enjoyed many weekends helping out (or at least enjoyed the freedom of walking their many acres of pasture).

Q: You're co-presenting a workshop on Hosting Events and Dinners on Your Farm at our Business of Farming Conference in February. What will you be talking about?

I'll be moderating, so mostly I'm there to keep things flowing and in case there are questions on risk management. The panel is stellar, and I can't wait to hear the experiences and wisdom of the individual farms represented.

Q: Can you share a favorite farm dinner or farm event memory?

I am a HUGE fan of ASAP's Farm Tour and my favorite destination is Smoking J's pepper farm in Candler. They know how to put on a delicious spread including some of their sauces. Plus, their operation is fascinating.

Q: What have you learned in the past from attending the Business of Farming Conference?

This will be my third year attending and speaking. I could be biased but I believe the content and quality of the workshops is far above the norm. In one day, there are so many great speakers, networking, and resources, it's an incredible bargain—did I mention the food? Maybe I shouldn't so there is more left for me. Just kidding!

Visit asapconnections.org to register for the 2019 Business of Farming Conference, Feb 23, at the AB Tech Conference Center in Asheville, NC.



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perfect as you struggle along.

In December we printed a story about a young lady that prayed and prayed for her "perfect" man. Only God could orchestrate a love story like this, because little did she know that her young man was praying and praying for his "perfect" woman. Both with many handicaps to overcome, God brought them together to become man and wife in His sight. With God in the center of this marriage they will continue to grow and last for many years to come.

What makes all this possible—Only the Love of God. We cannot even imagine the love He has for us. This love is called Agape Love. The Bible is filled with examples of this love. I remember a Bible study I did on Deuteronomy. Well, I didn't think of it as the Love Book. However, that is what I found as we delved deep into this book—God's love for His people. As the children of Israel came to the end of their journey God talked with Moses about what would happen. Moses would get to see this land, but because he disobeyed he would not go into the land. Deuteronomy 32:48-49 "Go up this mountain of Abarim, Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, across from Jericho: view the land of Canaan, which I give to the children of Israel as a possession; and die on the mountain which you ascend, and be gathered to your people, just as Aaron your brother died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people."

One of the most poignant pictures of God's love is found when Moses did as the Lord ask him to do in the above scriptures. Listen as this concludes—Deuteronomy 34 Then Moses climbed Mount Nebo from the plains of Moab to the top of Pisgah, across from Jericho. There the LORD showed him the whole land—from Gilead to Dan, 2 all of Naphtali, the territory of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Mediterranean Sea, 3 the Negev and the whole region from the Valley of Jericho, the City of Palms, as far as Zoar. 4 Then the LORD said to him, "This is the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob when I said, 'I will give it to your descendants.' I have let you see it with your eyes, but you will not cross over into it."

5 And Moses the servant of the LORD died there in Moab, as the LORD had said. 6 He buried him[a] in Moab, in the valley opposite Beth Peor; but to this day no one knows where his grave is. 7 Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died, yet his eyes were not weak, nor his strength gone. 8 The Israelites grieved for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days, until the time of weeping and mourning was over. 9 Now Joshua son of Nun was filled with the spirit[b] of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him. So, the Israelites listened to him and did what the LORD had commanded Moses. 10 Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, 11 who did all those signs and wonders the LORD sent him to do in Egypt—to Pharaoh and to all his officials and to his whole land. 12 For no one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel.

Many times, I had read this but missed this picture. God was the only one there when Moses died and God buried him, but not just this, He carried him from the top of the mountain to the valley to bury him and no one knows the place.

God is concerned for His people and the ultimate picture is Jesus on the cross. He loved enough to die for us so we can live.



Barbara Harrell loving mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. Part owner Blue Ridge Christian News.

What Is The Unpardonable Sin?
I Am Afraid I May Have Committed It.

By Kurt Bomar
Avery County



There are a lot of difficult passages in the OT. This is one of them. I hope to shed light on this passage as well as others this year because 2 Tim. 3:16 tells us:

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, And, 1 Pet. 3:15 says:

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

Many Christians have heard that there is an unpardonable sin and live in dread that something grave they have done before or after conversion might be that sin. I have talked with several people who struggle with this so let's take a look at it. These fears are unfounded. While there is an unforgivable sin, it is not one that a true believer in Jesus Christ can commit.

The one sin which God cannot forgive is mentioned in Mark 3:28-30 and Matthew 12:31-32. Jesus had been performing miracles, including driving demons out of people by the power of the Holy Spirit. Instead of recognizing the source of Jesus' power and accepting Him as God's Son, the religious leaders accused Him of being possessed by the devil and driving demons out in the power of the devil. Jesus responded by saying, "I tell you the truth, all the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven them. But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin." The key to understanding this is to look at who Jesus was talking to. He was talking to the religious leaders of the day who were assigning the works of the Holy Spirit to Satan. So, it was a rejection of the Holy Spirit which deeply offended Jesus.

The point for us is that if we have received Jesus as our Savior and Lord, we have not blasphemed the Holy Spirit; we have accepted His witness. One study Bible explains it as follows: "To commit this sin one must consciously, persistently, deliberately, and maliciously reject the testimony of the Spirit to the deity and saving power of the Lord Jesus." If a person keeps doing that until death, there is no hope of forgiveness and eternal life in heaven.

Once again, the unpardonable sin is not some particularly grievous sin committed by a Christian before or after accepting Christ, nor is it thinking or saying something terrible about the Holy Spirit. Rather, it is deliberately resisting the Holy Spirit's witness and invitation to turn to Jesus until death ends all opportunity.

Jesus Himself assures us, "Whoever comes to me I will never drive away" (John 6:37). Our God is a compassionate and merciful God. He desires that no one should be lost, but that all should come to salvation through repentance and personal faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord (2 Peter 3:9; Acts 2:21).

So "let not your hearts be troubled!"

Selah, (think about it)

Kurt Bomar is pastor of Walnut Grove Church.

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. Mark 10:14

Sudoku

Solution on page 14

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

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Fix Your Eyes.

By Chelsea Blevins
Yancey County



God spoke these few words to me as I wrestled with myself. My frustrations, confusions, and mishaps.

The sun was setting and scattered throughout. The pastures were colors of orange sherbet. Big tears began flooding my eyes as I sat in the presence of my Father; the stillness of my Father.

In the stillness of His presence, I felt my world came to a sudden halt. The world that I so often see through the lens of my own troubles, frustrations, and confusions. I pulled my car to the side of the road and right there, God began to work on me and my vision that often seems so blurred.

And as I began to reflect on 2018, I saw a year filled with God's presence. In both the difficult and joyous days. Some of my wildest dreams have come true this year. I have overcome many hardships, explored new talents and places, and found myself all over again a little day by day.

But you want to know what is crazy?

There are times when I don't feel those areas of growth in my life. I don't feel that good things are coming or that I am clothed in strength and armor that is everlasting and bulletproof. There are times when my vision of what God is doing in my life is blurry and I am David with my very own Goliath. A giant personalized to my doubts, fears, and unbelief towers a shadow over me.

Maybe your vision of life is blurry from time to time too? Your armor of prayer, praise, and worship don't feel so bulletproof.

But, as I sat beside the road in my car, the sun painting a sherbet sky, and a new year ahead God spoke to me these few words:

Daughter, **FIX YOUR EYES.**

Fix your eyes, don't you see how far I have carried you this year?

Don't you see how far you've come?

Don't you see the prayers answered?

Don't you see the heart restored?

Don't you see a year ago, you were the lost sheep? You were so lost, you couldn't remember who I had made you to be. You were so broken but wouldn't allow me to heal you, your very own Father. Instead, you looked to everyone else. But still, I risked everything to find you, my daughter.

I found you in the dark, confused, frustrated, and lost. I put you on my shoulders and carried you back home to me and I rejoiced with thanksgiving and gladness because I had found you, my lost sheep.

Yall, when God began to speak these words to me my heart hit the floor because it's true, he rescued me.

Looking back a year from this point, I was so lost. To be honest, my vision is still blurry from time to time. Doubt, fear, and worry cloud my way many times and the giant is there again with his cloud of darkness over me.

This year has been a season of growth, silence, stillness, and waiting. At times I have been frustrated and impatient in this season of waiting.

But, it is so true, this year, my Father rescued me. My God rescued me.

He put me on His shoulders, and He carried me.

No really, He carried me.

He became my strength in times of weakness. He became my true joy in times of sadness. He became my calm in the storm. He became my legs when I couldn't walk. He became the light when I lost my way. He became my shepherd when my vision was too blurry to see clearly the path ahead of me.

He truly rescued me.

He fixed my eyes.

He fixed my eyes on Him.

Where I was lost, I now walk home rejoicing with gladness and thanksgiving alongside my Father and boy, I can't wait to be home with Him.



Along the journey beside Him this year I see that although it's been a dry season of waiting at times, it's also been a year of walking, talking, healing, and rejoicing alongside my Father.

We have been through a lot this year, over hills and into valleys, stormy days and sunny days, my Father and I.

Through this journey home with Him I, the rescued lost sheep, have learned one of the most important things I could ever learn and that is this:

to **FIX MY EYES ON MY FATHER.**

My vision is much more clear through my Father's lens.

My thoughts are much more clear with my Father on my mind.

My laugh rumbles deeper and my smile grows bigger with the joy of my Father. And nothing, not Goliath or any other giant, can make me turn my eyes away from Him now that I have felt Him so strongly.

This year has been a season of prospering, growing, restoring, and healing. It's been a journey over mountains and through valleys. I have had stormy nights and days filled with sunshine. At times it hasn't made sense.

But my Father has been with me every step of the way and it will all make sense when I make it home.

You see, He rescued me. He picked me up and carried me on His shoulders and I fixed my eyes upon Him.

And I continue to fix my eyes upon Him and rejoice with Him, my Father, on my journey home with Him.

This year, 2019, I will see the sun shining in pastures as I pass by, I will feel the warmth of His presence in my heart. I will feel His rain as drops of grace and His still breath breathe over me as He always has.

At that moment I will look to Him, my Father by my side, and I will remember how He rescued me and fixed my eyes on Him.

And one day, perhaps one day soon, I will have all of Him, and all these years will make sense when our journey is over as He welcomes me home to be with Him forever.

But, until then, I will fix my eyes upon Him, my Father, my Redeemer, my rescuer.

Chelsea Blevins lives in Burnsville, attended Mountain Heritage High School and South College.

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Not Like the World

By Pastor Shawn Thomas
Burke County

"You shall not do what is done in the land of Egypt where you lived, nor are you to do what is done in the land of Canaan where I am bringing you; shall not walk in their statutes." (Leviticus 18:3)

This is SO applicable to Christians today. People are always saying things like: "we need to be like the world; we need to entertain like the world, be businesslike like the world;" and so on. But God says NO!! "You shall NOT do what is done in the land ...". He says His goal for His people is NOT to be like the world! They are to follow HIS word instead. He says in :4, "You are to perform MY judgments and keep MY statutes, to live in accord with them; I am YHWH your God."

Sadly, too many in the church are doing the opposite, using the world's standards as their model and guide, for worship, for business, finances, relationships, ministry, morals, etc. But this is a tragic mistake. God says we are NOT to be like them. "You shall NOT do what is done" by them!

Lest we think this is an "Old Testament" concept only, Jesus echoed this same warning in the New Testament. In Matthew 20, He told His disciples: "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant ...". Just like His Father in Leviticus, Jesus points His disciples to "the way of the world" and then says: "it is NOT this way among you."

Again, Jesus is declaring that His followers are to be different. They are not to do things the way the rest of the world does. The question for those of us who consider ourselves to be His followers is: ARE we indeed different? Or are we just "doing what is done" in the land around us?

Shawn Thomas is Senior Pastor at Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church in Morganton. His messages and devotionals are available at www.shawnethomas.com



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Traditions

Billy Graham's Answers on Abortion

continued from page 33

A: You've probably heard the old saying that "Two wrongs don't make a right"—and it's true, especially in this case. What you did by having sexual relations outside of marriage was wrong in God's eyes—but allowing the little child that is growing inside your girlfriend's womb to be killed would also be very wrong in God's eyes.

In other words, don't ask God to bless something that is wrong—which is what you'd be doing if you prayed for Him to change your girlfriend's mind about an abortion. Does this mean you shouldn't pray? No, not at all—but the prayer you need to offer is twofold. First, you need to offer a prayer of confession, asking Jesus Christ to cleanse you of your sins. Then you need to offer a prayer of submission, turning your life over to Christ and asking Him to guide you and help you do what is right.

I hope you won't think I'm harsh or judgmental; that isn't my intention at all. But you are standing at a major crossroads in your life—and I pray you won't take the wrong road. God loves you, and your greatest need is to discover this great truth. Jesus said, "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete" (John 15:11).

You have some hard decisions ahead—but isn't it better to face them with God than without Him? Don't be pressured into doing something wrong or unwise, but ask God to help you find the right path for your child—through adoption, for example.

Q: Our teenage daughter is pregnant. What advice should we give her?

A: Almost every week I receive at least one letter from someone facing this problem, and my heart goes out to you during this difficult time. Perhaps your daughter's sad experience will make someone who is tempted to take the same path she took to stop and reconsider.

My prayer is that you and your daughter will not end the life of the little child who is growing within her. Yes, abortion sounds like an easy way out—but all human life is sacred, and should never be taken without just cause. Yes, it was wrong for your daughter to have sexual relations outside the commitment of marriage—but two wrongs don't make a right, and it would be wrong for her to end the life of this little child.

May you and your daughter carefully and prayerfully consider your alternatives. Every year, hundreds of thousands of childless couples yearn to adopt a baby, and I urge you and your daughter to consider this option. She then could have the satisfaction of knowing her baby will grow up in a loving, caring home.

Above all, may you and your daughter turn to Christ, and find in Him the forgiveness and peace He alone can give. God loves your daughter, and He wants to help put her feet on a different path in life. The Bible's promise is true: In Christ "we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:14).

Q: I got an abortion. I can't forgive myself, and I know God won't forgive me either.



A: Many people may agree with your friends—but I'm thankful you know otherwise, for ending the life of the little child who was growing in you wasn't right in God's eyes. God's words to Jeremiah apply to every human being, born or unborn: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you" (Jeremiah 1:5).

But you are wrong when you say God can never forgive you! King David in the Old Testament was a great and good man in many ways—but later in life he strayed from God. He committed adultery with another man's wife, and then to cover up his sin he arranged for that man to be killed in battle (see 2 Samuel 11). Adultery ... lying ... murder ... How could God ever forgive him?

And yet God did forgive him! David honestly faced his sin, repented of it and sought God's forgiveness: "Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight" (Psalm 51:4). And when he did this, God forgave him and cleansed him of his sin. David could then truly say, "Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered" (Psalm 32:1).

This can be your experience as well. God loves you, and Christ died to take away every sin you ever committed—everyone. Don't let your emotions or anything else keep you from Christ. Ask Him to come into your life today, because in Him "we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:14).

You can have forgiveness through Jesus Christ today.

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gan's National Security Advisor, a twenty-year veteran of the Marine Corps, and the architect of the Iran-Contra plan. When his plan failed, McFarlane resigned his position and later attempted suicide.

I heard him speak several years ago at the National Prayer Breakfast. He described the incredible power he had achieved, the ladder to success he had climbed. But then Bud McFarlane told us with tears in his eyes that it was nothing. He got to the top, and there was nothing there.

Only after he fell off that ladder did he discover that it was leaning against the wrong wall—that life really consists of loving God and loving people. Nothing else.

"The whole of humanity needs you"

One prediction for 2019 I can make with certainty is that, as Jesus noted, "in the world you will have tribulation" (John 16:33). But every time adversity finds us, we can view it as an opportunity to evaluate ourselves spiritually, impact others with our faith, and refocus our lives.

And we can know that God will use us in spite of—and often because of—our challenges and failures.

If you wonder across the coming year if your flawed life can make a difference, remember this reflection by Catholic theologian Michel Quoist:

If each note of music were to say: one note does not make a symphony, there would be no symphony.

If each word were to say: one word does not make a book, there would be no book.

If each brick were to say: one brick does not make a wall, there would be no house.

If each drop of water were to say: one drop does not make an ocean, there would be no ocean.

If each seed were to say: one grain does not make a field of corn, there would be no harvest.

If each one of us were to say: one act of love cannot save mankind, there would never be justice and peace on earth. . . .

The whole of humanity needs you as and where you are.

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

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