It is becoming more evident each passing year that the moral fabric that has made the United States of America so blessed and favored by God is rapidly deteriorating. I can think of no better time to talk about our children than now. It is September and our little ones (and some not so little) are just going back to school. What kind of environment will they be heading into this year and what kind of education and training will our children really be exposed to?

As the very far-left and radically liberal minority continues to be the “squawks who get the graces”, it seems like we conservative Christians sit placidly by and watch as our country undergoes a frightening shift away from the very principles that made us so great to begin with. Like many of you, I am becoming alarmed and wonder often what I can do about it. I am just one person, right? Well, I believe that first and foremost, each of us has an opportunity to make a difference, and we can start by becoming more involved in our school system.

Our children are the future citizens and leaders of this great nation, and if we want them to have the same opportunities that we have been blessed with, we must start paying attention to what’s going on in our communities and especially in our schools. As they go back to school, let’s get back to commitment!

Proverbs 22:6: “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”

“We’ve heard and read that verse of Scripture many times. Each of us has a mandate from God Himself to “train” our children. This includes monitoring and interacting with those who spend almost every day with them in positive and productive ways. Your child will most likely spend 8 to 10 hours each night in bed, and another 6 or 7 hours in school each day. That only leaves around 6 to 8 hours for family. Many of us work and aren’t home when our children get home, and between other activities, our children are involved in (sports, dance, church, etc.), we are really getting just a few hours each day of our children’s time. Your child could be spending more one-on-one time with those in the education system than they are with you.

Teachers and other school staff who are responsible for providing education to our children should be aware that you are a concerned and responsible parent, and they should also understand that you are there to support them, as educators, throughout the school year. We need to be concerned enough that we take the time to really get to know each person that encounters our children and has influence over their learning and behavior each day.

Meet each of your child’s teachers. Get to know the principal and other school staff. Parental involvement is a morale-booster for these educators. Most of them want your child to be successful and appreciate knowing that you are taking an active interest in your child’s learning, that you are a TEAM manned for the same goal — the success of your child. This will give you a chance to ask important questions about your child. What observations are the teachers making about your son or daughter? Which children are their friends? How can you help?

Take time to be involved with activities at your child’s school. All Title I schools in the state are required to hold a Parent Math Night and a Parent Reading Night each year. Find out when these are taking place and be there. Also, most schools still have active PTOS or PTAs. Make sure that you join that organization and attend the meeting (usually they are incorporated into other events happening at the school at the same time). Is your child the choral or the band? Does he or she play a sport or are they involved with a club? Make every effort to attend these events. This shows your child that not only are you supporting them, but that you are also supporting their school and teachers!

Most importantly, you should pray for each teacher every day, by name, and have your child participate in these prayers as well so that they recognize the importance.

Another very important thing you can do is find out who is on the local school board. What kind of morals and values do they represent? When it’s time for new elections, you have an obligation to know as much as possible about those running for the local school board. Get other parents and citizens around you involved as well. Then, you must vote for those that you know are governed by God in their personal lives. According to greatschools.org, “An effective school board plays an important watchdog role in keeping your local school on track and setting policies that affect your child and your school. The school board sets the vision and goals for the school district and holds the district accountable for results.”

Being a parent is not easy today. In many households, both parents work full-time jobs, leaving very little time to practice the previously mentioned tasks. We are competing with technology and many other distractions. But, it’s not just up to the local church or local school to raise our children. Yes, they each play a very important role, but, ultimately, it is our responsibility as parents. God equips each of us to fulfill all that He has commanded us to accomplish. Joshua 1:9 says, “Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of good courage, be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.”

The very future of our way of life is at stake. You CAN make a difference!

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

I am a single mom. When I married it was not my intention to raise children alone. Yet here I am, part of a rising statistic. In Mitchell County, 28% of children live in a single-parent home. I became a Christian through my divorce and remarried a Christian man who left me pregnant with twins. Like most single moms, I have two jobs and make all the decisions for my children and me. For a long time, I avoided going to church because I felt like I didn’t belong there. 70% of single mothers nationwide do not attend church, many for just that reason.

Everyone who attends church is a sinner, but a single mom who may never have been married to her child’s father feels especially judged. But the God I know, the God who saved me, has mercy, and forgiveness for all. His word tells us not to judge. I feel strongly that we, as a church, are called to love the modern-day ‘widows and orphans’, the single mom and her children.

Parenting children in a committed marriage is hard enough. For the single mom it is one of the most difficult challenges she will ever face. Being the breadwinner, chief decision-maker, disciplinarian, and all the other roles is a lonely job. Many of us struggle with depression as well as loneliness. My twins are now 13. Those of you with teenagers will know that all the parenting struggles intensify during these years!

I would like to invite single moms in our area to attend a group just for us to get together and support our journeys with friendship and guidance. We will meet at Western Carolina Church on Sunday mornings from 9:30-10:30 beginning August 24th. You do not have to attend church in order to join us. Our first video series will be Single Parenting That Works! by Dr. Kevin Leman. The church has a light breakfast available before class. Nursery and classes for all age children are also available, all free of charge.

We are also a certified The Life of a Single Mom ministry. For more information visit www.thelifeofasinglemom.com

Patti Brandt was born in Long Island, NY and lived in Florida and Colorado before moving to WNC in 2017. She has a passion for helping single mom families thrive.

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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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I Have Visions for You to See

By Alan Griffin

God’s desire is for you to manifest something for others to behold: to make a way for His divine purpose to be revealed in the eyes of others. In most of the world, people spend their entire existence on survival, neglecting a relationship with God. In the USA we spend most of our life being entertained. In John 9 we have the story of a man born blind from birth. The disciples asked if the man was blind because of his own sins, or if he was blind because of the sins of his family. Jesus answered, “Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.” This is God’s desire for all Christians. Jesus took clay and spit, and anointed the blind man’s eyes. The clay represents the earth from which we were formed, and the spit is the divine anointing of mankind. The man was told to go wash his eyes in the nearest pool. When he did, through faith, he received his sight. The water represents the Word of God and through faith as God’s Word we receive the Holy Spirit.

When Adam was in the Garden of Eden he received daily visits from God. As they walked and talked, God revealed to Adam many things so their relationship grew on a daily basis. When Adam chose to please Eve over God he lost the spiritual connection between God and man—it was broken. So it is every time we sin, and every time we show no regret for our wrongdoings. This is why we do not have spiritual communion with God. He has made available to us through His working such meditation and prayers, and through visions and dreams, what He wants to reveal to every individual. Through our connected spirit, the works of God should be manifest in us.

When we accept the knowledge and experience the holy reverence of the awesome nature of God, bowing down before Him with all praise, honor and glory, we permit ourselves to be a conduit to God. When we turn to the workings of His universe—the stars, the planes, the glory of all creation—we admit to know little about the operations of things around us. When we spend time daily with the Word of God, living obediently to His teachings, seeking with our hearts, and placing our faith only in Him, we make ourselves available to the inner operation of the Holy Spirit. Through these channels, we receive new revelations and scripture becomes clearer and clearer. We permit ourselves to receive revelations from God.

These meanings can come through further understanding of the Bible, they can be received through visions and dreams, or they can come through past recollections. The important thing is to get your mind pure before God. A humbled heart, submitted to God, ready to be corrected and receive instruction on righteous living, will permit the Holy Spirit to reveal God’s desires to you. All Christians are capable of receiving dreams and visions. We are to continue to develop this knowledge to fellow believers so that the entire family of God receives instruction. 

Uphright living is the key to getting our mind to pay attention to what God is trying to tell us. He doesn’t try to push anything on us, but with a soft and loving voice He instructs us in righteous living. Turn out for ten days. Turn down your phone, turn off your TV, and make your home quiet so you can hear. Empty your mind of all thoughts. This does not come easy at first to meditating on some question you would like to ask God. With questions come answers, with answers comes growth, and growth brings us to our true purpose in life—sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ with others.

Hearing truth is the responsibility of every Christian. In John 15, Jesus explains to us that He is the Vine, and His Father (our Father) is the Gardener. We are the branches, and if the branches do not bear fruit they are cut off and thrown into the fire. We can sit in a pew all our life and never make it to the Promised Land. We can have faith, but faith without works is nothing more than a batch of dead grapes who will find themselves cast into the fires of hell. The fruit is that fragrant sumptuous and delicious knowledge of God’s grace given to another person in all love and understanding so they too may become acquainted with the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. The greatest experience I have ever had is watching another person come into the understanding of the justice and righteousness of God.

Dreams, visions, and recollections are to be compared with scripture to certify their authenticity. Never let another person reveal to you what a dream or vision means; if your dream has meaning, the Holy Spirit will be the One who reveals it to you. Finding to follow these steps will result in faith and ignorance. Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keps the law, happy is he (Proverbs 29:18) Visions and dreams are your choice. God has already chosen to communicate with you in this manner. God’s truth is known throughout all of His beings: but that is properly understood, all scripture, visions, and recollections will be in harmony.

Alan Griffin started the kidschrist 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 2003. The ministry has expanded their websites to reach around the world. Kidschrist.com, millenniumchrist.com, toddlerchrist.com, picture-versa.com, and saulworks-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@kidschrist.com.
**Mistake**

By Patricia Jackson

Merriman Webster Dictionary defines Mistake: To blunder in the choice of, or to make a wrong judgment.

In this article, we will look at the life of a King of Israel whose mistake impacted a great nation. (I Kings, Chapter 12).

Rehoboam, Son of Solomon, grandson of King David. Following the death of his father, he became king over all Israel, age 41. His first major decision came when men from the ten tribes of Israel came to him, led by Jeroboam. During Solomon’s reign, they were forced to work basically as slaves, and pay taxes also. They asked Rehoboam to lighten their workload and pledged loyalty to him if he would do so. Rehoboam sought the advice of the old men, governors, who advised him to agree to lighten the workload. He then sought advice from his friends, the young men, who advised him to increase their workload and brutal treatment. We do not read that Rehoboam sought the Lord’s wisdom and guidance in this decision. His decision was to follow the advice of his young friends. No doubt his decision was based on a number of things - his newfound power, his ego, his lack of experience as King and personal lack of compassion. Not understanding human nature or having insight into the future also resulted in the once glorious nation of Israel becoming divided, with ten tribes leaving. King Jeroboam would only have Judah and Benjamin to rule over. No doubt the decision not to follow the wisdom of the old man was a decision he lived to regret the rest of his life.

As I read these scriptures, I thought about when we are faced with a decision, we often consult our friends or co-workers. We usually get conflicting answers, leaving us to make the decision we prefer, often without considering the long term consequences. When faced with a difficult decision, we should pray about it first. Matthew 6:26 tells us “For your Father knows what things ye have need of before ye ask him”. We previously read the Lord knew Rehoboam would not seek his face and would make a foolish decision. If we fail to seek the Lord’s guidance, he might allow us to face unnecessary hardships and stress, in order to teach us a lesson. He always does this in love, but many times it is difficult to go through. We may also seek guidance from a trusted person of God, perhaps your Pastor or a Sunday School Teacher. No decision should be made until we weigh the immediate and long term consequences of the decision and the impact on others in our lives.

Patricia Jackson is the Assistant Teacher for the Ladies Class at Redeemed Freewill Baptist Church, Glenwood, NC. She is a grant writer for non-profit, a published author and retired Nursing Home Administrator. She lives in Rutherford County with her husband.

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**7th Annual Women Seeking God-Freedom Retreat**

October 4th-5th at High Pastures Retreat Center

Finding Joy In Your Journey

By Skelly Grindstaff

Mitchell County

“Theeping may endure for a night but JOY comes in the morning”. What about those seasons when the night is long and morning never seems to come? How can we, “Count it ALL Joy” as Paul says in the midst of your worst suffering? If you have been in a season of despair, depression and hard battles come to join us as we worship the One who “for the joy set before Him, endured the cross” so we could have the joy of our salvation restored. Come find out what it means for God to give you the “Oil of Joy for mourning and a garment of praise for the Spirit of heaviness”. Come experience the restoration of your Joy! This is a non-nominational event led by Skelly Grindstaff, who has a heart for seeing broken woman healed and come to an intimate relationship with Jesus. She has the heart to see women of all denominations and backgrounds joined together in one Spirit worshipping together. This will be held at High Pastures Retreat Center in Burns, NC. Dinner starts Friday, October 4th at 5:30, followed at 6:45 by an evening of joyful worship led by Ryan and Maria Anglin and a testimony time sharing what God has done in their lives. At 9 pm you can enjoy fellowship andCHURCHnews shared around the fire or a movie at the lodge. Saturday you will enjoy more worship and hear stories from some Women who have found Joy in the midst of some hard journeys. Kimberly Duncan, who radiated joy even in the midst of her battle with cancer and chemo will share her powerful story of God’s grace and transforming power throughout her life. Sarah Rosecamino, from last year’s conference with suicidal thoughts from years of battling mental illness but had a real encounter with the Holy Spirit and it brought forth a real transformation, not only to her but to her family. She was set free by the blood of Jesus and His Word and filled with a joy. She loves to share her story now. Skelly Grindstaff will share truths from God’s Word that will equip you to experience the true joy that is not based on circumstance or emotion. Staying at High Pastures is encouraged to get away from distractions. A Room with 3 meals is $60. There is an option for retreat only for $10 if you are unable to stay and you can also add individual meals as well. Registrations can be picked up or dropped off at The Bridge church in Spruce Pine or Higginson UMC in Burns, NC. They need to be turned in by September 30th due to a meal count. You can also contact Skelly Grindstaff for pick up at sgrindstaff70@gmail.com or 828-234-8646.

Shelley currently attends The Bridge Church of Spruce Pine. She has been involved in children, youth and women ministry, as well as leading adult small group bible studies in various churches of different denominations for 26 years.

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Serves the Lord with His Music
By Margaret Coitner
Burke County

In a day that we hear and read so much negativity about our youth, I would like to offer something positive to our readers. I would like to commend a very special young man for his outstanding dedication and commitment to the Lord as well as to his preparation for the Lord’s work. I have long retired from my fifty years of teaching primary piano lessons. However, with my sincere love for teaching as well as my heart for students interested in music, I find it very difficult to turn them away when they ask that I teach them.

In all my years of teaching, it was very seldom a high school student, and even more so, a young man came to me with a desire to learn church music so that he could serve in his church. Kenny had been greatly influenced by, at that time pianist, Mrs. Alma Smith, her service to the church and her ability to play so well. She played a tremendous part in Kenny’s desire to learn. He had studied music as well as church music. His interest in music had been ongoing prior to this interest in church music. However, Mrs. Alma recognized his talent and his love for sacred music. She encouraged him to learn. Kenny’s drive to serve in his church touched my heart because I, too, had begun piano at the age of eight for that very same reason. I wanted to play piano for church. I became our church pianist around age twelve.

Needless to say, I took Kenny on as my student. He has been a joy to teach to say the least. On September 5, 2015, he had his first lesson. This month Kenny is celebrating his third year in piano with a concentration on hymn playing.

My experience and ability to teach had very little to do with Kenny’s progress. His consistency is having regular lessons and daily practice, along with his determination, made Kenny the outstanding student he is, as well as the pianist he has become. In the three years that Kenny has been with me he has missed only four lessons. These were unavoidable. A student must meet with his teacher regularly and have regular practice if he is to progress. Kenny has been faithful to call me each week to confirm his lesson time. He is the kind of student that teachers dream of having and the faithful servant that God would have us all to be.

Due to health reasons, Mrs. Alma found it necessary to retire her position as church pianist at South Mountain and Kenny because the pianist long before he had completed two years of lessons.

Kenny is now a college student and even with the heavy load he carries he continues his piano practice and has his lesson each week. Should you visit the South Mountain Baptist Church on Hwy 16, Morganon, you would no doubt be blessed by his presence as he serves the Lord with his music. Chris Amos is the pastor of South Mountain Baptist. Kenny is the son of Ginny Clarke of Morganon.

Margaret Coitner taught piano lessons for fifty years.

Foster Grandparenting — Ministry Opportunity for Seniors
By Carol Layton - Director of Communications, NC Baptist Aging Ministry

In 2018, 15,796 children were placed in North Carolina’s foster care system. Baptist Children’s Homes of NC (BCH) responded to these numbers by launching “Family Foster Care.” While continuing to provide residential care, the ministry now trains and licenses individuals to provide foster homes to children.

BCH also trains churches to come alongside foster parents, as a church body, and provide support and Christian community to both them and the children who come into their families.

Providence Baptist Church in Harrisburg and Salem Baptist Church in Dobson have couples in their congregations who have become foster families through BCH’s training and placement process. Currently, seven churches have been placed with foster families from Salem’s congregation. Six of these children are siblings — two siblings each living with three of the families. These brothers and sisters are able to worship together and celebrate birthdays together. Co-parenting between the families adds another benefit.

Dr. Sandy Gregory, director of North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry (NCBAM), envisions seniors volunteering with BCH Family Foster Care as “foster” grandparents. “All children need the special relationship that only a grandparent provides; and foster kids desperately need it,” says Gregory. He and his wife Renee received foster parenting training through BCH. They have fostered several children and are currently fostering to adopt.

Gregory offers a 90-minute workshop for senior adults who attend BCH Family Foster Care classes. The training includes information about the foster care system, the needs of foster families, responding to emergency situations, how to foster grandparents can serve as mentors and share their Christ-like legacy with a foster child — possibly carrying a life forever.

One of NCBAM’s newest outreaches, “One Hope,” will also intersect with BCH Family Foster Care. One Hope engages socially isolated and lonely seniors with community activities, such as foster grandparenting.

NCBAM’s newest “Passport” brochure provides more information on BCH Foster Family Care. The brochure provides ideas on how to get involved in fostering through BCH. Call 800.476.3669 or visit bchfosterCare.org.

Carol Layton is Office and Support Manager for North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry (NCBAM).
**Marlene’s Meditations**

**Gifts Mirror God’s Generosity**

By Marlene Houk

Burke County

James 1:17: 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.

I bent, washed the cloth from the cabinet and batted my eye. When I opened my eyes, the sight startled me back forty years ago. Draped over my hands lay a present from our wedding. It had survived unbelievable odds, incredible feats of cleaning, and two teenagers, its memories, helping me celebrate our wedding anniversary today. My hands had handled that same washcloth so many years ago, a gift from close friends who wished us well on our matrimonial journey. The power of that gift still gave me pleasure and sweet memories years later. How could a white washcloth last thirty-seven years? Through countlessla times, and neat little oddities, narrowly missed destruction by teens racing headlong through life, and precarious clinging to the same family proved miraculous. And yet, here it is, somewhat tarnished glory in my palms. Yet, oh the significance of that faded white cloth, proved priceless to me.

The cloth, worn to a thin layer by two generations, reminded me of a spiritual analogy in the Bible. Those gifts weave the threads of generosity, reconciliation, affirmation, and, most importantly, spiritual blessings into Bible stories of epic proportions. For example, the Israelites brought tithes to the Levite priests, who offered them back to the people with hope, understanding, and faith, and the ability to transcend petty earthly emotions. These include grace (Ephesians 4:7), righteousness (Romans 5:17), the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:18), living water (John 4:10), practical spiritual gifts to offer in service to the Lord’s Christ (Romans 12:3-8), and eternal life (Ephesians 6:23), etc.

The next time you ponder your choice of a baby shower, wedding or birthday gift, consider its potential to leave a fragrance of friendship and care, bringing a smile for possible decades after the event. And don’t forget that we mirror the Giver of every good and perfect gift (James 1:17) as we present our carefully chosen treasures to others.

The companionship to the washcloth, the towel, survived also, a testament to the friendship of its giver and a reminder to me of the Lord’s rich spiritual gifts to us that we can enjoy forever.

Marlene Houk is a regular contributor to Blue Ridge Christian News. Her passion is to share deeply into the truths of the Bible to women and to discuss those in Bible Studies called Backlash 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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**High Country Prison Ministry**

**Greater Love**

By Jody Griffin

Avery and Mitchell Counties

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:13)

Tragic flooding in the Midwest recently brought to my mind images from similar experiences in years past. One such image was a bit of a personal epiphany.

Two small children had been swept away from their father’s hands by surging water. The father ran to catch them and as he ran, he yelled for help. There was no sound with the video, but one could easily see what he said as he watched his children disappear from his sight. It was so horrible to witness that I almost shut my eyes, but I am so glad that I didn’t because what I was able to see could only be described as a miracle.

Both children had become entangled in some obstruction in the water and were struggling to keep their heads positioned to breathe. Suddenly, the television screen was filled with people. A man grasped a nearby tree and a human chain formed before any eyes. Within seconds, a man reached out and took hold of the first child who instinctively climbed from person to person to land. More humans, later, all were soaked but safe and alive!

The testimonies of those who had become this chain of life for the children said essentially the same thing. When they heard the father call, they could do no less than risk their own lives for someone else. One woman even said that she gave no thought to the fact that she couldn’t swim, she just saw the urgency of need and responded.

I have witnessed similar miracles here in this community. We have had our share of tragedies in recent years. But with each tragedy, there has also been beauty. Human chains have formed, reaching out to those in crisis, reaching not just with words but with hearts. Your selfless ministry is an inspiration to me. I hear the cry for help and give nothing short of yourselves in response.

Your financial support of this ministry and, for some of you, the time you spend volunteering within the gates, and for countless others of you who cannot give or serve in person, but who pray for us, we thank God for you!

Let us all be thankful for this privilege to live as friends and to reach out to those around us in crisis! And thank you so much for your financial support of this ministry! You are our lifeline!

Jody Griffin is pastor of Centra Baptist Church in Spruce Pine and Community Focused Chaplain at Avery-Mitchell Correctional Institution.
By Doug Harrell
Mitchell County

The years fly by at a tremendous pace it seems. We look out the window of time and before we realize it, we are coming to the end of the journey. For some, this might seem morbid, but it is a fact of life for all of us. Barbara and I attended a funeral yesterday for a friend of ours in a nearby community and upon arriving back at home that evening, we made the comment, “You know Doug, funerals are a little more personal now than they used to be?” I had to stop and think about that for a few minutes and let those thoughts sink in. You know, it is different when the funerals you are attending are for those who are your age and younger. It is no longer just something out in the distant future that you know but never think about. This very week, I became the oldest living member of the Lutheran and Arizona Harrel family and that gave me a moment of reflection.

I say these things to get your attention because, without faith in a risen Savior, we are just facing death, due to mortality. If there had been no resurrection, there would have been no future after the grave, but for those that have faith, we can cease that fear. Now none of us know when our date with destiny will be, or how we will take place, but belief in God’s word gives us the ability to face each day with joy and gladness, rather than depression and gloom. If we really trust and obey, we can live each day of our lives to the fullest and not worry about tomorrow or what may bring. We can face the day with joy in our hearts and a smile on our faces. Way too often, we tend to focus on the hurts and pangs of our joints, our health conditions and our ability to do the things we once did rather than doing that most of the time that we can with joy in our hearts. Now understand some days are hard and the going gets tough, but even in the valleys the journey is 95% attitude. We can sit down on the couch and be afraid to do anything because we might overheat and have a heart attack or something else, or we can get up and do all we can possibly do. My dad, A D Harrel, used to tell me when I was growing up, if you feel bad get up and go out and do something constructive, you won’t feel any worse and you might get something accomplished in the meantime.

When you are around others, don’t try and outdo each other with the intimate description of all your illnesses and scars from the surgeries you have been through, talk about your dreams and goals. Make sure you have some, they will be different than they used to be, but always something to strive for. Have a reason to get up, get out and get going. Nothing brings us to demise quicker than losing all sense of urgency in our lives. The Bible, to my knowledge, does not have one verse about retirement, but it has a lot about doing good, plowing your fields and feeding your flock. About caring and sharing Jesus’ love with those around you. Now don’t misunderstand, there is nothing wrong at all with stopping some of the daily jobs of a job or career to enjoy the fruits of your labor, but have productive plans for your life, or you will become bitter and stagnant like still water.

Focus on the world and the people around you, and what you can do each day to contribute to society and the community you are in. Be conscious of looking forward and upward rather than inward and downward. Commit to being and doing the very best you can as long as you can, and the very best you can each day of your life, it could very well be your last day! Fill each day to the brim, let your cup run over with love and enthusiasm for the day and those around you. Continue to sow seeds of joy wherever you may go each day of your life, as long as you may live.

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

BEAR CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH Welcomes You to Celebrate Recovery Thursday’s at 7:00pm Hope & Help from Addiction Through Christ

Christian Action League of NC
"Doesn’t Fit Their Vision"

By Dr. Mark Crouch

Summer months for the Christian Action League of North Carolina can be financially challenging. It’s the period when contributions are the lowest. As the League executive director, it is my responsibility to find the needed funds, which precipitates making some phone calls to individuals and churches for help.

Recently, I contacted a church that had once supported the Christian Action League but had reassessed their missions giving and stopped. They were under new leadership now, and their missions’ director said the League “doesn’t fit their vision.” I knew that expression meant “Doesn’t fit their vision,” was just a nice way of saying, “As a church, we intend to stay away from politics. We don’t share your conviction that we should engage every aspect of the culture and shape it for righteousness sake.” As I see it, this is a sad response, because churches unwilling to bring the terms of God’s Word to bear on the great issues of our time are not being quite thorough in their vision. The gospel and Christian discipleship are much wider in scope than trying to get people into heaven and filling church pews. The gospel is about redemption for the whole man, and it stretches into every realm of life in which humanity operates.

In earlier generations, Christians in America understood this. Allow me to share a lengthy excerpt from what is now a book long out of print, The Gospel and the American Dream, written by Bruce L. Shelley. Shelley writes: “In 1815, a generation before the Civil War, the well-known New England minister, Lyman Beecher, delivered a series of popular sermons. He called it ‘A Plea for the West.’ The oration reveals Beecher’s deep-seated belief that a vast new empire was opening in the American wilderness. Nothing less than a whole culture was at stake. Christians should seize the opportunity, he said, and shape ‘the religious and political destiny of the nation.’ And how does this happen? ‘Preach the Gospel!’ he asked. He called for the preaching of the gospel, distribution of Bibles, the planting of churches, the establishment of schools, and the reform of American morals.

‘This vision of a Christian America dominated evangelical thinking and generated what historians have called the “Great Evangelical Revival.” As Evangelicals faced the challenge of winning a nation to Christian obedience, two instruments were available to them: revivals and voluntary societies. “America’s first Great Awakening created an evangelical fixation upon revivals as God’s special instrument for reforming the American people. As the nation spread westward, spiritual awakenings occurred in the newly settled regions between the Alleghenies and the Mississippi and proved to be a primary channel for the spread of Christianity and the civilizing of the wilderness.”’

Since the then-recently adopted American Constitution and Bill of Rights rejected any thought of a “holy commonwealth” by ruling any direct influence of the churches upon the government, how were these growing numbers of Christians to fulfill their responsibilities for public life and morals? That is where the voluntary societies came in. William Carey and other English evangelicals had already formed such societies to carry the gospel to India and to fight the slave trade in the West Indies. The societies allowed individual Christians, without regard to denominational identities, to mobilize their efforts for moral and religious causes. They simply contributed their money, and in some cases, their lives, to advance their cause at home or overseas.

In his book, Evangelicals seized the idea for their own purposes. It seemed the perfect instrument for America’s free society. Thus early in the nineteenth-century scores of societies sprang up to shape some aspect of American life: Bible Societies; Sabbath Societies, Mission Societies; Temperance Societies. ‘One thing is become more prominent,’ said Beecher in 1810, ‘the grand influence’ of the church and the triumphs of the last forty years are the result of the voluntary association of Christians.

‘That grand influence of the churches included the shaping of American morality and many commonly shared religious beliefs.’

When [Alcide de] Tocqueville visited the country in the 1830s, he expressed his admiration for the democratic process at work in the numerous small communities throughout the nation.

‘He held that American democracy was always in danger of digesting into itself a little-club nationalism, usually autocratic and a backlash against such a mass society in America’s small towns, where most people were self-employed, civic-minded, and influenced, directly or indirectly, by the Christian faith.

‘This vision of a democratic America, linking Christian values and republican principles, was probably the prevailing vision throughout the nineteenth century. Few dared to stand and challenge President Woodrow Wilson when he said, ‘America was born a Christian nation for the purpose of exemplifying to the nations of the world the principles of righteousness found in the Word of God.’

I have this vision no longer fits much of the church today, America is on the brink of complete disaster, and Christians are starting to feel like aliens in their own country. For a church to say that addressing what’s happening in politics “doesn’t fit their vision” is also a way of admitting to selective blindness.

Reverend Dr. Mark Crouch is Executive Director of the NC Christian Action League. You can contact him at revmarkcrouch@christianactionleague.org or 919-737-0605.

September 2019 - Blue Ridge Christian News
God’s Children: NOT Exempt from Suffering
By Shawna Thomas
Burke County

In early 1865, hundreds of thousands of men from the North were being drafted into the Union Army to help finally bring an end to the war. President Abraham Lincoln’s own son Robert was now also being sent. Lincoln’s wife Mary did NOT want him to go. She said, “I am so frightened he may never come back to us!” But Lincoln replied, “Mary, a poor mother, Mary, has made this sacrifice...”. After sending so many others off to war, Lincoln could hardly expect his own son. Just because he was the President’s son, didn’t mean he didn’t have to go to war. (Sandberg, Abraham Lincoln, The Prairie Years and the War Years, p. 669)

And so it is with us. Just because we are God’s children, does not mean we are somehow “exempt” from various sufferings. In fact, it may rather GUARANTEE them — because God will purposefully use these difficulties to grow us spiritually, and teach us important things He needs us to learn.

Hebrews 11:27 speaks of Jesus’ “time here on earth, says, “although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered.” Being God’s Son did not “ exempt” Jesus from suffering... and neither does being His child exempt us! Even though we are God’s children, we will suffer in His will, because we will “learn obedience” from it.

Among other things, this means just because you are suffering, does NOT mean that you are not God’s child — or that you are not in His will. Sometimes when we face difficulties we might be tempted to think, “Perhaps I am not in God’s will? Perhaps He is punishing me?” But this is not necessarily so. God’s children, right at the center of His perfect will, may suffer. Just like Jesus, “although you are a son, (you) are learning obedience from the things which (you) are suffering.”

—So suffering doesn’t mean you aren’t God’s child.
—Suffering does not mean you aren’t in His will.
—It just means that God has chosen to use what you are going through to teach you something very important. So walk with God through that difficult time in your life, and be sure to learn the important spiritual lesson(s) your Heavenly Father intends to teach you through it!

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

And thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the year’s end. Exodus 34:22

New Writer
By Nancy Malik
Avery County

Hello to the body of Christ of the High Country and those who want to know what that means! It is a joy to work with a newspaper committed to the Christian community in this beautiful area of the United States. BRCN and WECR radio in Avery County are working together to reach this entire region for Christ. Bins and Pieces, found in the middle of the paper, lists many events happening within this area of the mountains. Columnists are writing about the Christian life and so many ways to get involved and pray for their work.

Starting in September I will be giving creation spots Monday-Fridays for children on WECR Glory Radio 1130.

God’s creation is full of His glory and the Blue Ridge Mountains wear it so well. The four seasons hold delights of their own. With mountains, lakes, streams, forests, flowers, wonderful wildlife and Christmas trees, it is breathtaking. In mid-August, I went to the top of a mountain before first light to view a month-long meteorite shower and was blessed with the view of two of them scanning the sky horizon to horizon. The skies truly declare the glory of God! He made each star in the sky. Also, heart shape rocks are found around this area. Another gift of The Creator to let the High Country know how much He loves His special place.

Fall is coming soon as a reminder of the seasons of the year and life with new growth in spring, fullness in summer, winding down in fall and then cold and dark in the winter. The four seasons here remind us of His promises in life with a cycle in and year out. They remind us of His promises in life and who He is, The Creator. The six counties that BRCN’s reaches out to encompass a unique place. Prayer power is the norm in this place. Sharing the Lord is a common event and it shows. The BRCN and WECR radio and two great formats to support to allow the High Country Body of Christ connect. Please consider placing ads, articles, participating in Bins and Pieces (free) and be involved with the Church of this "set apart" place to draw together. We live in an exciting time! Be blessed! You are loved, deeply!

Nancy Malik and her husband moved to Avery County in 2017. Her husband passed in 2018. She is a member of Heaton Christian Church. Nancy taught preschool, elementary school and middle school over many years. She is the grandmother of eight!

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September 2019 - Blue Ridge Christian News page 10
The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved (Jeremiah 8:20)

It’s hard to believe, but as I write this article summer is nearing its end. My how time has absolutely flown by! School is beginning again, fall colors are approaching and cooler weather is on the way.

Jeremiah is in the above verse lamenting the captivity of Judah by Babylon. He can’t believe this has happened. The northern kingdom fell one hundred years previously to the Assyrians. Babylon rose to power, defeated Assyria and proceeded to take all the territories under Assyrian control. It was not content with that huge land and people grab and marched on Judah.

As Jeremiah sees all this happening, and he also is taken into captivity, he lamented. He also heard the Lord’s lament in Chapter 2:11, “O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, ye very stars of heaven, for the Lord hath spoken a word against the proud, saying, This is the beginning of sorrows...”

He is grieved. Time is dragging on and there seems to be no end to the captivity and no return to their homeland. He wonders why God’s people do not seek forgiveness from the Lord. And why are they not begging for a return to their homeland.

As I think on these things my mind drifts onto the United States of America. I love our country. I was born here and have lived in America all my life. I believe America was founded by God as He moved upon the hearts of the founders to come here seeking a land where they could worship God in spirit and in truth.

Upon arriving they began the process of establishing a government by the people and for the people. A government where they could worship God as they were led to do so. They acknowledged His divine sovereignty. They sought His counsel as they wrote our founding documents. They prayed to Him for leadership, guidance, protection, and blessings upon their new nation.

But, my oh my, how we have fallen from that mindset! Our nation today has so many voices seeking to censor the name “Jesus”. Innocuous prayers are prayed without using His name. His Word is being taken from offices by so many.

The phrase, “so help you God” has been removed from some courtrooms. The Ten Commandments have been removed from many public locations. The Cross, once standing guard over the tombs of deceased military and law enforcement personnel and others, has been removed in many places.

My question is, where will all this madness stop? How is it that we can mention the names of false gods without laundering the praise so boldly, visibly and loudly to the One God who gave us this great land, blessed us in so many ways, and sent His Only Begotten Son to pay the ransom for our sins?

The Lord thoroughly judged Judah and Israel for turning from Him! What will He do to a nation such as the United States of America who knew better, yet, blinded and deceived by Satan, has done the very same things?

My heart breaks when I hear Jesus’ name being censored and statements and symbols of our faith being removed from public buildings and locations. I long for days to return as when I was a boy. In that era the Pledge of Allegiance was honored, the Word of God proudly displayed by all, prayer passionately prayed in JESUS’ NAME and Church houses were full of passionate worshippers who gladly came to the House of God to offer Him praise for their blessings and well-being.

Pray with me, “Lord, forgive us for not honoring you our very best praise and worship. Forgive us for not standing boldly for your Word and your Name. Forgive us for allowing the removal of Christian symbols and statements in public places. You alone are worthy of all praise and worship! You made our land great. Enriched it and prospered it! Please give us another opportunity to stand for You. Please turn our nation back to you. Help us to teach our children the importance of honoring and serving you. Help us to show them the value of living for you and worshipping you. Lord, guide our hearts and protect our homes; give us the wisdom to tend you and follow you. Thank You for always being there for us and for hearing our prayers. In Jesus’ Wonderful and Mighty Name, we pray. Amen.”

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

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Steve Gatto is a CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ who specializes in reducing risk and taxes in retirement. McIntyre Law Firm is an Elder Law practice that specializes in helping people protect their estates and their founder wrote the Book Saving the Farm.

To reserve your seat call (828) 359-0299 or email Steve@reitreim.com

68 South Main Street Suite 200
Marion, NC 28752

Bear Creek Baptist Church

By Bruce Cannon
Mitchell County

September Educational Events
- September 16th: Retirement Law Summit
- September 17th: New Rules for Retirement Savings
- September 19th: How to pay for Long Term Care
- September 26th: McIntyre Law Firm Saving the Farm
God’s people are faced with making decisions each day of your lives. Some decisions seem to be simple. They don’t require much thought nor energy. Because we make these choices every day. For example, getting up, putting on our clothes, eating, working, and sleeping are the types of choices that we make each day. It appears that the decisions that give the most trouble in life, as Christians, are probably moral, ethical, and spiritual decisions that have to do with relationships. Whether you are aware of it or not, and you are probably going to make most of our decisions based on what we have learned, what we have been taught, and how we have been conditioned to choose from our past. Some of that is probably good and helps us make good decisions—but much of it often sets us up to make questionable decisions that affect our life, our testimony, our relationships, and our fellowship with God.

Let me mention “Five Principles” that I have gleaned from a dear minister, Dr. Clifton Black, that will help you make decisions that: honor God, keep you faithful, bless your loved ones, friends, and brothers and sisters in Christ; and make your testimony of your relationship and walk with Christ stronger.

The Ideal Test

The first question to ask is does my choice or decision line up with the will and ways of God? Does the choice that I am about to make follow the godly, spiritual ideals of God’s purposes and plans? Does this choice line up with God’s Word and allow Him to use you as a credible witness to His love, calling, promises, plans, and purposes? As a believer, God has called you into a relationship that allows the world to see the power and love of God in action.

Integrity Test

Integrity means what is on the inside matches what is on the outside. A person of integrity acts consistently out of the character of Christ. And, perhaps, the greatest description of the character of Christ is found in Paul’s listing of the “fruit of the Spirit” in Galatians 5:22-23. Integrity is a strong sense of right or wrong, and courageously choosing right no matter what the circumstances. Integrity is the touchstone for the working of the Spirit of Christ in our lives.

Paul wrote in (Peter 2:16) “Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God.” If whatever issue or question that demands a decision bothers your conscience, then it is likely that the Holy Spirit is giving you an immediate testimony that you are facing a challenge to whether you are being true to the principles of God or not. God is going to choose to act like a disciple and follower of Christ or not; or whether you are going to be a spiritual leader and encourager of faith or not. If it bothers your conscience, you had better avoid it! Whether it’s right or wrong, permissible or not, do not put off the choice about it.

A guilty conscience always tries to cover up by making excuses or rationalizations. When Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden, do you know what the first thing that he did? He ran and hid in the bushes. God knew where Adam was. The problem was that Adam didn’t know where Adam was. Children of God, you can’t hide from God. There is no use in trying to cover up sin. The Bible gives this warning in Proverbs 28:12-13, “When the righteous triumphs, there is great glory. But when the wicked rise, men hide themselves. He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion.”

Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 6:12, “All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient; all things are lawful unto me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.” The great apostle and missionary of Christ says everything is allowable in the Christian life because we are free, but not everything is beneficial. Paul then gives a couple of tests in this verse that are aimed at guiding the believer through the decision-making process. Let me translate them into modern terms. Will it make a good person? Is what I’m doing going to constructive or destructive? Is it a help to my life or a hindrance to my life? Is it true to my life or is it useless?

The longer I live, the more I have come to believe that many things are not necessarily wrong, they’re just not necessary. James Wright said, “Life’s too short to give up reading an inferior book.” In other words, life is too short to waste it on nonessentials, on things that really don’t make the most of your life. So, the third test in decision-making is, is it beneficial? Is it helpful to me? Often the good is an enemy to the best. Don’t settle for being average. Does it have a tendency to control me or do I control it? Does it dominate my life, or do I dominate it? Anything, any habit, any hobby, any activity, anything that controls your life is your god. Almighty declared, “You shall have no other gods before Me.” If it’s distracting for you, it’s out. If it tends to control your life, it’s out. The bottom line is if it’s not the most helpful thing for your life, then you must choose, “No!”

Influence Test

Here in America, we have freedom of speech. We are free to say anything that we want to say. We are also free to do any lawful thing that we want to do. But for the follower of Christ, sometimes it is better (for the cause of Christ) to not say what’s on our mind or not do what we freely want to do. Why? Because our Christian influence and testimony of Jesus living in our life is at stake. Whether you like it or not, your testimony is always on trial. You are not on trial, as perhaps it is so easy, but rather the presence of Jesus and the credibility of our Christ’s call upon your life to discipleship and service is on trial.

Investment Test

Your decisions, whether you realize it or not, reveal what is important to you. They divulge, disclose, display, and exhibit whether you are serious about being a man or woman of God, a follower, and disciple of Christ, and a witness of God’s grace, mercy, and love. The decisions that you and I make daily concerning marriage, family, personal spiritual growth, finances, time, energy, and many other things—reveal whether you and I are going to live in Christ and walk in His Spirit—or we are going to live for self and stumble in the world. Each and every decision is important to the Lord.

And so, “as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been rooted and made firm in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflows with gratitude.”

Dr. Jack R. Hodges, Jr. is the Senior Pastor at Pleasant Hill Baptist Church in Morganton, Burke County. He has served as a pastor, a biblical counselor, and an International Mission Board missionary.
How Not to Waste Your Life
By Steve Williams
Mitchell County

The Bible tells us in James 1:22 “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own souls.” See there are many good people, nice people with the potential to serve God. The only thing that they never move to apply their potential.

An Oklahoma football coach, who was once asked by a reporter about a star recruit, a high school running back who had broken all his school’s records for running yards. The reporter asked the coach, “How good can this running back be. Can he break the college records? Does he have potential?”

Many newspaper reporters ask multiple questions, but before the coach had time to answer even one question. The coach said, slow down buddy, is that one question or three? He replied to the nervous reporter, what I mean is, does this running back have more potential than any runner you’ve ever coached? The coach stared at the reporter, smiled a big smile, and spit out an answer. Sure he does, buddy. But potential means you ain’t done nothing yet.

See that is where a lot of Christians are today. They have the potential to do something, but they haven’t done anything yet. See, most Christians today are like a car that’s transmission is stuck neutral; the motor sounds impressive, the lights, radio and horn are all in good working condition, and new tires, but the only problem is that it is not going anywhere. So, if one is not going to waste their life, they must be doing something. You ask doing what? Doing what the Word of God tells us to do. To go and share the gospel and to practice living the Christian life out loud. God does not just look at our potential, but God is looking for our productivity. Too many times we are doing what we want to do instead of what God wants us to do, and that means we are wasting our lives. If we’re not going to waste our lives, we must become productive Christians. So many people have in their mind that if they are going to do something for God it’s going to have to be something great. That’s pride and pride will never be productive. Don’t waste your time waiting and longing for large opportunities which may never come, but faithfully handle the little things that come your way.

Words of Wisdom

• The will to win the desire to succeed, the urge to reach its full potential… these are the keys that will unlock the door to personal excellence. N/A

• A word of encouragement from a teacher to a child can change a life. A word of encouragement from a spouse can save a marriage. A word of encouragement from a leader can inspire a person to reach their potential. John C. Maxwell

• God, our Creator, has stored within our minds and personalities, great potential, strength and ability. Prayer helps us tap and develop these powers. N/A

• The dreams and passions stored within hearts are powerful keys that can unlock a wealth of potential. John C. Maxwell

I heard this one time and I have found it to be true. Raising teenagers and trying to teach them to reach their full potential, is like nailing Jell-O to a tree.

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

Check out our Website-
www.brnews.com
And find us on Facebook

Out of Darkness -
No Regrets Family Ministry
By Dean Honeycutt
Mitchell County

The Lord has blessed me tremendously and I just wanted to thank God for everything He has done for me. You know the Lord did not have to save me, but by His grace, I was saved. The Bible teaches us that we were in the “power of darkness” before we got saved. Colossians 1:13 (KJV 1900); 13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.

Therefore, I was in a dark place as an unsaved person. I did not realize where I was spiritually. Most people never consider their spiritual condition before God. We do not think of ourselves as being in the realm of darkness before we get saved. Could this be the reason many of us take our salvation for granted because we do not consider where God has brought us from?

To even began to wrap our minds around what God has done for us is amazing. If it were possible to see ourselves as hell, then we could begin to understand the grace of God. We have an account of this in Luke 16 about a rich man in hell who lifted his eyes in torment and saw Lazarus comforted in Abraham’s bosom. This rich man begged for a drop of water and for Lazarus to warn his five brothers of the horrible place he was in. It is obvious from this true account had the rich man been aware of the horrible terrifying place of hell he would have done anything to avoid going to this place of torment.

Only through the light of the Gospel and the conviction of the Holy Spirit are we made aware of our need for salvation. We do not come to this place of awareness on our own. By the grace of God, we are made aware of our sinful condition but rarely are we convinced of our dire need for salvation. We are not brought to this place of awareness on our own.

So, God comes into our darkness and rescues sinners out of a place where we cannot get onto our own. How does one expose what is in the dark? You expose what is in the dark by shining light into darkness. Jesus Christ is the “light of the world” and it is His light and revelation and work of the Holy Ghost that exposes and draws our sinful nature to itself for salvation. John 1:9 (KJV 1900); 9 Again, a new commandment! I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.

Thank God Jesus came to where I was in a dark place I could not get out of, and Jesus paid my sin debt on the cross of Calvary makes it possible for me to be saved. God loves you so much even when we do not even consider what He has done for us. When Jesus died on the cross there was darkness all over the land, because He was paying the penalty for my sin. The wages of sin is death, but thank God, the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Have you trusted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? God can meet you where you are at today, pray to Him today confess your sin to God and ask Jesus to be the Lord of your life. Romans 10:13 (KJV 1900); 13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Live life with “No Regrets”

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Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. John 4:35
Tiring God in Times of Change

By Chris Rathbone
Mitchell County

For the most part, we like the familiar. What I mean by that is we do not care a whole lot for unplanned changes in our lives. We tend to get comfortable with how things are in our lives and we are pretty resistant to anything different coming along. I can honestly say that I am the same way. Even though there are changes that will often work out to be a blessing, sometimes I have trouble looking ahead at how God will use a change to grow me spiritually. We especially do not like change when it takes control away from us. For example, we may not mind changing careers when we are the ones who decided we wanted to change. However, if we have to change careers because of being laid off or a company closes down, we get all upset because something has happened that we had no control over. Here are some things to remember that will help us during times of change or transition.

First, change is inevitable. Like it or not change happens. Even in different stages of our lives, it is absolutely going to happen. We go from grade school to college, from single life to married life, from a couple to parenthood, from parenting our children to empty nest syndrome, from working life to retirement life, etc. etc. See what I mean about change being inevitable. It is a fact of life that life is full of change! There are some things that we just must accept and these kinds of changes and many more are “par for the course”.

Secondly, regardless of what may change, we are still in the hands of God. Instead of arranging our hands or losing sleep over things that we cannot control, why don’t we simply realize that whatever comes our way, we still are God’s children? These changes in life that we didn’t see coming did not take God by surprise. I believe that there is nothing that comes into our lives that God has not already seen and allowed. Even though I may not understand the reasons why, I do trust Him with what He may be doing. Sometimes circumstances happen in our lives that we want God to take away. We need to pray and ask the Lord what He may be doing in our life instead of asking why He allowed something in our life. One of my professors used to say this, “Faith is not if we believe enough God will deliver us from something. Faith is trusting and believing God whether He delivers us or not!” (Example: Shadrach, Meshach, & Abednego Daniel 3).

Last of all, God may be doing something that we will realize later. Now I know that some things happen that never make any sense regardless of how much time goes by. But I also have experienced changes that did not make sense until later. Sometimes even years have passed and I may not have seen what God was doing behind the scenes, and then suddenly the Holy Spirit speaks and opens up my understanding to say something like this: “Chris, for you to be where you are today, this had to happen 4 years ago! Now, do you trust me?” Those are moments in our lives that we come to realize that we can really trust God with all those changes and unforeseen circumstances that come our way.

Now I need you to do me a favor. Please remind me of this article I’ve written when I am going through one of those unforeseen changes in my life. When you hear me doubting and wondering why God has allowed something to happen, remind me that I can trust God in times of change!

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

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Crossword Solution

Sudoku Solution
Clint's Chronicles on the Funny Farm

The Root of the Story:
This was the second Funny Farm Story that Clint wrote back in 2010. He was just getting his sea legs, so to speak, on writing these articles. As I read back through them, I see the upper table, a big some cooked meal that Barbara had prepared and used a cake of some kind to finish off the meal. This is where we had the pleasure of listening to Clint's tale of the day and the adventures he had been subjected to, in reality, had created for himself. One of his enduring qualities was his ability to poke fun at himself without reservation, and to revel in it. We have often thought he would have been a winner at the storytelling contest over in Jonesboro, Tennessee. I would have loved to have seen him participate in something like this. He was such a competitor in every walk of his life that I have no doubt that he would have been a winner here as well. It was always a laugh-a-ton around the upper table just listening to the events unfold. His description of real life was just as full of life, if not more so, than his written stories are. I hope you enjoy this one as much as did when I read it today.

Blessed a day.

Farmer Doug

Funny Farm

Dear Friends,
As late as March of this year I believed I was a country boy. My home is Hendersonville, NC, a nice town of 30,000+ only 1 hour drive from CLC. My profession changed dramatically in late March when I came to spend a few months with my friends Doug and Barbara Harrel at Harrell Hill Farm near Bakersville.

Doug and I go back more than twenty years. I was the executive vice president for GTE Corporation (now Verizon) and Doug was a technology wiz. A "country boy" who does good is the way I often thought of me.

Well let me tell you, I have learned some valuable and unforgettable lessons since living in the real "country". I’ve worked on the farm now for nearly six months and experienced things which could only happen in a Chewy Chase film or to me.

Anyway, if you will tolerate me, I want to share some of my hair raising farm stories. We'll call them "Clint's Chronicles on the Funny Farm"—names will be changed to protect the innocent and chances are I may exaggerate the facts a wee bit. It will go something like this.

A Beast In The Beans!
'Twas a beautiful day at Harrell Hill Farm, crystal clear sky, a torrid 93 degrees as I headed for the garden to harvest a couple bushels of blue lake bush beans. I had been nearly devoured by ticks and yellow jackets the day before—the most aggressive microscopic critters on earth. So donned my overalls, long-sleeved shirt, and high boots for an adventure in the bean patch.

Now what I found growing there was a string bean but have since learned that there is no longer a string, just a snap. That was a pretty big disappointment to me, although I am not sure why. Just so many new farm facts in my head these days I can hardly catalog them all.

Doug told me this was backbreaking work—that I might want to take a three-legged stool along for more comfortable picking. Well I did that but we’d had an inch of rain overnight and the three legs kept getting mired in the dirt so it was breaking my back moving the soil around. I tossed it aside. Besides, I’ve been in the farm 3 months now and lost 63 pounds of chubby and ten inches in the waistline. I am as skinny as a li'l, strong as a bull, poised and ready to again dominate the landscape. My agricultural prowess.

I was lunched over piles and piles of bush beans, eating solitude with the Lord, the land, and the gaudy. A gentle breeze cooled my sweat soaked clothes, and I was humming praise songs and talking to Jesus. What a wonderful day He was giving me.

It is important mind you, that I remain vigilant while harvesting these succulent little pods. I know, but my spiders, snails, and other killer vermin can attack without warning. It’s simply one of the hazards of being Farmer Clint, yet I gladly embrace. I chuckled to myself as I thought of the Scripture, “Be self controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” 1 Peter 5:8. Not that I expected a lion, although a hungry bear was not out of the realm of possibility. Regardless, a farmer cannot be too careful.

Somewhere, amid mid-row bean, I heard a soft rustling in the sorghum cane field. I figured it must be a deer since they had been enmity virtually every other day. I placed at Harrell Hill Farm. I never had any bears and was praying that he wouldn’t come over and sit all the beans. It was such a glorious day, I continued to pick and pray, to pick and hum, to pick and thank God for the joy of being one with the farm.

Then, from nowhere and from nowhere a huge, furry beast burst from the perimeter of the cane field. I heard it coming running, stomping, growling, moaning—I’m not sure who those portrayed in Steven King novels. I stood my ground, poised for war, girded for battle, prepared to lose my life for the blue lake bush bean patch…then I FELT IT, IT was on me!

My head dropped swiftly, quickly in fact that my snow hat fell to the ground. And there, I mean right there, moving across my steel-toed boots was the ugliest monster I’ve ever met. It was BIG…it was BROWN…it had teeth like a SHARK…I screamed like a girl…It looked at me, made some gutural sound and darted away. My friends, in the midst of picking beans and praising God I stood shoulder to shoulder with my very first KILLER GROUNDHOG. (Okay, maybe not shoulder to shoulder but he was a whippin’ per!)

I always thought groundhogs were like prairie dogs, or tin and crazy like Chuck and Dale. Well, now I know—they resemble Simba, or Adam, or King Kong, or any number of other prehistoric beasts. (Yes, laugh you are reading this from the comfort of your easy chair, not staring Goofus in the face.)

I had spilled beans from one end of the garden to the other, lost my three-legged stool, tripping over and destroying many tomato plants, stumbling through young broccoli spears and squishing most of the tender beet strips… I jumped into my farm truck—an 1891 vintage Jeep but that’s a story for another day— and slammed the door.

My heart was beating like a sack full of angry opiums, my blood pressure sky high, I’m sure I had taken a breath during the battle for the blue lake bush bean patch. Yet after a half hour or so, I again gained the peace of the Lord; all was well with my soul; the monster had lidded into the winds.

I discounted my Jeep and resumed the harvest of blue lake bush beans—confident that I had survived yet another test on the Funny Farm.

Bumbled in the Hills,
Farmer Clint

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Our Deliveries Are Made Daily!
One Body of Christ, Many Parts
By Christy Young
Mitchell County

I have always been amazed when studying the human body. Each body part depends on another to function and work at full capacity. We all have experienced something, maybe as simple as the common cold. Although our symptoms seem minor, it affects how our body works as a whole. Everything within our body has an important role to play, and no part is independent. All parts must work together for our body to function correctly. The Bible describes the church as the body of Christ. As believers, we make up the body of Christ. That is an important role to fill. Each believer is unique and special, but dependent on others to fulfill the purpose that God has called us upon. God has equipped each of us with special talents and abilities to uplift His kingdom. When we combine our talents and abilities, we become one in Christ. We must be spiritually in tune to understand the direction and purpose behind the talents that He has gifted us with.

We must be connected with other believers, the church, to combine our talents/gift to fulfill the work God has called us to do. 1 Corinthians 12:12 says, “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members, being many, are one body; so also is Christ.” Christ’s body is the church. If the members are connected, great things are accomplished in the name of Jesus. Without connection, there is no life, no fruits to bear. Connection/Unity as a body of believers is essential to leave a lasting impact and impression on our society, our world. As members of the body, we are called to serve Christ, each other, and the world around us. We are living in a world of darkness and despair, we must shine the light of Jesus throughout his land. Let’s unify with other believers to accomplish great things! Our prayers should be, Jesus thank You for Your body, the church, because it is beautiful and wonderfully made. Thank You, Father, for allowing us to be part of Your body. May we be obedient to Your calling and a blessing to Your church and the world around us.

Christy Young is the blessed wife of Chris Young and proud mother of Hunter and Kolden. She is a life-long resident of Mitchell County, bookkeeper at Young, Miller & Gilaspie, PA, and a member of Bear Creek Baptist Church.
In Memory of Ms. Hattie Buchanan

By Chris Buchanan
Mitchell County

All of you no doubt have a loving memory of Ms. Hattie. She seems like everyone called her that. It’s difficult to say when that started but every new church and community we would move to people would just start calling her that. She didn’t ask them to. She just was called that. It was just a natural act of endearment. And she embraced it. She loved children. She would always work with children at church when the opportunity arose. She probably worked with many of you, in either Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, Girls in Action, or Mission Kids. She loved them all. She also adored when children would come into our home. She would always have something for them to do, something to play with or do. And the elderly? She adored the elderly. She especially had a love for the elderly women of the church and community. Visiting them at home, in the hospital, or at the nursing home, she found joy in being with them and learning about them and from them. No matter who you met Ms. Hattie made an effort to befriended them.

Ms. Hattie was a hard worker. Being brought up by a single, widowed mother and the youngest daughter of 5 girls and 4 boys, she learned about hard work early on. Married at 17, mother by 18, pastor’s wife by 24, and mother again at 28, meant hard work for her would continue for some time. She occasionally worked a public job; knitting mill, hardware store, florist shop, teachers aid, babysitting, etc. and she was educated. Even though she dropped out of high school to get married, she later got her high school diploma. She was a member of the first graduating class of Maryland Community Colleges (then Maryland Technical Institute). She first got her Associate degree in Education and then she got her bachelor’s degree from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. She also got her masters degree in education from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. She taught in California for some time and then returned to Maryland to teach in the Prince George’s County Public Schools. She was artistic, not just with flowers but teaching herself and her family to do macramé and make baskets.

But her primary focus was family. She pursued it with diligence, love, and joy. It was what she was created for. She wanted the best for us. And she gave her best for us. She was a cook, homemaker, maid, nurse, policewoman. She was a typist, book-reader, game-player, text-driver, referee, mediator, detective, prosecuting attorney, defense lawyer, judge, and jury. She advised, counseled, soothed, comforted, mentored, hugged, kissed, prided, reminded, scolded and so much more.

But, most importantly, Ms. Hattie was a prayer warrior. You might think that’s not always and always has the answers. But Ms. Hattie knew she didn’t. That’s why she prayed. You see, sometimes mothers don’t get the answers they want when they ask the questions. They worry about rashes, bumps, and scrapes. They don’t know what all the medical terms are, but they know when you just aren’t yourself. They worry about the older kids that come around their children, and what happens at school or the playground. In the case of Ms. Hattie, she worried if her sons would be buried into the hallway, causing them to lose balance and fall possibly getting hurt, and needing someone to help them get back up on their feet. She worried about her husband traveling to-and-from the hospital, visiting the sick, comforting families, or finding himself in some foreign and preaching to the lost. As her children got older, she would find herself troubled by her children’s rebellious looks, hateful remarks, strident words, and traitorous speech. She knew she had to be an authority in the church and resist the things of the world that had never before arisen. She knew about the vulnerability that comes as you enter changes in your life. She could see the pain when someone was cruel to either one of us. She saw our spiritual struggles and rejoiced the days we each decided to make Jesus our Savior. Sometimes, she didn’t like the relationships we had. At times she would see what people said in our eyes and it troubled her. But our spiritual well-being was the single most important thing in her life. And so she prayed. Sometimes, she felt like she just couldn’t get through to us. She couldn’t watch us all the time. She didn’t know all the influences we might be under. And so, she prayed.

Ms. Hattie’s last couple of years were not ones of ease. Following surgery to remove her thyroid, her health started to deteriorate. Weakness grew, difficulty in eating increased and finally, she was unable to stand on her own and her voice was just a whisper. Still, a strong heart and will to stay with her family she struggled on. But God wanted Ms. Hattie with Him. And that’s where she was brought to be. In the presence of our Lord and Savior. No pain, no more struggles, no more tears. She is perfectly healed. PRaise His Name! While she finished her race well, we encountered an overwhelming and unknown course: facing life as son without a mother, daughter-in-law without a mother-in-law and a husband without a wife.

Grief is a personal and intense journey that all of us have experienced or will experience at some point in life. Although death does not "sting," "emotional hermaphrodites" still swarm around those of us left behind. Separation anxiety, loss of identity and innumerable tears are just a few of those "hermaphrodites." As Christians, we have been promised an eternal reunion with the Heavenly Father. As sons, as a daughter-in-law, and as a husband, we mourn our own great loss. We miss her. Ms. Hattie was a tremendous woman of faith in Jesus Christ. Above all, she trusted Him in all things and you can too. The Bible says in Romans 5:8 “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Chris Buchanan is a current resident of Mitchell County and attends Bear Creek Baptist Church.

And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. Galatians 6:9

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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
Get Over It
By Tracey Jessup

"Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to what he said. But Martha was distracted by many things, so she came to him and asked, ‘Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.’ But the Lord answered her, ‘Martha, Martha, you are worried and distressed by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her’ “—Luke 10:41-42.

According to nationaldaysofcalendar.com, there are over 1,500 national days. However, one, in particular, caught my attention this year. March 9th is Get Over It Day. Strategically the midpoint between Valentine’s Day & April Fool’s Day, Get Over It Day was conceived by two psychology graduates, an entrepreneur in Alabama who was struggling to get over an ex-girlfriend.

Recognizing it was a universal concept to which many people relate, Goldblatt wrote a Get Over It Day “Perspective Piece,” and the concept quickly went viral. According to his website (GetOverItDay.com), the day has been featured on Good Morning America, ESPN’s SportsCenter, and more than 1,000 media outlets worldwide, and has reached over 27 million people as of March 9, 2019.

Today’s passage follows the story of the Parable of the Good Samaritan, which began with a lawyer asking Jesus, “Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” (Luke 10:25). The law was partially correct. Eternal life is something to be inherited. However, to receive an inheritance, one must be an heir, and no amount of “doing” will make one an heir. Keeping God’s commandments is the way of life, not a way to a life. The account of Jesus visiting Martha and Mary makes this clear. As Jesus passed through the village where Martha and Mary live, Martha welcomes him into her home. During Jesus’ visit, Mary sits at his feet and listens to his teaching. Martha, on the other hand, was “distacted by her many tasks.” Thankfully, Jesus does not tell Martha simply to “get over it.” Instead, he offers an important lesson: that while practical service does have its place and certainly is acceptable to the Lord, God’s call to follow him does not mean a flux of service and religious activity undertaken in our own strength. Instead, it is the total surrender of our lives to be willing to deny ourselves, take up our cross daily, and follow Jesus (Luke 9:23).

In The Message of Luke, David Wilcock writes, “It is only when by God’s grace we have become the right sort of people—his people, by the new birth—that we begin to do the right sort of things. The way of Jesus is one of devotion and dedication, both in following him and in heralding him. But the way is not . . . a matter of anxious ‘religion’ and frenzied service, of busy-ness and incessant good works. It means, not an achievement, but commitment; not activities, but attitude; not quantity, but quality” (p. 123).

Prayer: Lord, we are worried and distracted too easily by many things. Give us the grace to choose what is needed most as we follow you.

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Dr. Tracey Jessup serves as executive 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 Sanford University’s Beacon 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 pastorate, pulpit supply, and preaching revitalization. He and his wife, Teresa, have two children, Christian and Anna.

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Creation Answers

Why did Jesus die?
The Sacrificial System and Creation
By Roger Brink

In my article "An Evangelical ‘Limousine’?" I talked about the watering down of the term "evangelical." The "limousine" was suggested as a mark of a true evangelical was an acceptance of a straight reading of Genesis 1–11 since an attack on Genesis 1–11 is basically an attack on the authority of the Bible, and hence God. Now many people calling themselves evangelical would dispute such a statement, claiming that the creation- versus-evolution issue is "not relevant." God’s creation versus evolution issue is "not relevant" to us. How can that the creation account can be interpreted in different ways. However, I contend that both positions create major theological problems that undermine the Gospel at its foundations.

Here, I will not delve into the science of creation versus evolution as this is well-covered elsewhere, but rather expound the theological issues surrounding a question left open in my previous article, namely, "Why did Jesus die?"

No genuine evangelical can suggest that Christology (the study of Christ) is "not relevant" and Millard Erickson states our "understanding of Christ must be centered around the topic of the Christian faith." Is the topic of creation versus evolution and the issue of the question of what God is? A question that is secondary to the question of what does God say? However, a lot, of theology has been affected by "science" and Christology, in particular, has ignored issues such as Luke tracing Jesus’ genealogy back to Adam and Paul stating that death only came into the world with Adam’s sin.

I will take a "verse count" in the Gospel to support what God is as important, then the primary emphasis is clearly the text. There is no direct instruction as to Jesus’ appearance, His likes, dislikes, etc. Two of the Gospels even omit direct details of His birth. Conversely, well over half the chapters of the Gospels are dedicated to the week of His life, the events immediately leading up to it, or the events following His crucifixion.

The creation- versus-evolution debate is often fought on scientific grounds, but what about the impact of the creation account on the topic of Christology and, especially, Jesus’ death? There are three issues in particular that need careful examination:

- What is death?
- What did Jesus do to die?
- What is the obituary? did He need to fulfill the requirements needed for die for us?

All three topics are major and so the following arguments are, by necessity, brief but hopefully sufficient to show both their importance and relevance to the creation account.

According to both theistic and humanistic evolutionists, death and suffering occurred for millions, or even billions of years before man either evolved or was created, a process omitted from the Bible. However, what is death and how did it originate?

Both Genesis and the New Testament (Romans 5:12) state that death entered the world through the sin of one man, with the clear implication that there was no death before Adam. So why do we ignore what both Testaments say and take for granted the evolutionists' explanation of the origin of all life? The word "life" according to the Bible—has the "right" (modern terminology) to remove that life. When someone finally does what God has done and creates life from nothing, only then can they moralize over who is entitled to dictate the rules as to what happens to that new life form?

Christology is a matter of whether or not God is the Author of all life—according to the Bible—has the "right" (modern terminology) to remove that life. When someone finally does what God has done and creates life from nothing, only then can they moralize over who is entitled to dictate the rules as to what happens to that new life form?

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Freedom Through Truth
By Billy Graham

Man and woman today are seeking various kinds of freedom. In many places of the world, people are gathering in crowds and shouting, “Freedom!” Some time ago I was at a World Fair and saw the tremendous prospects of science presented in the exhibits. I thought of what Einstein said shortly before he died, “I feel, . . . like a man chained. I get a glimpse of reality and then it flees.” If only I could be free from the shackles of my intellectual enslavement, then I could understand the universe in which I live. Not only do we want political freedom today, but we also want moral freedom. We have a sexual expression on a scale unknown in modern times. We thought it would make us happy, but we are miserable with it. We have found it destroying not only our morals but our souls. We say we want freedom from prejudice, freedom from ignorance and freedom from poverty. We even say we’re searching for religious freedom. There are groups in North America that want to throw out all Christian elements, all religious symbols. They wish to be free from such “bandage.” They say, “Do away with the recognition of God in national life.” Not only do we want personal and political freedom, but we also want religious freedom. They desired that we should have freedom of religion, but not freedom from religion. “Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord!” (Psalm 33:12). If we push God aside, may God have mercy upon our nation.

I believe Scripture teaches that the only truly free people in the world are those who have made Christ their Savior, Master, and Lord. Jesus Christ said, “you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:32). What, then, is truth? People seek for that, too, as they seek for freedom. The scientist seeks the truth about the physical universe. The philosopher tries to understand the nature of matter and mind. The psychologist looks for the truth about the action and reaction of the human mind. At the end of his life, Cauumama Raddha said, “I am still searching for the truth.”

But here is a man, a giant among men, who appears on the horizon. He stands before His Name speaks, “I am the truth!” (John 14:6). An astounding claim: “I am the secret of all truth—all psychological truth, all sociological truth, all scientific truth, all philosophical truth, all religious truth.”

THE SECRET OF THE UNIVERSE

The Scripture says that “by him, all things were created” (Colossians 1:16) and “in him, all things consist” (Colossians 1:17). There is something that holds matter together, and the scientist cannot tell you what it is. I believe that someday we are going to learn that the secret of all truth is God: that if He had His hand off for five seconds, we would blow apart. He is the truth. Ultimate truth.

Now, you can reject this truth and think that you are free. You can say, “I have rejected Jesus Christ, I have rejected God, and now I am going to live it up.” But you will find yourself in bondage far greater than any you knew before. You end up with inner conflicts, guilt complexes, inferiority feelings, fears and neuroses, and your so-called freedom is a new enslavement.

When Christ told His disciples, “I am the truth” (John 14:6), He was either right and was telling the truth, or He was a blasphemous deceiver who knew that He was not the truth and was lying. Or He thought that He was God, and He did not know the difference. That would have made Him a lunatic—a person who thought He was God when He really wasn’t. Which was it? That is a decision you will have to make. You will have to decide who Jesus Christ is—a liar, an impostor, or what He claimed to be: God in the flesh, the ultimate reality, and truth in the universe. If He is God and the truth, and He tells me to follow Him, I would be a fool not to do so.

GOD DEMANDS A COMMITMENT

“We have sexual expression on a scale unknown in modern times. We thought it would make us happy, but we are miserable with it. We have found it destroying not only our morals but our souls. We say we want freedom from prejudice, freedom from ignorance and freedom from poverty. We even say we’re searching for religious freedom. There are groups in North America that want to throw out all Christian elements, all religious symbols. They wish to be free from such ‘bandage.’ They say, ‘Do away with the recognition of God in national life.’ Not only do we want personal and political freedom, but we also want religious freedom. They desired that we should have freedom of religion, but not freedom from religion. ‘Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord!’ (Psalm 33:12). If we push God aside, may God have mercy upon our nation.

I believe Scripture teaches that the only truly free people in the world are those who have made Christ their Savior, Master, and Lord. Jesus Christ said, ‘you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.’ (John 8:32). What, then, is truth? People seek for that, too, as they seek for freedom. The scientist seeks the truth about the physical universe. The philosopher tries to understand the nature of matter and mind. The psychologist looks for the truth about the action and reaction of the human mind. At the end of his life, Cauumama Raddha said, ‘I am still searching for the truth.’

But here is a man, a giant among men, who appears on the horizon. He stands before His Name speaks, ‘I am the truth!’ (John 14:6). An astounding claim: ‘I am the secret of all truth—all psychological truth, all sociological truth, all scientific truth, all philosophical truth, all religious truth.’

THE SECRET OF THE UNIVERSE

The Scripture says that ‘by him, all things were created’ (Colossians 1:16) and ‘in him, all things consist’ (Colossians 1:17). There is something that holds matter together, and the scientist cannot tell you what it is. I believe that someday we are going to learn that the secret of all truth is God: that if He had His hand off for five seconds, we would blow apart. He is the truth. Ultimate truth.

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GOD DEMANDS A COMMITMENT

“We have sexual expression on a scale unknown in modern times. We thought it would make us happy, but we are miserable with it. We have found it destroying not only our morals but our souls. We are all interested in truth, and Christ is the truth. When you give yourself to Him, He opens the door of your mind in the most glorious way. You see a new dimension of life that you have been previously blind to. When you open yourself to Christ— to the truth—you live up high. You become times life glowing, and there comes a peace and joy and security that only He can give.

God demands a decision, a commitment, a surrender, a conversion. Jesus said, ‘You must be born again.’ It wasn’t optional. He said, ‘You must come in through the door’ (John 3:7) before you can get into the Kingdom of Heaven. When you come to Christ, He gives you a freedom that is real: ‘Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed’ (John 8:36).

What is this freedom? First, He frees you from the penalty of sin. I could preach from morning until night, describing what sin is. But I do not need to. You know that you have sinned against God. We break the laws of God. We fail God. We fall short of His requirements. We are sinners. This sin has done something—it has alienated us from God. Our sin comes between us and God so that He has to hide His face from us and will not hear us. You may laugh at this. But remember. The Bible says that ‘God makes a squint’ (Psalm 32:3). If He hides His face from sinners, God will not hear us. You may laugh at this. But remember. The Bible says that ‘God makes a squint’ (Psalm 32:3). If He hides His face from sinners, God will not hear us. You may laugh at this. But remember. The Bible says that ‘God makes a squint’ (Psalm 32:3). If He hides His face from sinners, God will not hear us. You may laugh at this. But remember. The Bible says that ‘God makes a squint’ (Psalm 32:3). If He hides His face from sinners, God will not hear us. You may laugh at this. But remember. The Bible says that ‘God makes a squint’ (Psalm 32:3). If He hides His face from sinners, God will not hear us. You may laugh at this. But remember. The Bible says that ‘God makes a squint’ (Psalm 32:3). If He hides His face from sinners, God will not hear us. You may laugh at this. But remember. The Bible says that ‘God makes a squint’ (Psalm 32:3). If He hides His face from sinners, God will not hear us.
The Claims of the Cross

By: Dr. Ken Day
McDowell County

Matthew 27:37-33

... Him they compelled to bear his cross.

The cross upon which Jesus died was a pivotal point in the history of the world. It is a symbol of the suffering of Jesus and our redemption. Yet it is much, much more. Once the death sentence was pronounced, we are told that Jesus was led forth to Calvary, bearing his cross. The proceeding hours of suffering and torture were so great that the Roman soldiers thought Jesus would collapse under the weight of the wooden load. We read that, "... they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross." (Matt 27:32) Attention should be given to three main areas about the claims of the cross.

The first is the compulsion of the cross. We see in verse thirty-two, that Simon of Cyrene was compelled by the Roman guard, the title of The Skull. The word compelled means to impress into service or asking someone to go the extra mile. We know very little about Simon with the exception of information that he is from Cyrene, a Libya city in North Africa that is west of Egypt. It should be noted that on this day, he had a change of direction in his life. We can learn from Simon regarding this change, because Jesus challenges us in Luke 9:23 when he says to his disciples, "... if any man come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow me." We must look seriously at our lives to see whether we need to have a change of direction.

A change of direction also requires a change of allegiance. It tells us that Jesus requires us to bear our cross if we want to become his disciples. A disciple is one who follows the teaching. Not a pupil, but a learner, therefore one who is an imitator of the teacher. This change of devotion has great implications for one's personal life. Luke 9:26 says, "If any man come to me and forsake not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren, and sisters, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

The second claim of the cross is the costliness. This cost produces shame, suffering, and sacrifice. The shame of the cross is beautifully written by the writer of Hebrews when he said, "... despising the shame..." (12:2). Jesus was despised, beaten, ridiculed, and crucified, went to the cross as a sacrifice for all who would believe. A shameful way to die, much less a torturous physical death.

The suffering endured by going to the cross has now become our example of the claims of the cross on our lives. 1 Peter 2:21 tells us, "For even the Gentiles suffered the same things by the will of God." We must understand there is a required cost on our lives to follow Jesus.

The costliness of the cross is also a sacrifice. This sacrifice is of one's own life. Galatians 2:20 explains to us that we must live an extinguished life, meaning death to self and sin. This great cost to Jesus was us to a great inheritance. Now we can live in total dependence on him, and no longer depend on ourselves to live as Christ would have us live. We can reflect back on Simon of Cyrene, who was compelled to pick up Jesus' cross. He is our example of a sinner like we.

The third claim of the cross is the compassion that it has on our home, church, and The World as a whole. We read in Mark 15:21 that Simon was the father of Alexander and Rufus. It should be noted that Rufus is mentioned again in the book of Romans 16:11 as being chosen by The Lord, along with his mother. This affectionate phrase is given only to a Christian in Paul's writings. The cross has an impact for generations of the home, and society.

The cross also has a blessing in the church. The word church is a reference to the called-out ones or assembly. We might today refer to the church as a congregation of Jesus' disciples, regardless of the term we use. The vicarious death of Jesus, set in motion divine blessings for the church then and today. Acts 13:3 tells that the church at Antioch had prophets and teachers, some well-known such as Barnabas and Simon of Cyrene. Also, Menas a young leader in the church who was the foster brother of Hador Anupus. The cross and its' blessing has attracted people from all walks of life.

The blessing of the cross penetrated the world. The Apostle Paul mentions in Colossians 1:23 that "... and was preached to every creature which is under heaven." He also addresses the Roman Church and says, "First I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world." (Romans 1:8). The brothers and sisters in Theodosia were commanded because of their evangelistic fervor had echoed not only throughout Macedonia and Achaia but had spread abroad. (I Thessalonians 1:8) The blessing of the cross in the world, have the church marching orders.

There is only one conclusion that one could make about the claims of the cross. These claims require a decision from us about whether we are willing to be compelled and to count the cost of being an imitator of Christ. The cost is great, but compensation has many blessings for your home, church, and the world. Yet our Lord made the ultimate sacrifice on the cross for us to die for, to save us from the destruction of Hell. Will you become a disciple of Jesus? The Bible says in Luke 9:27, "And whoever shall not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." Are you his disciple?

Ken Day is an Agency Manager with Farm Bureau Insurance in McDowell County, and an Elder at Victory Church in Morganton.
The Parable of Patchwork and New Wineskins

Dr. Terry Cheek
SedroWoolley County

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all give us an account of this parable. A parable used to illustrate fasting for the coming Kingdom of God. For our study we’re going to use Luke 5:33-39, specifically looking at verses 36-39 to gain insight into the Lord’s teaching.

The practice of fasting was widely used in Israel and its history reveals the practice while an individual was in mourning. The Pharisee’s had adopted it and perfected it to be an act of piety used by the religious elites as a tool to impress one another in front of the common man.

John the Baptist was using the fast to illustrate the nation’s mourning for their sins. The fast of John and his disciples was a confession of their need for forgiveness of sin and spiritual cleansing.

The Pharisees were very observant of Jesus and how He taught His disciples in contrast to their practice and the practices of John the Baptist. The Pharisees were appalled when neither Jesus nor His disciples practiced fasting. It didn’t take long for the Pharisee’s to confront the Lord about His neglect of their practice.

To answer their confrontation Jesus used the illustration of marriage. After the bride was presented to the bridegroom there was a massive feast. This was a time of joy and rejoicing. Christ depicted Himself as the bridegroom and that generation as those invited to the wedding. Those who accepted would attend the festivities with joy celebrating with the bridegroom. Christ was inviting them to share in His joy, thus there was no mourning and no reason for a fast. The purpose of this part of our study was to present the Kingdom of God was at hand. Both John and Jesus were making this presentation, but for what purpose?

Jesus begins His parable to reveal the answer to our question. First, the Lord begins with the story of patchwork. There was an old worn-out garment that was useless in its present condition. Certainly, it could be patched and made to last a little while longer. To do that would require sewing in a new piece of cloth. During the Lord’s day, the new worn-out cloth was not discarded, in other words, they would sharpen with the first watch. To patch the old garment would mean the work would only last until the first washing. At that time the shrinkage would tear the old garment and destroy the new garment.

To further illustrate the presentation of the Kingdom of God Jesus spoke of the wine and new wineskins. One can see that new wineskins were very elastic. They would expand for the fermentation process as grape juice became wine. However, once a wineskin became old it was no longer elastic. They could be used as water bottles or other containers but not successfully as wineskins. To attempt this would cause the old wineskin to burst with the new wine fermented causing it to be ruined.

The two-folding illustration given by Jesus showed the Pharisees their old system of preserved religion was worthless, useless and outdated. It was impossible to pitch it up or introduce the Kingdom of God through their old rigid packaging. The Kingdom of God had to be introduced through unspoiled doctrine. We find two kinds of people surrounded the Lord that day. Those who welcomed unspoiled doctrine into new cloth of new wineskins. And, those who like the Pharisees were content with the old cloth, wineskins and religious rituals that were misused and destined to fail the men and women putting them to use.

Folk’s parable speaks to the church also. As born-again Christians, we are to live in harmony with life. Paul tells us old things are passed away and all things become new. Don’t try to repack a new life inside of an old one. Put the old away and follow Hebrew’s 12:1 KJV. "Therefore, we also are co-mates with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.”

Until we meet again, either in print or in person, may God richly bless you.

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

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Depression: Hidden in Plain Sight

By Rick Hughes

I was a law enforcement officer on patrol on South Main Street when I got the call. The telecommunicator advised me to 10-21 (call) my residence. I heard my wife say between sobs, "I am so afraid of being alone and of what I might do."

I called my sergeant, was released from duty and raced home. There I found my wife, Kathy, sitting on the floor crying. I sat down with her and attempted to console her. I will never forget what she said next. "I have never been so depressed in my entire life."

From the time I didn’t understand what had happened to her. It just happened. For the next two weeks, I took a leave-of-absence just to be with her.

According to The National Alliance on Mental Illness, an estimated 16 million American adults — almost 7 percent of the population — have had at least one major depressive episode in the past year. People of all ages, racial, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds experience depression, though some groups are affected more than others.

Depression was prevalent in Kathy’s family, and she had seen her dad struggle with it all his life. When Kathy and I were first faced with it, we sought help from our pastor. He said it was an issue of faith. Next, we consulted his physician, who prescribed medication.

On church prayer request lists, we read about people who have cancer or heart conditions. There are others who have suffered traumatic events or consequences of sin, but depression is never mentioned. Is it because of shame and embarrassment, or have we failed to properly address depression in the Christian context?

In the Bible, we see numerous examples. David, Elijah, Jonah, Job, Moses, and Jeremiah suffered from depression. These are the ones we know about. Even Jesus experienced anxiety. "Ah, soul, it is very sorrowful, even to death," were the words He spoke in the garden of Gethsemane. Isaiah the prophet refers to the Lord as "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3), which shows us Christ’s humanity.

Have we failed to properly address depression in the Christian context?

So, what can we do to help?

Group life is a beautiful way to encourage people who are depressed. Because of transparent relationships, groups can encourage those who suffer from depression while providing a safe, gospel-centered place for them.

Here are some specific ways your group can help those around you who may be struggling with depression:

- **Begin with unconditional love.** (1 Corinthians 13)
- **Learn how to approach, and the consequences of brokenness, affect the total person — mind, body, spirit, and environment.** (Genesis 3)
- **Even after we are saved, we may have biological or medical issues in life.**
- **Though God is bringing healing to us, our complete healing does not take place until we have glorified bodies.** (Philippians 1:20-26)
- **Learn about depression.**
- **Be real but understand that depression masks the real person.**
- **Rather than trying to resolve their problems, simply walk beside them.**
- **Encourage them to do things with you like sharing meals, exercising or attending a relating community event.**
- **Do small tasks for them.** What is routine for you may be overwhelming to them.
- **Stay in contact on a regular basis.**
- **Understand depression is one of the drivers of suicide.**
- **It’s been 35 years since the day I was called home from patrol. Kathy now leads a group of senior adults at our church who are transparent and real. They encourage and walk beside each other, wherever life may take them, and spur each other on for the glory of God.**

Though Kathy continues to struggle with depression, she is able to deal with it in healthy ways, such as birdwatching, photography and frequent family gatherings. Kathy gave permission to share her story in order to help others who also suffer from depression.

People who are depressed can benefit from strong family relationships, medical assistance, hobbies and strong community involvement like small groups. Groups are the place where people connect to churches, so they offer unique opportunities to help people who really struggle in life.

Sometimes people are hesitant to get involved in things they do not understand, but all of us suffer from various kinds of brokenness. Don’t be afraid to get involved with people who are depressed. Remember the words of Jesus, "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33).
Billy Graham Evangelistic Association

Just As I Am
By Lizzy Long

This year, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association’s summer series is taking a look at five popular hymns sung at Billy Graham Crusades—and how those songs fit into our lives today. Known as the signature song of the Crusades, “Just As I Am” is the final hymn in our series.

Just as I am, without one plea
But that Thy blood was shed for me
And that Thou didst it for me
O Lamb of God, I come! I come

How many times have you sat in church feeling the urge to surrender your life to Christ?
The pastor has shared a pivotal message and the Holy Spirit is tugging on your heart, compelling you to walk up front in response. But you hesitate.

The side seems miles long and you chide yourself for not being good enough to come before the throne of God. Doubt and fear creep into your mind, making you feel unworthy. Even if you repeat now, you know you’ll fail later.

How does God respond to us?
1. God welcomes us with open arms.
2. He pardons our sin.
3. Jesus cleanses us from filth.
4. He relieves us from guilt.

“You’ve been told you don’t have to be ‘better’ before placing your hope in the Almight; you simply have to come. Even between the acceptance of God and man, your life depends on one decision: trust. Do you really believe God is who He says He is?”

In 1835, Charlotte Elliot faced that timeless question.
After suffering from a serious illness that caused her to be disabled, Elliot felt purged and depressed while watching others constrain the active kingdom of God. To combat those feelings, the British woman began to write out the reasons she trusted the Lord.

That list was the start of “Just As I Am,” which would later become one of the most popular hymns of all time and the classic ending for altar calls at Billy Graham Crusades.

Maybe you, too, can be assured of God’s promises by opening your heart to the lyrics of “Just As I Am.”

O Lamb of God, I come

Throughout the Bible, we see people who had an open invitation to follow God. Some of their journeys look different than ours. Moses kicked off his sandals as he encountered God through a burning bush, and Isaiah cried out from his uncleanliness during a vision of God’s throne. In both cases, we see the humility of sinful man before a holy God.

“Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.”
—Isaiah 1:18

As Elliot penned “Just As I Am,” she recognized her flaws, illness, conflicts, doubts, and fears. Even so, God loved and accepted her just as she was.

According to How Sweet the Sound, a book by Billy Graham’s longtime Crusade soloist George Beverly Shears, Mr. Graham once explained that “we have to ‘shake’—no claim on God’s love or forgiveness—except that Jesus shed His blood to reconcile us to His Father. ‘There’s nothing we can do to earn salvation or freedom from sin; we simply must receive it through the grace and mercy of Christ’s death and resurrection. Ironically, we live in a world that seeks acceptance through careers, social status, and peers, but we often have difficulty receiving acceptance from a Savior.

Like trying to stubbornly wipe a dirty stain off a favorite shirt, we attempt to fix our own problems, wanting to appear better than we actually are. We forget that God created us in His own image and doesn’t desire our good intentions, but the very heart that He designed.

Indeed, as the song “Just As I Am” says, He let us be “poor, weak, blind,” that He may become all we need, giving us “sight, riches, healing of the mind.”

Behind the Music

Ninety-nine years after Elliot wrote “Just As I Am,” a teenage farm boy heard the hymn while attending a revival. He then stepped forward in surrender to God while another hymn, “Almost Persuaded, Now to Believe,” was sung.

That man was Billy Graham, who would eventually select “Just As I Am” to play during his gospel invocations. Chosen for its lyrics of response, “O Lamb of God, I come,” and strong Biblical basis, Graham believed the Crusade hymn reflected the choice to follow God. His autobiography would later be named Just As I Am.

Similarly, an 18-year-old George Beverly Sheas came forward to accept Christ after repeatedly singing “Just As I Am” during a special week of evangelistic meetings. “I could hardly wait to stand with the congregation and sing, ‘Just As I Am,’” he said. “I could sing and confess my heart, which was so convoluted, rather than make that public confession. I was satisfied just to sing and not go forward.” However, that Friday evening, Sheas did move forward, placing his hope in Christ alone.

More Than an Emotion

In the 1960s, as thousands were responding to the Gospel at Billy Graham Crusades, the media reported it was due to “Just As I Am” playing on the crowds’ background during the altar call. While certainly the forthcoming lyrics and gentle melody are comforting to one’s mind, Billy Graham wanted to prove it was the Holy Spirit doing the work.

After praying through the sanctuary and consisting with his music leader, Cliff Barrows, they decided to skip the hymn during his 1966 Crusade in London. For

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Labor Day - Fall Arrivals

FOR THE ENTIRE FAMILY

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Peter cautions that some of Paul’s teachings are difficult to understand. He goes on to warn against twisting Paul’s words to make it appear that he is teaching “lawlessness.” Peter makes it clear that only unstable people take that approach. He teaches that such a misunderstanding of Paul results in destruction. He does not teach that Paul is wrong, but he does say that Paul can be difficult to understand. Consider some examples:

Based on Galatians 5:1, many believe that Paul refers to the Torah as bondage. This cannot be true because Psalm 119:44-45 says that Torah is liberty. Galatians 1:1 says that Galatians 3:13 causes many to believe that the Torah is a curse. Deuteronomy 30:16 makes it clear that if we obey Torah, then God will bless us. The common understanding of Hebrews 8:6 is that the Torah has been replaced by something better. Psalm 17:7 says that Torah is perfect. By definition, perfection cannot be improved. Many believe that Hebrews 8:13 teaches that the Torah is obsolete and in the process of vanishing. Deuteronomy 29:29 makes it clear that Torah is forever. First Timothy 4:1-5 does not teach against the dietary instructions found in Leviticus. For that to be the case, Leviticus 11 would have to be labeled “a doctrine of demons” and “a lie in hypocrisy.” I would be terrified to refer to any passage of scripture in such terms. According to the introduction of the Book—Psalm 119:142—God’s Torah is truth. It is impossible for Paul to teach against the Torah. To do so would not only get him at odds with Jesus, it would also make Paul a false prophet according to Deuteronomy 13. Paul was not unstable or schizophrenic. Romans 6:14 says “For sin will have no dominion over you since you are not under law but under grace.” However, the next verse says that we must not use grace as an excuse to sin. Grace is defined by scripture as “lawlessness” or not keeping Torah. Romans 10:4 says “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes,” but Romans 3:31 says “Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.” In Romans 7:12, Paul teaches that the Torah is holy, righteous, and good. Why would God take away something so wonderful? Is Paul talking out of both sides of his mouth, or is he trying to understand his own view that we are not familiar with the first two-thirds of the Bible? In our fellowship, many Bible teachings begin with reading Luke 1:44. It says, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Jesus makes it clear that the Torah, the Prophets, and the Psalms all describe and point to Him. How can we understand Him, His mission, or our role in His Kingdom unless we are willing to master the entirety of the only valid textbook for a life well lived?

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. 828-460-7013

Out of town? You can still read the "Good News" on our new Website: www.brnews.com And find us on Facebook
Using the Bible to Share the Gospel
By Rev. John B. Sorensen

We have many tools at our disposal to help us share our faith with others: tracts, story illustrations, and, of course, testimony. These are all great tools, but it is Scripture, not our words, that convicts someone of sin.

Hebrews 4:12 says, “For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joint and marrow, it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”

We cannot share the Gospel without pointing to the Gospel. While there are many scriptures that help explain the Good News to others, here are a few that I have found work well.

Romans 6:23 - “The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Like any gift, eternal life is not earned or deserved. The Bible tells us that we are saved through faith, not our works (Galatians 2:8-9). Every other religion teaches that people must earn their way to Heaven. Christianity alone proclaims that God’s favor and entrance into Heaven are absolutely free.

Romans 1:3 - “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

The Bible states that man is a sinner. Sin is anything that falls short of God’s perfect standard: an action, a word, a thought, an attitude. Because we are sinners, we cannot save ourselves.

Ecclesiastes 3:4 - “God does not leave the guilty unpunished.”

God is merciful and does not want to punish us. The Bible tells us that “God is love” (1 John 4:8), but it also teaches us that He is just and must punish our sin. This presents a problem. The problem is not God’s, it is ours.

John 1:14 - “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God....and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”

Jesus Christ is both God and Man. While Jesus had many great accomplishments, His most important was that He died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sin and rose from the dead to prove He had purchased a place in Heaven for us.

Acts 10:31 - “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved.”

Faith isn’t simply knowing about Jesus. It also isn’t trusting in Jesus for temporary things like health, safety, and finances. Saving faith is trusting in Jesus Christ alone for eternal life.

Remember, each verse, alone, may be a lot for someone to process. Be patient. While we should know the reference when we quote Scripture, all we need to say is that “the Bible says,” or “We read in the Bible,” and then quote the verse. The Holy Spirit will speak to the person hearing the Scriptures.

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 30 years. For more info tips and resources, visit evangelismexpansion.org.

Press Release
Local Physicians Assistant Appointed
To Serve on the North Carolina Institute of Medicine, Board of Directors
Mitchell County

Lyndsay Jensen Edwards, PA has been appointed to serve on the North Carolina Institute of Medicine, Board of Directors. Lyndsay is a native of Mitchell County and is currently employed by the Mountain Community Health Partnership, (Bakenvile Community Health Center).

Lyndsay was recommended by Senator Ralph Hise and appointed by Senator Philip Berger, President Pro Tempore of the Senate. Lyndsay says, “I am honored to have been appointed to this position. It is a great opportunity to represent our community, the PA profession, and aid in improving healthcare in North Carolina.”

The North Carolina Institute of Medicine has shaped health policy in North Carolina for more than 30 years by identifying solutions to the state’s health challenges. (NCIOM) The goal of the North Carolina Institute of Medicine is to improve the health and well-being of North Carolinians by identifying evidence-based solutions with broad stakeholder support. (NCIOM)

Lyndsay will serve alongside Keith Holtclaw, FACHE, who is also from Mitchell County. He also serves as a Mitchell Community Health Partnership (MCHP) Board Member.

MCHP is honored to have Lyndsay represent Mitchell County, its residents, and our health center.

For more information about Mountain Community Health Partnership, visit our website, or call 828-336-6611.

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Health News

Kidney Needed
By Ryan Carpenter
Barcombe County

Hello, my name is Ryan Carpenter. I am 23 years old and have been living with kidney disease my entire life. At birth, I had malformed, partially functioning kidneys and lived a life of normalcy until I was 1 year old. At that time, I developed acute renal failure. After a vigorous 6-day treatment with steroids, it was as if a miracle occurred. My kidneys began to work on their own. I was followed by the nephrology team at Pitt Memorial Hospital until I was 5 years old. I then began seeing a nephrologist in Goldsboro, NC. After several years, I was referred to UNC-Chapel Hill’s pediatric nephrology team. At that time, a kidney transplant was inevitable. The next step was to find a donor.

My Mother was a blood match, but she has diabetes and was not considered. My Dad is a universal donor, he was tested and became my donor. Shortly after taking transplant education classes, my transplant date had finally arrived. I was admitted to the hospital the night before to get me prepared for surgery the next morning. The next morning, the transport team arrived to take me to the pre-op areas, at this point, my anxiety really began to set in. After my family wished me well, it was just the nephrologist, my Mom and me. The time came for Mom to leave, and me to travel to the operating room. The next thing I remember was waking up in ICU (Intensive Care Unit).

The next seven years were the best of my life. Other than not playing contact sports, I got to have a routine high school experience. After graduation, I was ready to follow my dream of being a chef. Nothing could have prepared me for the multiple bouts of organ rejection, serum sickness, and all the biopsies that came with it. I started peritoneal dialysis in 2016 and continued until 2018 until the nephrologist changed my life again. I developed two abscesses in my abdomen and in turn, started hemodialysis. I have been on this regimen 3 times a week for eight months.

I pray for a kidney that will match and take me to a life that I have longed for since I was a child. Thank you for reading this article, and I hope to inspire you to pass my story along for a much-needed kidney and blessing.

Should you be, or know someone who is interested in being a donor, use the information below:

Jason Kystofik
Walter Reed Transplant Coordinator
(301) 400-2516
Amy Woodward, RN, BSN, CNN, CTTC
UNC-Chapel Hill Living Donor Coordinator
(984) 974-7558

Glenwood Baptist Church

Something To Think About:
God is Really There!
By Dennis Love
McDowell County

Listen to what the Bible says in Psalm 37:23: “The Lord directs the steps of the godly. He delights in every detail of their lives.” WOW, what a great promise and what an awesome assurance from our Lord. He is going to direct our steps and He delights in EVERY detail of our life. Don’t miss that little word “EVERY.” The Bible says that He delights in EVERY detail of our life. Now, this verse doesn’t say that we delight in EVERY detail of our life, but it says that our Lord delights in EVERY detail of our life.

You probably recall the story of the two discouraged disciples as they walked on the road to Emmaus. These guys thought Jesus was dead and there was now hope for them. But as they walked, Jesus suddenly joins them on their journey, but they were so down and out that they didn’t even recognize it was Jesus. So, Jesus asked them, “Guy, why the long faces? What’s the problem?” Do you recall what they said? They said, “You must be the only person in Jerusalem who hasn’t heard about the events of the last few days.” Jesus said, “What things?” They said, “The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth. How the chief priests and our rulers delivered him up to be crucified. We were hoping that it was Him who was going to redeem Israel. And now, today is the third day since these things happened.”

It wasn’t until these guys arrived in Emmaus that they finally realized that it was Jesus Himself who was talking with them. Here it is. don’t miss it! Life is often that way too! There are times when we sense the presence of the Lord in our lives and then there are times when we don’t feel His presence. And it’s those times when we don’t feel His presence that we wonder if God has abandoned us. And the answer is NO He has not! The Bible says that He will never leave us or forsake us. The Bible says in Psalm 37:23 that the Lord directs our steps and that He delights in EVERY detail of our lives. There are times in life when God seems absent, but He never is! He is really there! He is there to direct our steps and He even delights Himself in EVERY detail of our lives.

I don’t know what you are facing today. I don’t know what battles you are fighting today. I don’t know the struggles you are having today. But I do know this. I know that God is really there with you even if it feels like He isn’t. Why not take a moment today and say, “Thank you Lord that You are really there even though I can’t sense You are there!!

Dr Dennis Love is the Senior Pastor at Glenwood Baptist Church in Marion, NC. He and his wife Vicki have been married for 19 years and they have been in Marion for five years. They have two sons and three grandchildren.

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Two Mass Shootings In Two Days: God’s Question For His People Today

By Jim Denison


These are some of my emotions this morning. But surprise is not among them. And that is one of the tragedies of these tragedies.

A man opened fire at an El Paso shopping area Saturday morning, killing at least twenty people and wounding twenty-six others. He was apprehended at the scene.

Early the next morning, another shooter opened fire, this time in an entertainment district in Dayton, Ohio. At least nine people were murdered, including the gunman’s sister, and twenty-six others were wounded. The shooter was killed by police.

There have now been 251 mass shootings in America this year. And 2019 is a little more than seven months old.

A murderer living twenty minutes from my home.

I was shocked by the national reaction to these tragedies, it seems to me that despair has captured our collective soul.

We are afraid that no place in America is safe today. We can’t put metal detectors at every store, mall, movie theater, and office building. And even if we did, murderers would just attack us in the parking lot.

How do you know that wherever you’re going today won’t be next? The facts, you don’t. Dallas is not safer than Dayton. A garlic festival in California is not safer than a Walmart in El Paso.

A young man living in Allen, Texas (twenty minutes north of my home) drove ten hours to massacre people in El Paso and is now one of the most infamous mass murderers in American history. Perhaps someone living in your community will be next.

On a morning like this, it’s easy to wonder how the Christian message can possibly be relevant to the crisis of mass shootings. How can the gospel protect us from the next massacre? How can it make a difference in this epidemic?

What mass shooters have in common

Tomorrow, I plan to answer our question in the context of the racist worldview that reportedly motivated the El Paso shooter. For today, I’d like to respond more personally.

In the wake of the El Paso massacre, the Los Angeles Times published a vitally important op-ed by Jillian Peterson and James Damore. These university professors run The Violence Project, a nonpartisan think tank dedicated to reducing violence in America by improving policymaking and practice through research and analysis.

Working on a project funded by the research arm of the US Department of Justice, they have studied mass shootings since 1966, along with media, social media, rami- festos, suicide notes, trial transcripts, and medical records. They have discovered four commonalities among the perpetrators of nearly all the mass shootings they have studied:

One: The vast majority experienced early childhood trauma and exposure to violence at a young age.

Two: Nearly every mass shooter reached an identifiable crisis point in the weeks or months leading up to the shooting.

Three: More of the shooters studied the actions of other shooters and sought validation for their actions.

Four: They all had the means to carry out their plans by obtaining weapons legally, illegally, or from family members.

As a result, Peterson and Damore recommend tighter control of media sites that validate violence, improve security and weapons control, and proactive responses to those in personal crisis.

The darker the night, the more crucial our light

While society should obviously take all effective measures to protect itself, there’s my biblical point. Jesus can change any life he touches. He can heal any trauma. He can redeem any crisis. The God who turned a murdering Pharisee into a missionary of grace can transform anyone.

Do you observe that any person stands beyond the transforming power of our Savior’s love? What about the person planning the next massacre?

The more secularized our culture becomes, the more evangelistic our churches must become. The more people during a crisis ridicule our prayers, the more they need our prayers. The more traumatized and victimized our society, the more vital our compassion.

(For more, see Jim Denison’s ‘The Gilroy Garlic Festival: Moving forward by not moving on’.)

The greater the threat of violence, the more urgent our message.

That’s why we must do all we can to reach the next shooters before they strike. We must use our influence to penetrate our broken culture with biblical truth and grace.

We must share God’s word and love with everyone we can in every way we can.

God’s question for his people today

Jesus is weeping beside twenty-nine graves today (John 11:35). He is calling us to join him with heartbroken compassion for the victims and their families and a renewed commitment to our gospel mandate.

We are still in the only “light of the world” (Matthew 5:14). The darker the night, the more crucial our light.

One lesson of El Paso and Dayton is that every community is a mission field. As a result, every Christian is a missionary.

This morning, I hear our Lord asking, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for me?” (Isaiah 6:8).

What is your answer to him?

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.

www.brecnews.com

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Voluntary need to advocate, protect the rights of long-term care residents. Boone, NC (June 26, 2019) - The High Country Area Agency on Aging Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program is calling for volunteers in Avery, Mitchell, and Yancey Counties. Volunteer ombudsman, also known as Community Advisory Committee (CAC) serve as advocates for residents living in nursing homes and assisted living facilities across NC. CAC members are trained, certified volunteers who are assigned to a local long-term care facility to advocate for residents’ rights.

To learn more about becoming a volunteer ombudsman or to request an application, call Stevie John at (828) 265-5424 Ext. 116 or visit the High-Country Agency on Aging website at www.highcountryagg.org.

Barke County

Grundy Reversing Diabetes seminars are returning to Valdese in August. Yes, you can reverse it and yes, you can learn how to prevent ever having diabetes.

Group setting, food sample each evening and door prizes. It’s a fun way to learn to take charge of your health and live a better quality of life. IT’S FREE! Great Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church, 2901 US Hwy 70 in Deced (across from FoodHills Thrift Store). Seats are limited so pre-register by calling Sharryn at 828-334-0064.

Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church Event - The Giving Heart Thrift Shop is OPEN every Tuesday and Thursday from 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Like us on Facebook “GivingHeartThriftShop,” The Giving Heart Thrift Shop is a ministry of the Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church.

God’s Closet - Morganton Free Shop Day! Sunday, August 4th, from 2:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. at the Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church, 2177 Jemerson Road, Morganton, NC. There will be FREE clothes for children ages 0 - 18 years old. No documentation required. For more information visit our website www.morgantonodds.org and like us on Facebook “GodsClosetMorganton” and “MorgantonSeventhdayAdventistChurch.”

McDowell County

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Steve Gann is a CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ who specializes in retirement planning and income in retirement. McIntyre Law Firm is an Elder Law practice that specializes in helping protect people’s estates and their founders wrote the Book Saving the Farm.

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Join us for a local foods breakfast & tour a few McDowell County farms.

9 * September * 2019

McDowell County Agricultural Center, 188 Ag Services Dr, Marion When 8:30 a.m. September 7, 2019 Where McDowell County Agricultural Center 188 Ag Services Dr, Marion, NC 28752

Join us for breakfast made with locally sourced ingredients and learn about McDowell County agriculture! Breakfast and tour will begin and end at the McDowell Ag Center, 188 Ag Services Dr, Marion. Tour stops include Beekeepers Inc offering pollination services, Canons Springs Farm producing hemp, and the Food Hub-future aggregation site of local food.

Transportation will be provided, but seating is limited. Call and reserve your spot today. Call 1-855-8104 for questions or to reserve your seat. $5 donations are accepted and appreciated.

Pleasant Garden Baptist Church - Scorecard Event, October 12, 2019, 9:00 am - 3:00 pm, Marion, NC

About this event

To help raise the next generation of disciple-makers we need to begin by evaluating what we are, are not doing, at church and within the home. Here are some of the questions we will answer:

- Does your church have a shared vision for making disciples from infants through senior high?
- Are your children’s and youth ministries aligned with a foundational ministry plan for that purpose?
- Are your parents equipped to be the primary disciple-makers in the home?
- Scorecard will assist your church leaders in developing a strategic ministry plan with checkpoints throughout the year to measure spiritual growth in your children and youth.
- Scorecard also includes specific ways your church can partner with parents to disciple their children at home.
- The cost is $25 per person and includes lunch. A special group rate of $10 per leader is also available.

More Information:

Cheryl Markland • (800) 395-5102 ext. 5645 • markland@ncbaptist.org
Janet Packard • (800) 395-5102 ext. 5646 • packard@ncbaptist.org

New Community Outreach

Benefits McDonald Families with Children

Teams 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 55 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 from 3:30 p.m. and the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. For more information or if you are interested in volunteer opportunities to call (828) 938-4799 or email TeensforChristBEARcloset@yahoo.com.

CROSS Mill United Methodist Church – Marion is now accepting donations of NEW items for an upcoming fundraising auction. Proceeds from the auction will go toward much needed church building repairs and our 24/7 Sharing Food Pantry Ministries. Any business and or individual donations would be greatly appreciated. Call 828-490-7257, 828-942-3989 or 828-863-8706.

First Baptist Church Marion - 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!!!

36th Annual Mountain Glory Festival Saturday, October 12, 2019, 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM Marion - Where Main Street Meets the Mountains Vendor applications for Marion’s largest craft festival are now being accepted. For 36 years, beautiful downtown Marion has hosted this popular celebration on the 2nd Saturday in October. This year make plans to be part of the Festival, Saturday, October 12th, 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM.

Visitors will be looking for original handcrafts on Main Street three main blocks. Featured will be 150 craft, food, non-profit and sponsor booths of locally made art and crafts, festival foods and local wines and beers. Plus, two stages presenting Marion’s finest musicians.

Don’t miss the annual Mountain Glory Quilt Show inside the McDowell Arts Council. The quilt show is the gallery’s featured, October exhibit. The kids will have fun in the “Children’s Area” with hands-on activities and local entertainment.

You might even see Bigfoot, Marion’s Official Animal! The festival is sponsored by the City of Marion. For the festival, information visit the www.mtnfestival.com or call 828-457-2215.

Mitchell County

Mitchell County 4-H - Tuspin Hill Community Center Jamboree MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR Saturday, September 28, 6:30 PM, FOR A FAMILY NIGHT FESTIVAL FILLED WITH MUSIC, FUN, FOOD AND LAUGHTER AT THE TUSPIN HILL COMMUNITY CENTER ACROSS FROM GRIFFITH'S STORE (KNOWN AS JERRY'S) IN THE TUSPIN HILL區域. LOCAL PERFORMERS WILL JOIN US TO CELEBRATE THE MUSIC OF THE DAY. IT WILL BE AN EVENING OF GOSPEL, COUNTRY, BLUEGRASS, ROCK AND ROLL, AND SOME 'OLDIES BUT GOODIES.' MUSIC, ADMISSION IS FREE AND A CONCESSION STAND WILL BE OPEN AT 6:00 PM. FEEL FREE TO SING ALONG.

Every Saturday in September, a prayer gathering at Riverside Park at the amphitheater* at 10:00 a.m. Saturday, September 7th - 10:00 a.m. Saturday, September 14th - 10:00 a.m. Saturday, September 21st - 10:00 a.m. Saturday, September 28th - 10:00 a.m.

Please mark your calendars for these important dates. We are praying for Franklin County’s Decision America tour of North Carolina. Let’s take advantage of our freedom to gather & pray for God to do amazing work across our beautiful state!!!

(*The 2nd entrance into Riverside Park.)

Celebrate Recovery - This is a Christ and Biblical Based Program, giving hope and help for men, women, and families suffering from addiction. Any questions contact Josh Wise @ 385-0051

There will be meeting every Thursday night with someone there to talk to men, women, and their families. There is also a Children’s program.

First Presbyterian Church - Women’s Bible Study Fellowship – Acts and Letters of the Apostles. Women’s Day group meet @ First Presbyterian Church, Spruce Pine, 10am-11:30am

Crassiy Creek Baptist Church - Women’s Bible Study Fellowship - Acts and Letters of the Apostles

Women’s Evening group meet @ Crassly Creek Baptist Church, Spruce Pine 7:30pm-7:15pm

Macy Bell (828) 639-1196 (Day Women) Angie Woody (828) 487-3830 (Evening Women)
Yay Village: We are announcing the Opening of Yay 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 Yay Village Commercial-Share Kitchen so that we can provide a certified area at a reasonable cost for local trying to sell their products. This way we help to community entrepreneurs with their part-time business.

So, if you have a product you want to market and sell (like jams, juices, 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 5:00 pm.

Sign up for 2019 After Hours! Business After Hours is 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 pm and ends at 6:00 pm (unless other arrangements are made). Send your questions and reserve your month by emailing Kelly at kjones@mitchellcountychamber.org.

August: Mitchell County Animal Rescue
September: The Switzerland Inn
October-November: OPEN
We do not have After Hours in December.

2019 Calendar of Events for Downtown Spruce Pine
Summer Concert: September 7th Central Park
Walk A Mile Fundraiser: October 7th, Central Park
Walk A Mile Fundraiser: October 19th, Downtown Spruce Pine
Potter’s Market: October 3rd, 13th & 21th, Cross Street Football
Marchant Trick or Treat: Marchant Trick or Treat: October 31st, Downtown Spruce Pine
Small Business Saturday: November 30th, Downtown Spruce Pine
Christmas Parade: November 30th, Downtown Spruce Pine
TRAC Studio Tour: December 8th, Mitchell & Yancey County
* Farmers Market every Wednesday at Bank of America beginning in April

For more information about any of these events, contact Kim R. 755-7700

The River Arts - June Studio Tour Applications
The River Arts Studio Tour is perhaps the largest and the longest running studio tour in the country, you will find craftspeople and artists in nearly every medium, many tops in their field and several new-to-the-tour participants.

FREE, and self-guided, this adventure will lead you to some unique places situated between Mt. Mitchell and Ross Mountain. Visit artists traveling through valleys, past streams, across rivers, over hillsides, and experience breathtaking mountain views as they make their journey through the River Arts Region. Meet the artists when they create and where they live.

The River Arts Studio Tour is sponsored by the Arts - River Region at these Spruce Pine locations on Friday evening after the tour closes for the day. A sampling of participants will be on display geographically so one can plan a route for the rest of their journey.

For more information, please call 828.687.7111 or email: art@riverartsregion.org

Tipton Hill Community Foundation (Tipton Hill) - Country Breakfast: this 1st Saturday each month, 7:30 - 10:30 am, at the old Methodist Church, across from Jerry’s Store. Come join us for smoked sausage, scrambled eggs, gravy, jellies, juice, and coffee. Eat-in or take-out, all funds support the Tipton Hill Community Foundation.

Maryland Small Business Center
CLASS THREE: Finding Your Customers (2.5 Hours)
This class will focus on growing and retaining customers. The presentation will discuss the typical customer in the area and how to build a customer profile to attract new customers. In addition, strategies will be explored to attract and retain customers.

Fee Waived: Instructor: Lydes, Mitchell 828.765.1295

CLASS FOUR: Basics of Bookkeeping (2.5 Hours)
This class will discuss common bookkeeping methods used for small businesses as well as online popular bookkeeping platforms. Attendees will gain a valuable knowledge of how to properly record and archive transactions. The seminar will also discuss low financial statements into small business bookkeeping.

9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Fee Waived: Instructor: Barry, Mitchell 828.765.1295

CLASS FIVE: Marketing your Business (2.5 Hours)
This class will discuss common marketing practices for local entrepreneurs. Designed to teach you the most effective and affordable marketing tools available. Gain insights to understand and reach your customer, analyze your industry and business environment and differentiate between marketing, advertising, and grassroots marketing techniques. Explore the components of an effective market plan, and this comprehensive seminar.

9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

EMERGENCY NUMBERS
1. When in sorrow call John 14
2. When you have sinned call Psalm 51
3. When you worry call Matthew 6:19-34
4. When you are in danger call Psalm 91
5. When your faith needs stirring call Hebrews 11
6. When you feel down and out call Romans 8:31
7. When you want peace and rest call Matthew 11:25-30
8. When the world seems bigger than God call Psalm 90
9. If your pockets are empty call Psalm 37
10. When you are lonely and fearful call Psalm 23
11. When you grow bitter and critical call 1 Corinthians 13
12. For how to get along with other men call Romans 12
13. If you are depressed call Psalm 27
14. If people seem unkind call John 15
As my wife and I were shopping at Walmart, I noticed the diversity in the people around me. People with many shades of melanin. People from all around the world. People with heritages different from my own. As I observed them, my heart sunk thinking of the tragedy at the Walmart in El Paso just two days before. Another community retail center with people from many parts of the world. A store is full of people, shopping and enjoying their day, terrorized by hate.

It is simple to blame an act of terror that claimed more than 20 lives in Texas on political ideologies, video game violence, firearm availability, healthcare access, or even the hatred inside the heart of the murderous terrorist that carried out this atrocious act. The answer, spiritually speaking, runs much deeper.

These things happen because Hell hates Heaven. Hell hates when I look around me and see people “from every tribe and language and people and nation” (Revelation 5:9). I think about Heaven. My heart rejoices knowing that God loves and redeems people from every skin tone and language group—Hell shuttered at the prospect.

I had great comfort knowing that no matter what Hell unleash on us—no matter what wickedness brings ugliness terror—Heaven will look a lot like Walmart. No bigotry or hate or racism can change Heaven. Hell cannot prevail. Hell cannot overcome. The Gospel of Christ will transform the hearts of people from every tribe and language and people and nation. People from every race will comprise the Kingdom of Christ. Hate can rage and Hell can war, but they do so in desperation, not in victory. When Christ’s Kingdom is complete, “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things, have passed away” (Revelation 21:4). This is the day I long for. This is the day I thought about as I strolled through Walmart.

Dr. Michael Paradies is a pastor, educator, and author. He and his family make their home in Icard, NC.

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New Writer - Spiritual Health

Temple Maintenance - Brain Health

By Dr. Miguel Cruz

Mitchell County

Last month we talked about our spiritual health and the necessity of spending time with God by reading and meditating on the words of God as part of a healthy lifestyle. I shared how I committed to this path by getting up earlier in the morning in order to make time for that to happen. Notice I said I had to make the time instead of trying to find the time, finding the time will never happen. Life will make sure it fills every possible minute to keep you from spending that valuable time to “be still and know that I am God.”

This month I want to talk about brain health. Let me start with this statement from the “British Journal of Clinical Pharmacology,” 2013

The prevention of Dementia such as Alzheimer’s is a growing public health concern due to a lack of effective curative treatment. Current epidemiological data are in favor of a protective role of certain nutrients. However, the mechanisms involved are not well understood and require further investigation.

The micronutrients mentioned above are vitamina supplements, herbal combinations and amino acids, most of which can be purchased at our health food store and doctors’ offices which specialize in natural health care. The reason this is important is that you can know that you are doing something good for your body and for your mind before it is too late. As the above quote states, we cannot go along as if nothing is happening and when it really gets bad enough that everyone notices you go to the doctor expecting them to fix it for you. Hopefully, it’s not too late. Just visit any nursing home and see the result of waiting too long.

Nothing happens in the brain without the chemical messengers that the research is showing positive changes in people who are willing to help themselves and take control of their health.

**Fundamentals of brain health**

For our brain to be healthy we must have the right neurotransmitters. Oxygen, a steady supply of blood sugar and stimulation. There is a relatively new term being used called brain plasticity. This refers to our brain’s ability to develop multiple channels of communication which continue as we age. The key to good brain function is to maintain communication channels (plasticity). The opposite of plasticity is brain degeneration. Plasticity is dependent on stimulation and a good physical and emotional environment. Studies have shown that people with Alzheimer’s lesions had no symptoms when they remained mentally stimulated. Talaversion does not stimulate the brain. Plasticity can improve at any age with a good environment. Mental stimulation can include brain games, puzzles, learning a new language or playing a musical instrument. So, the brain games you see advertised are capable of helping with stimulation.

Neurotransmitters - These are chemical messengers; our nervous system produces to communicate with each other. Communication, hormones and blood sugar can determine the health of neurotransmitter function. Neurotransmitters use oxygen, glucose, stimulation. Brain degeneration will happen if any one of these is compromised. Blood sugar is critical because it also affects oxygen levels in the brain. (2 strikes)

It has been my observation that many of the people we have tested have blood sugar problems. This is in line with me especially. When I had myself tested it was apparent that my blood sugar had been high for a while. I had no idea because I exercise regularly, and I thought I was eating well. It turns out my affinity for bread (even whole grain and sprouted grain) was part of my problem. People with sugars in blood sugar are often labeled as bi-polar and put on psychoactive drugs. Imagine having an unsteady gas supply to your car. It can and will alter moods. A high blood diet not only affects sugars in blood sugar but it promotes inflammation and brain degeneration. A diet with good combinations of proteins & Healthy FATS prevents blood sugar swings, energy crashes & inflammation.

Stress: The brain can adapt to stress giving the illusion that you can work well under stress. If the high stress goes unattended long enough, brain inflammation will overtake you leading to brain degeneration - crash - burnout - nervous breakdown. Taking time regularly to “be still and know that I am God” is the best prevention I know of.

So, what can I do?

A regular blood workup is essential, but don’t just take your doctor’s word for the results. I recommend you get a copy of the lab and see for yourself. I am constantly having patients who think their doctors and they told everything is fine when it clearly was not. It seems some things are ignored unless you are having obvious symptoms. Remember the key is to catch this BEFORE you have symptoms.

A normal fasting glucose should be 70-100, but even better have your doctor order an A1C which gives you a number indicating the average blood sugar over 90 days. A CBC which is a normal part of routine labs will usually pick up any anemia. Keeping your brain stimulated is essential but will be up to you. I recommend many brain games available free on the internet.

**Books I recommend for further study on “Why Isn’t My Brain Working?” by Ditis Kharazian and “The Brain That Changes Itself” by Norman Doidge**

Email me with any questions you may have or for additional information. Chiron2000@gmail.com.

Dr. Miguel Cruz is in practice along with his wife of 33 years, Leisa Cruz who is a licensed Integrative Nutritionist. They own CruzLife Center in Burnsville NC. Dr. Cruz is a Certified Integrator since 2013. When asked what he does, he says he helps people get out of pain and improve their overall health without the use of drugs or surgery. Something everyone seems to want but nobody seems to know how to get there. Dr. Cruz accepted Jesus Christ in the 1970's while in college at UNC-Chapel Hill. He has then dedicated his life towards helping people grow in physical health and spiritual health.
Annual Health Care
Enrollment Ahead

By Steve Gazo
McDowell County

It is almost that time of year. The time when people choose to overpay for healthcare. A 2016 Commonwealth Fund study said that healthcare accounted for over 10.1% of family budgets which is up from 6.5% only a decade ago. The study also said that healthcare was also outspending income but had slowed slightly. Without getting into politics, and that is a challenge when you discuss the ACA, my goal is to help people understand the options available and to remove the risk that people have by simply choosing either substandard healthcare or none at all.

The first thing one should consider is whether or not you qualify for subsidies for the ACA plans. These plans offer unlimited coverage and have no restrictions on pre-existing conditions. Depending on your household income you could pay as little as 2.68% of your income to as much as 9.68%. So, if you made $100,000 and had a family of 4 you would be expected to pay $9,870 a year for your family healthcare. This is $222.50 a month and if you are at this level you may fall off what is known as the “cliff”. This means if your income exceeds the maximum limit even by $1 you would be responsible for the entire cost of the healthcare plan you choose. This comes as a surprise to many and will show up on your tax bill when you file.

Fortunately, there are alternatives that do not come with all the variables and you can sign up for them at any time. That is right anytime. This means if you are currently in a plan and one of these plans better fits your needs you can sign up today and start saving money. It is also beneficial if you think your income may exceed the limit and minimize the penalty that you will have to pay for making too much money.

So, what are the options I am talking about? There are Health Sharing Plans. They are not insurance but provide coverage to cover the cost of healthcare and they come in many forms. I think they break down into affordable options in three areas depending on what you can afford and what you need. Most come with limits for pre-existing coverage for major illnesses, such as hospital or surgery.

The most basic plan is a MEC, which means Minimum Essential Coverage. These are the most affordable plans and start at $69 a month. They provide telemedicine for family, annual physical and a limited number of Doctor visits a year. They are designed to provide routine healthcare for cuts, breaks, and colds. They usually pay to your doctor or urgent care to treat. They do not provide any hospital or surgical care. They are a good option compared to no coverage at all and can save you money overpaying for routine care out of pocket. The next area is catastrophic care. This is the opposite of the MEC and provides only Hospital and Surgical Care. These plans are to provide a safety net for a major health event. They have pre-existing condition limitations and a lifetime cap on the amount they will pay out but compared to the risk and cost of paying for a hospital stay yourself it is a good option. The last option is a comprehensive plan that combines both the Doctor and Hospital care is one plan. This is where if you are currently on an ACA plan you should compare the cost versus the benefits to see if you can save money with these plans.

I help people evaluate all these plans and determine which way to cover your healthcare is best for you and your family. There is no cost for this analysis. As healthcare cost continue to rise and budgets become more stretched it is critical that you evaluate one of the largest expenses that most people have in their budget. As a CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™, I am always looking for ways to help people stretch their budget and accomplish their goals while protecting their families. Feel free to give me a call (828) 559-0299 or stop by my office in Marion on Main Street.

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

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To the world
You may be one person,
But to one person
You may be the world
Dr. Sears

Rep. Meadows Introduces the “America Stands with Israel Act”

Washington, D.C. – Today, Rep. Mark Meadows (NC-11) introduced the America Stands with Israel Act—a bill to provide defense and security assistance to Israel.

The America Stands with Israel Act empowers the President of the United States to deal with imminent threats to Israel’s survival in two ways. First, it authorizes the President to take whatever military steps may be necessary to protect Israel from an existing or imminent military threat. Second, it allows the President to send immediate and unrestricted defensive measures and services to Israel necessary to assist in its defense.

Rep. Meadows released the following statement on the bill:

“The Middle East region remains a hotbed of terrorism, largely dominated by a country hostile to America in Iran. Israel is one of America’s closest and strongest allies. It is crucial that the Israeli-U.S. partnership remains strong for us to ever have hope for any stability in the Middle East. If Israel’s survival is ever threatened by revisionist regimes, transnational criminal organizations, or extremist terrorists, the United States must stand ready to defend our friend with the full strength and force that our nation has to offer. Today’s global security environment is becoming more and more complex. The United States and Israel must work jointly to face modernized threats together.

I came to Congress to stand firm and defend our friend, Israel, and their right to exist as a peaceful, free, and prosperous nation. My hope is that this bill will be a step toward that end.”

NC House District 118

Budget Impasse Still Looms—Schools will be starting soon and it is only now that the teachers, staff, faculty, and others will begin to feel the “real” effect of operating without a current budget approved. As a result of the veto, we will be operating under a “CR” Continuing Resolution of a budget approved from the previous biennium. There will be no salary increases appropriated for Teachers and Staff Employees.

Blue Ridge Elementary Opens—What a treat it was for me to visit recently! I got to spend several hours in this new, clean, sparkling school. They put me right to work volunteering in the library, BOOES, BOOKS, and more BOOKS to clean and assemble the bookcases ready for the students! It was work, but meaningful work. This new school will incorporate Beech, Bald Creek Elementary, and Clearmont Schools. I couldn’t be more excited for the students, parents, and the new principal Andrea Allen.

Bills of Note

SB 389—Reestablish NC Milk Commission

The NC Milk Commission was initially established in 1953 and was repealed in 2004. This bill would re-establish the North Carolina Milk Commission. The Commission would be authorized to regulate the production and sale of milk in the State. This bill would provide needed support and relief to our dairy farmers. The bill was heard recently in the Ag Committee and unanimously voted to move the bill forward to the House Judiciary Committee for further hearing.

SR 86—Small Business Health Care Act

This bill allows for small business, sole proprietors, and independent contractors to form large group plans that offer affordable insurance for association members. The bill has passed both Chambers and has been sent to the Governor.

HB 415—NC Consumer Fireworks Safety Act

This bill would permit cities and counties to sell consumer fireworks. It would also levy a 5% excise tax on the sale of such fireworks. The bill ran into stiff opposition when discussed in the Res. Reform Committee and ultimately the sponsor of the bill pulled it without a vote.

The bill has now been sent to the Rules Committee. Many members spoke against this bill along with the Fire Chiefs simply due to the danger of the products and lack of facilities to store fireworks once used.

We are continuing our sessions in hopes of getting passage on the Governor’s veto of the budget bill. We are over a month into this process!

NC Senate District 46

Even as we wait on the state budget impasse to be resolved, there were some important pieces of legislation that were acted upon by the General Assembly.

First, Senate Bill 16 Small Business Health Care Act is now on the Governor’s desk after passing both chambers with bipartisan support. The legislation allows small businesses, sole proprietors, and independent contractors to form large group health plans that offer affordable insurance for association members. These association Health Plans (AHPs) would be subject to state and federal consumer protections, including covering those with preexisting conditions, and would expand access to coverage for working North Carolinians. The plans are expected to reduce the cost of healthcare coverage for hundreds of thousands of North Carolinians by treating small businesses the same as large corporations, through new insurance products regulated by the state Department of Insurance (DOH).

Another important piece of legislation is House Bill 74, Taxpayer Refund Act. If passed into law, the NC Department of Revenue would mail a refund to every taxpayer in the amount they paid in state taxes, up to a maximum of $121 for an individual or $250 for a couple. The refund will return $663 million to the people and is not eating into any of the Reserve Fund appropriations that were in the vetoed budget. The Reserve Fund currently has $1.3 billion in it. The vetoed budget added another $790 million. The Taxpayers Refund Act instructs the Department of Revenue to issue checks as soon as possible. The Department must mail checks by December 15, 2019 for those who filed before August 1, 2019. As of publication, House Bill 74 is expected to pass the Senate and the House before going to Governor Cooper for his signature—or to veto.

The third piece of legislation was House Bill 370, Require Cooperation with ICE Detainers, which received final approval from both the House of Representatives and Senate in late August and would require UNC sheriffs to comply with federal immigration authorities when dealing with suspected illegal immigrants already in jail for committing other crimes. The bill was heard in committee and sent to the Senate, where it passed. The bill is now on the Senate agenda and will be voted on in the near future. The Senate has until November 10 to pass the bill.

God Bless America
New Trails Provide New Opportunities:

Recently, I was pleased to be the lead sponsor for state legislation that adds two trails to the State Trails System: the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail and the Wilderness Gateway Trail. The new law co-designates the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail with the federal government so that the trail is now both a state and federal one. The Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail is a project of the National Park Service to recognize and honor the important role of patriot militiamen in the Revolutionary War. It is located mostly in western North Carolina, with segments in both Tennessee and Virginia. The trail ends across the North Carolina line at the site of the Battle of Kings Mountain in South Carolina. Many historians refer to that battle as a turning point in the Revolutionary War in the South. It is my hope that North Carolina’s authorization of this trail will result in mutually-beneficial collaboration between state and federal officials and lead to a partnership beneficial for the western North Carolina portion of the trail.

The Wilderness Gateway State Trail authorization directs the state’s Department of Natural and Cultural Resources to establish it as a completely new trail. It will begin in Catawba County on the east and extend westward through Burke and Union County. The Jacob Fork and Henry Fork rivers both have their origins in South Mountain State Park in Burke County and flow east to a confluence in Catawba County. Conceptually, the new trail will likely intersect or follow one of these rivers with loops and variations to provide access across and under I-40 to make it more user-friendly for these traveling or living north of the interstate. This new trail will hopefully create a “gateway” to the wonderful wilderness and recreation areas of the South Mountains. In turn, I hope this new trail will provide increased hiking, camping and other outdoor opportunities for both the citizens of our area and also for tourists.

NC Senate District 47

Achieving childhood literacy by third grade is foundational to desired educational outcomes for our children. I co-sponsored Senate Bill 438 – Excellent Public Schools Act of 2016 which was filed April 1st. Before the beginning of the school year, the bill was passed by both the Senate and House, ratified, then sent to the Governor on August 14th. As of this writing (7 days later), the Excellent Public Schools Act of 2019 is awaiting Gov. Roy Cooper’s signature. The bill was created through coordination with Gov. Cooper’s appointees to the State Board of Education. I certainly hope that Gov. Cooper will sign the bill that his own administration was involved in writing. Possible outcomes are that he will sign the bill, but not sign the bill (which will become law within 10 days without his signature), or veto the bill.

This bill, which focuses on early childhood literacy programs, was created with input from a wide range of educational stakeholders who looked with legislators at the best practices, as well as areas for improvement, here in North Carolina as well as in other states. Building on and fine-tuning the Read to Achieve Program, which was passed by the NC General Assembly in 2013, Excellent Public Schools Act of 2019 implements improvements and changes to several key areas which data shows contribute to early literacy in third grade, an important indicator of future academic success. Changes to the North Carolina Read to Achieve Program will do the following:

- Establish individual reading plans for students who need extra help in reading
- Establish a Digital Children’s Reading Initiative
- Establish a Comprehensive Plan to Improve Literacy Instruction (Comprehensive Plan)
- Require the North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching (NCCAT) to prioritize and provide aligned professional development in early reading and literacy instruction.
- Require teacher preparation programs to provide literacy training in programs for elementary education teachers
- Require the literacy curriculum and instruction provided by local school administrative units to align with Read to Achieve and the Comprehensive Plan
- Require approval of plans for local reading camps
- Study phasing out some alternative assessments for third-grade reading
- Create a uniform reporting structure for Read to Achieve data
- Provide for continuing education credits related to literacy for certain reading camp instructors and allow retired K-3 teachers to serve as reading camp instructors
- Expand the WolfPack WORKS program

Please check the NC General Assembly website – ncleg.gov or feel free to call me at 919-733-3460, or email me at ralph.hise@ncleg.net if you would like to know the outcome of this important legislation focusing on early childhood literacy.

Family Living

Why Children Should Spend More Time With Their Grandparents

By State Point Media

(StatePoint) Play is important for everyone, no matter their age — and when grandparents, parents, and children play together, that’s where the real benefits of unstructured play time are discovered.

“Playtime with adults of different ages is not just a chance for families to bond, these interactions with positive role models also help children develop a range of important social, language and problem-solving skills,” says Dr. Amanda Gunmer, child psychologist and an expert contributor to TheGeniusOfPlay.org.

Adults benefit from playtime too. As one grows older, the free unstructured fun enjoyed in childhood is often replaced with structured activities like sports, card games and solving crosswords. Time spent with youngsters can keep adults young and give them a chance to relive more carefree days.

According to The Genius of Play, a national initiative whose mission is to raise awareness about the importance of play and help parents make a critical part of raising their kids, here are three reasons why intergenerational play is good for young children:

- Unstructured play tends to be collaborative, encouraging cooperation and honesty.
- Spending time with older adults helps children understand how aging works, and later accept their own aging.
- Grandparents are storytellers and their wisdom and experience can open children’s horizons further, as well as ignite imagination and creativity.

- When it comes to adults, intergenerational play is beneficial in the following ways:
  - Children bring innocence, joy, and laughter to any situation, helping adults reduce stress.
  - Active, busy playtime can keep an older adult vital and healthy. Indeed, those that play with children burn more calories, experience fewer falls and become less reliant on walking aids, according to studies.
  - Playtime is good for an aging adult’s mental and emotional health. Games can help seniors maintain cognitive skills and retain memory, and the quality time with children can prevent feelings of loneliness and boost positivity.

Whether you’re young, old or somewhere in between, these three tips from The Genius of Play can help you make the most of the time together:

- Share your favorite games with your grandchildren. From hide-and-seek to hula-hoops, introducing them to the games you played years ago is a great way to connect and make new memories.

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Preachers of the Gospel

BY DR. TOM WALKER
MCDOWELL COUNTY

2 Corinthians 4:5 says, "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and yourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."

Being a preacher of the Gospel is not a rare vocation or a job opportunity, it is a calling from Almighty God. In 1 Timothy 1:12 the Apostle Paul said, "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, that for that cause I am overshadowed, being in the ministry. According to the word of the Lord and his spirit, he hath made me his instrument, to be a vessel for the knowledge of Christ, and a pillar for the撑 up of the church, and a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Being called, God counts on his servants to be faithful in preaching the Word, loving the people, while guarding and feeding the flock of God (the local church over which the Lord has assigned him).

It has been my privilege to preach the Gospel of Christ now for some fifty-one and one-half years. Having experienced a call from God, I will keep on going on in the ministry when negative experiences are encountered. I have been a pastor in three different Baptist churches over those fifty-one and one-half years, but the good experiences have always dominated over the bad ones.

Preaching is a tremendous responsibility that no man should consider lightly. Many men who are in the ministry have been called by the Lord and some were not beckoned by the Lord to preach. Some take on the ministry on their own without God putting them into the ministry.

Preach with a Born-Again Experience

If a man is to tell others how to be born again, he needs to have a born-again experience for himself (John 3:3). Never of an incident years ago when a pulpit committee was considering calling a certain man to be their pastor. He told this Baptist church several committees something like this: "I do not believe in being born again just like you do, but I have been trained in one of the best seminaries, and if you call me I will make you a good pastor." The tragedy is that some on the committee wanted to present him to the church for them to vote on him as their shepherd. What ignorance on the part of some!

Preach with a Sense of Responsibility

Romans 14:12 says, "So then every one of us shall give an account of himself to God. One day we will answer to God for our ministry." Were we faithful to preach the whole counsel of God without the fear and favor of men? The pastor is accountable to the church, but his greatest accountability is with Almighty God Himself. If we say we are "accountable" before God, that means we are liable to account for our actions and our attitudes to Him. That should motivate us to do our best for the Master. One day when life is over when the last page of our lives is written, we will stand before the Lord in Heaven.

It is not only what we have done that will come into play on that day, but also the attitudes we had. Did we do what we did in life for the glory of God or did we do it to just further some agenda we had in mind? Did we help someone to advance ourselves or to help them along the way? Not only are our actions important in our accountability to God but our attitudes as well.

Preach with a Clean Life

Isaiah 31:11, "Depart, depart ye, go out from hence, touch no unclean thing, go ye out of the midst of her: be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord." Note the words, "Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord."

God's ministries should be physically clean and maintain the right spirit and appearance before others, however, there is more in Isaiah 31:11 than that fact. We are to keep ourselves right spiritually.

What you do to private others may not see, still, God sees everything. Nothing is hidden from his glory. Hebrews 4:13 tells us, "Neither is any creature invisible to him, for he is a consuming fire."

If a preacher does not have a clean life it will hinder his effectiveness for Christ.

Preach with Divine Power

Zachariah 4:6 says, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts: The way that ye go shall be established for you; and ye shall make fair the thing that is mechanic in his sight."

Acts 2:38 declares, "And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people." Holman comments that Stephen accomplished great wonders and miracles among the people. He did it through faith in God and through the power of God.

In speaking of God's power, we make reference to His enabling us to be effective in our work for Him. Why preach and not be effective in doing so? We should greatly desire good results from our labor. That is impossible without the power of God moving and carrying us along in God's work.

In 1 Corinthians 2:4-5 the Apostle Paul wrote, "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

The Apostle depended upon God's power as he labored in the work of the Lord. Because of that power was successful in his spiritual labors and was one of the greatest men for the cause of Christ that ever lived.

Preach with A Love For the People

Jesus told Peter in John 21:16 and 17 to "Feed my sheep." It is not enough to love to preach, but beyond that, we should love those to whom we do preach. Love means that you give yourself to take care of them. You seek the good of the congregation and their welfare, not merely your own.

That is why we do all three things Paul told young Timothy to do. We reprove, rebuke and exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine (2 Timothy 4:2). Exhorting is easy but rebuking and reproving can be difficult to do, but it must be done. A man of God needs a balanced ministry of reproving, rebuking, and exhorting.

We need to teach things if they will be better and further the members of the church. God has not called us to tips an in the rubs but to tell the truth.

Preach with a Determination to Keep Going

God has blessed me to pastor the good folks at Zion Hill Baptist Church now for over 25 1/2 years. I do not plan to retire until they no longer need me or until my physical condition would not allow me to pastor any longer. If I have to do someday retire from being a pastor, as long as I have breath, I will continue to preach the Word of God. Don't let small, annoying matters that cause us make ready to throw in the towel and give up trying to minister.

Preach with A Good Knowledge of the Bible

I will close this study today with a verse out of 2nd Timothy, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15). No man is qualified to lead God's people if he does not spend the proper time in study. With so many excellent study resources today, there is no excuse for being an unprepared preacher.

May God help us to do all we can for Him!

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

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The Road Taken...

By Timothy W. Tren
Burke County

Robert Frost so famously wrote in the final line of his poem, "The Road Not Taken," "... Two roads diverged in a wood, and I— I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference!"

As I stand at another crossroads of my own, God has prepared an unusual circumstance, in that both roads in my journey are "the one less traveled," regardless of which one I choose. Unlike Frost's divergence, where one path proved more significant over the other with my choice, each has the potential to share the Word of God in the duties required. In other words, they both have the ability to become blessings to others, in that I will be serving the Lord on either journey; or that, yes, that fact truly makes all the difference.

As a matter of confirmation, I was afforded an opportunity to interview with a school the first part of this week. I had just finished sharing my testimony with a friend when the phone rang. Like Abraham at the altar, Isaac laying bound below his knife blade, the feeling of his muscles' tightening in his shoulders as he was about to drive the blade into his son, my path seemed perfectly clear, the decision obvious. God had provided me with a task, there was no turning back. But then, is my case, the phone rang. In Abraham's. God sent in Angel of the Lord, as it ran through my mind, literally made me laugh as I answered the call. The caller was from a school that I had applied for many years ago. I was really a bit of a surprise when they called Monday morning, asking if I could come in Tuesday for the interview. Knowing that God has prepared one path already, I was a bit uncertain, but thought that at least I should perform my due diligence.

"Was this God seeing how committed I was to finally accept the position at this school's Home, and then providing me an opportunity to go on a job that would allow me to more easily provide for my family?" I was like Abraham, where he could see that I was going through with it no matter the cost! It was with these questions in mind that I drove to the school the next day for the interview. I felt wonderful, a beautiful day, clear blue skies, low humidity, and a feeling inside that God was with me, no matter what. The interview went very well, and it seemed that I was always one step ahead on the panel's questions. They told me before I left that they would have an answer within a couple of days. By the next morning, Wednesday they had made a decision; one that I didn't initiate in.

In many ways, the news was a relief. I thanked God out loud, for it was as if He had chosen for me. He knows us better than we know ourselves, and that being the case, would understand how hard it would be for me to decide between the two. Confused once more that God is in control, I returned to work on the Retreat, there was always one more thing to do.

Thursday came, and once more, there was another knock on the door. I opened the email, and there was another opportunity to interview with another potential employer that I had applied for many weeks earlier. They had moved my app, the reason they were giving me 72 hours to perform the interview and submit it for review. Once again, making sure I performed my due diligence. I logged into the web site on Friday and began answering the question. Before beginning, I prayed that if this was God's chosen path, I would go from there. As it turned out, it was already more than well pleased with the choice I had provided. The questions were sort of the customary type, but rather, asked things like, "How do you grow and maintain your walk with Christ?" "What was your personal testimony with regard to accepting Christ, and how have you continued that walk?" In each case, there was no question that God was working on something big: something that would make it clear there was much to do in order to make it possible. Because, with God, nothing is impossible.

Finally, after the last question, I hit the submit button. It was done. Have you ever completed something and wondered how well it went? Did you get the sudden feeling that there many things you hadn't said that you could have? These questions and others began to form in my mind, but as they did, there was the comforting hand of God upon me, consoling me, assuring me that this was all that was needed. There was no need to overthink. From my mountain top vantage, there was the feeling of being literally closer to God. One question after another, my reflection kept reminding me that I had never been alone, even when I felt the loneliness. Looking back, those solitary moments were steppingstones to the answers that would play out. In the warning, there was no question that God was working on something big: something that would make it clear there was much to do in order to make it possible. Because, with God, nothing is impossible.

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God’s Birth of Anchored
By Carol Hicks
Burke County

The birth of my middle child, Alex, would forever change our family’s path in this life, although, we didn’t know it at the time. Over the course of the first two years of his life, we started a journey that caused fear and heartache with lots of God’s blessings in between. Alex was born with approximately 25 genes missing off chromosome 10. Technically, there is a name for this particular chromosome abnormality. His speech is difficult to understand, and he’ll need care for his entire life. We made the mistake of looking up chromosome disorders on the Internet—that was a mistake. Bad news after bad news. We ran from doctor to doctor looking for answers on how to help him. We tried everything! We were so scared and didn’t understand. We were hurt and when we thought about what the future held for Alex and us. Since fear can be paralyzing, we knew we couldn’t allow this fear to grip us anymore, so, we surrendered to God. That is exactly what He had been waiting for us to do. We started memorizing verses such as Jeremiah 31:9 and Isaiah 9:14 and claiming them over our son. As we have watched Alex grow, God has blessed him with a heart of prayer. He is a prayer warrior. Anytime he hears sirens—no matter what time of day, he prays. Now, he doesn’t even have to hear a sire, anytime he sees someone stopped on the side of the road or in trouble, he prays. When someone is sick, he prays. He has taught us to look for opportunities to pray for people. Of course, we also prayed to God to heal him. We read over and over again of God’s miraculous healings. We prayed that He would unloose Alex’s tongue so that he could talk to us and sing praises to the Lord. Oh, how we wished for this for our son. For 13 years, this was our prayer. But one day, God told us in our spirit that He had a bigger plan in mind. Starting with a tiny seed in our hearts, we started praying and seeking God’s will. This tiny seed would later reveal that God wanted us to take a step of faith to create a ministry at Pleasant Hill Baptist Church for kids with special needs and their families called Anchored, based on the Scripture—Hebrews 6:19. We didn’t feel at all qualified for this endeavor, however, God has reassured us that He will do the impossible through us. Isn’t it just like God?” He asks us to do the impossible so that we know it wasn’t, but it is all Him. God wants us to be the ordinary person and do remarkable things through him or her—all for His honor and glory!” He just asks us to take a step of faith and believe He is who He says He is. This process of transformation had to happen inside of our hearts before God could proceed. We learned to believe God in every area of our lives. We had to prance us to prepare for this ministry. Since God has called our family through our earthly journey and has given us hope and peace, we know He will be the anchor for the families this ministry will bring into our church. The goal of this ministry is to empower and provide support to individuals and their families in an environment where individuals, regardless of their abilities, can grow into a relationship with Jesus Christ. We want God to be the anchor in other lives as well! We praise God and thank Him every day that He uses the ordinary person to do His amazing work! He constantly walks beside us every day to lead and guide us. We have seen God’s supernatural hand in helping to launch this ministry. He continues to provide resources and funds for the classroom. Pleasant Hill Baptist Church has been very supportive and involved in raising funds as well as God’s hand through two grants that were awarded to us through the SBC Baptist Association and the Joie and Friends. We are excited to begin this ministry opportunity for kids with special needs and their families. We look forward to the future in partnering with churches that share a common interest in special needs ministries to work together as a team.

Caron & Alex Hicks attend Pleasant Hill Baptist Church and have started the Anchored ministry.

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Anchored Ministry

God’s Birth of Anchored
By Carol Hicks
Burke County

The birth of my middle child, Alex, would forever change our family’s path in this life, although, we didn’t know it at the time. Over the course of the first two years of his life, we started a journey that caused fear and heartache with lots of God’s blessings in between. Alex was born with approximately 25 genes missing off chromosome 10. Technically, there is a name for this particular chromosome abnormality. His speech is difficult to understand, and he’ll need care for his entire life. We made the mistake of looking up chromosome disorders on the Internet—that was a mistake. Bad news after bad news. We ran from doctor to doctor looking for answers on how to help him. We tried everything! We were so scared and didn’t understand. We were hurt and when we thought about what the future held for Alex and us. Since fear can be paralyzing, we knew we couldn’t allow this fear to grip us anymore, so, we surrendered to God. That is exactly what He had been waiting for us to do. We started memorizing verses such as Jeremiah 31:9 and Isaiah 9:14 and claiming them over our son. As we have watched Alex grow, God has blessed him with a heart of prayer. He is a prayer warrior. Anytime he hears sirens—no matter what time of day, he prays. Now, he doesn’t even have to hear a sire, anytime he sees someone stopped on the side of the road or in trouble, he prays. When someone is sick, he prays. He has taught us to look for opportunities to pray for people. Of course, we also prayed to God to heal him. We read over and over again of God’s miraculous healings. We prayed that He would unloose Alex’s tongue so that he could talk to us and sing praises to the Lord. Oh, how we wished for this for our son. For 13 years, this was our prayer. But one day, God told us in our spirit that He had a bigger plan in mind. Starting with a tiny seed in our hearts, we started praying and seeking God’s will. This tiny seed would later reveal that God wanted us to take a step of faith to create a ministry at Pleasant Hill Baptist Church for kids with special needs and their families called Anchored, based on the Scripture—Hebrews 6:19. We didn’t feel at all qualified for this endeavor, however, God has reassured us that He will do the impossible through us. Isn’t it just like God?” He asks us to do the impossible so that we know it wasn’t, but it is all Him. God wants us to be the ordinary person and do remarkable things through him or her—all for His honor and glory!” He just asks us to take a step of faith and believe He is who He says He is. This process of transformation had to happen inside of our hearts before God could proceed. We learned to believe God in every area of our lives. We had to prance us to prepare for this ministry. Since God has called our family through our earthly journey and has given us hope and peace, we know He will be the anchor for the families this ministry will bring into our church. The goal of this ministry is to empower and provide support to individuals and their families in an environment where individuals, regardless of their abilities, can grow into a relationship with Jesus Christ. We want God to be the anchor in other lives as well! We praise God and thank Him every day that He uses the ordinary person to do His amazing work! He constantly walks beside us every day to lead and guide us. We have seen God’s supernatural hand in helping to launch this ministry. He continues to provide resources and funds for the classroom. Pleasant Hill Baptist Church has been very supportive and involved in raising funds as well as God’s hand through two grants that were awarded to us through the SBC Baptist Association and the Joie and Friends. We are excited to begin this ministry opportunity for kids with special needs and their families. We look forward to the future in partnering with churches that share a common interest in special needs ministries to work together as a team.

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valid, biblical explanation for why Jesus had to die.

So, just how does Jesus fit the requisites of the “CV” set some 1,500 years before He came? In the New Testament, we find that Jesus was male and first-born (e.g. Luke 2:2). He was born of a virgin with the Holy Spirit being the “father” (Luke 1:26–38) to break the line of inherited sin, and that He was without blemish (Colossians 1:12; 1 Peter 1:19). He was also human and divine, so we have a complete match!

However, this is where the creation-versus-evolution issue, and the associated issue of long ages, comes to be “irreconcilable” but is in fact reconciled with the authority of the Bible, Christology and, ultimately, our own redemption. Quite simply, to suggest the account of Adam and Eve (and the associated issue of sin and death) is a myth, or needs “reinterpretation,” is both a direct attack on God and the authority of Scripture, and also brings into question the whole purpose of Jesus’ death. It is an attack on both the Old and New Testaments since Luke traces Jesus’ genealogy back to Adam (Luke 3:23–38), Paul refers to Jesus as the “last Adam” (1 Corinthians 15:45) and there are other New Testament references to Adam (1 Timothy 2:13–14; Jude 1:14). Sin, and with it the introduction of death, is also linked with Adam in the New Testament (Romans 5:12).

So, if Adam is not a literal, historical figure, then effectively nothing of the Bible can be taken at face value, a fact that atheists seem to appreciate more than many evangelical’s. Even worse, the whole justification for Jesus coming to die for us is destroyed and, with it, our redemption.

That only leaves long ages prior to Genesis 1:2—but for what purpose? If we are to accept the Bible from the creation of Adam onwards, why would we even question God with the remaining few verses?

But can God still have used evolution and what about long ages?

If Adam and Eve are historical figures, then clearly there is no need for evolution from that point on as evidenced by Jesus’ genealogy in Luke Furthermore, if there was no death prior to Adam (Romans 5:12), there is no room for evolution at all—it is completely ruled out.

That only leaves long ages prior to Genesis 1:2—but for what purpose? If we are to accept the Bible from the creation of Adam onwards, why would we even question God with the remaining few verses? Why would anyone want to accept a “gap” between Genesis 1:1 and 2, or want to see the days in Genesis as being “God’s days, not man’s days” or some other “explanation,” denying the straight reading of Genesis? The only reason is purely to adopt a non-biblical, non-supernatural, humanistic worldview into one’s theology, which requires long ages for evolution to work!

The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is the “last Adam” (1 Corinthians 15:45) who came to die for our sins and, by dying on the cross, has provided us with the means of being reconciled to God and being able to spend eternity with Him. As Paul says in Galatians 1:6-7 any other “gospel” is not really a Gospel!
**Dave Says**

By Dave Ramsey

Dear Dave,

Why do I need a will if I’m still young and haven’t acquired a lot of wealth?

Laura

Dear Laura,

In a case like yours, you don’t need a complicated will. But you do need an inexpensive, basic will. The larger and more complicated your estate is, the more you’d spend on estate planning and a will in order to ensure everything is properly addressed—and to keep the government’s hands off everything.

Let’s say you’re in your early- to mid-twenties and single. You have a car and a bank account, and that’s it. In this kind of scenario, it’s going to be easy to work through your estate. But it’s going to take your parents—or whoever’s left—a whole lot longer to get those few simple transactions taken care of if you don’t have a will in place.

The other thing you’ll always want to have in your will package is a healthcare power of attorney directive. This includes things like who’s going to make medical decisions for you if you’re unable to make decisions for yourself. As a part of this, you’d want to fill out the paperwork on whether to disconnect life support systems in the event of a coma. These things aren’t fun to think about, but doing it will take a huge burden off the people you love. And all this becomes even more important if you have children because the state will step in and decide what happens to them if you don’t.

Having these things laid out ahead of time, and sharing them with your family and close friends, is a very thoughtful and mature thing to do for those who would be left behind in the event of your death. They’re already going to be distraught and grieving, and you don’t want to make it worse by leaving them with a lot of important, difficult decisions to make.

—Dave

Dear Dave,

My wife and I are on Baby Step 2, and the only debt we have is $30,000 in student loans. We bring home about $30,000 a year. In addition to this, we have almost $40,000 in equity in our home. We also have a toddler, piss another baby on the way. Do you think we should sell the house, and rent for a few years while using the money from the sale of the house to pay down our student loan debt?

Chris

Dear Chris,

No. I wouldn’t sell your home in this situation. You’re going to be out of debt in a couple of years or at, anyway. You’ll just have to lean into it and make sure you’re living on a strict, written budget. I’m talking about no vacations and no eating out. You shouldn’t see the inside of a restaurant unless you’re working there. And the new kid’s crib may have to come from a garage sale, but so what? Mine did, too. Want to know something else? I survived without having a rich kid’s nursery, and so did my kids.

There’s a price to be paid anytime you decide to get serious about gaining control of your money and cleaning up a financial mess you’ve made. You’re going to have to work like maniacs and have no lives for a while. That might even mean picking up a part-time job at night or on weekends. You’ve got a tough couple of years ahead of you, but I think it’s worth the tradeoff.

Keep your house.

—Dave

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

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www.brcnews.com
The Jesus Christ Lizard
By Christy Lowman
Burke County

Did you know that there is a lizard named after Jesus? The Basilisk lizard's nickname is "the Jesus Christ lizard." Can you guess why?

The Basilisk lizard can grow up to 2 feet, this is including the length of their tail. Their life span is seven years if grown in captivity. They are related to the Iguana. The adults males have three crests, one on each head, back and tail. The female has one crest on her head and can lay as many as 20 eggs at a time.

The Basilisk lizard lives in Central America and South America in the rain forests around streams and rivers. It lives mostly in the trees that hang over bodies of water. When a predator is after them, they hide in the trees to avoid being captured. The adult can run up to 10-20 meters on the water surface while the adults can only run a few meters before sinking in the water because of their weight. They are also able to run at high speeds of about 4-5 mph on land and much faster on water. This helps "the Jesus Christ lizard" escape its predators and catch food. This is why they will always be found near the banks of a body of water. They are also able to hide under leaves and on the ground and stay motionless for a long time.

How would you know how long the lizard is able to travel on the water's surface? Being lightweight, super-fast and just two of the contributors. The Basilisk lizard also has very long toes and small flaps of skin on their feet that help them walk in the water creating little air pockets under the lizard's feet lifting them to the top of the water. The lizard then pumps and causes their legs rapidly like a bicycle, lifting their legs hard on the water's surface. If the lizard does sink in the water, there are no worries, they are strong swimmers and can stay underwater for up to 30 minutes!

All these factors are how the Basilisk lizard can run on water. Jesus however, wasn't equipped with any special features. He came to earth as an ordinary person and ran too.

Did you know that it is a miracle that Jesus walked on water? Scientists have calculated that a person weighing 175 pounds would have to run at 65 mph to travel the same distance as the basilisk lizard does. But Jesus was able to walk on top of the water! Did you know that Jesus performed many miracles and answered many prayers while He was on earth? Did you know that He is still doing these things every day? Think about it. Can you remember a time that God answered your prayers? Have you witnessed a miracle in your life or someone else's? If you can't think of an example look closely over the past week. I bet you will see God working in your life, answering prayers, or performing miracles on your behalf. Sometimes these are not as large as walking on water but are very small. Look closely! Also be sure to ask God to answer your prayers or perform a miracle for you. Remember the Bible says, "I am the Lord, the God of all people. Nothing is too difficult for me." (Jeremiah 12:7)

At the same time, God added his witnesses to those performing all kinds of miracles and wonders by distributing the gifts of the Holy Spirit according to his will. (Hebrews 2:4)

Dear Lord, we praise You and thank You for the answered prayers and miracles that You perform for us and others. We are so thankful that You are still in the business of doing these things for us! Pray that You reveal and show Yourself to each child. Let them see how you are working in their lives! In Jesus' precious name I pray. Amen.

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Pauses...and Consider
Beside Still Waters
By Kim and Jan Mepo
Avery County

Three boys and their Dad out for a hike that led to a quiet lake with not even a ripple; it was a perfect day.

Then Dad said, "Watch this." Picking up a smooth stone he sailed it out over the water where it skipped along making ripples appear that hadn't been there before.

"How do you do that?" they questioned. "I want to try!" they each exclaimed.

And so, the skipping rock lessons began. Some got plugged into the water and sank. Others sent out a ripple or two. But, it took time for them to master the technique.

However, once they did, there were enough stones for them to skip. One after another he heard, "Watch me!" "Watch this!"

The times when I was alone, I loved sitting back and watching this display. I even tried it a time or two. But the guys always beat me.

My mind floats back to a time when I was about five years old and I heard my father say, "Catch the deep end of this thing - it's deep down here." After that, I was always fishing around for the fish when we were at the lake. I'd stare at the ripples and wonder about the deep end of the thing.

Besides our bodies being in constant motion, what other parts of us seem to go non-stop? I think it is our minds. If we aren't preoccupied with worries, to-do-lists, schedules, meetings, or more, we're trying to solve problems for our children and others. There's hardly a moment when we can be still and undisturbed as lake water on a calm day.

We have come beside still waters while hiking in Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado. These lakes so high in the mountains are gifts of God to each of us when we unexpectedly come upon them. Mirror images of trees and clouds reflect back in the stillness.

I wonder if God would like us to quiet our minds for at least a few minutes so that He can gently drop His thoughts across our minds. Thank the ripples such thinking would create - ripples of purpose, meaning, and values, ripples of love, forgiveness, mercy, and grace.

As such thoughts slipped across our minds from Him, we would be "fixing our thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable," as it is said in Philippians 4:8, 9. If we continue to receive His thoughts, we will be thinking about things that are excellent and praiseworthy.

Then our minds will once again become like that peaceful lake reflecting Him clearly because "the God of peace will be with you." Selah

REFLECTION

Beneath majestic snow-capped mountains, golden Aspen and Evergreens cast a reflection that feeds the eyes, while the Creator imprints His majesty on the soul.

Let's reflect God's resplendence to others.

"I will meditate on the glorious splendor of Your Majesty, and on Your wonderful works." Psalm 145:3

Ken and Jan love residing in the mountains of Avery County. Visit Jan's new blog at paseendonoanddian.com. Journeys with Jan and Ken's photos at kenmepo@photography.com. Kenmepo@photography.com is currently offline. But Ken's photos can still be seen at kenmepo.com.

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How Churches and Families Can Partner in Making Disciples
By Stephanie Jackson

“When I get home, I am going to talk to Jesus!” my redhead preschooler called out as we pulled out of the church parking lot after another robust Sunday service. My husband and I glanced at each other, then responded. “Yes, little one, you can talk with Jesus any where at any time.” We smiled because we knew these few words were God’s gift to our family. They represented a partnership between our home and our church — one that we treasure, and one that we cannot without.

Busy family unit:
Hudson Taylor was a 19th-century missionary who said, “All of our difficulties are only platforms for the manifestation of His grace, power, and love.” Many families that attend church each Sunday are in a season of life that is ruled by a difficulty called perpetual busyness. It’s a season that can be burdensome and overwhelming. Busyness can overflow into all areas of family life, and families need ministry leaders to come alongside them in support and encouragement. Therefore, church’s ministry leaders must ask how they can partner with families who are in the grip of busy lives.

Called to encourage:
Psalm 78:4 serves as a humbling reminder to those of us leading children in our churches. It reminds us of our calling, “Tell the coming generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, and His might, and the wonders He has done.” What a weighty and joyful gift that we have been given! Children’s ministers hold a great responsibility to partner with parents in this task — the task is marked with the highest stakes imaginable but also the greatest eternal reward.

Children will spend only an hour or two, at most, in church each week. While the training may be short, it’s invaluable in the hearts and minds of the kids. Take every opportunity to preach the gospel in every situation. Consider how your team interacts during parent pick-up. Use pick-up time to inform families of what their children learned at church while encouraging them to keep the conversation moving during the week.

Children’s ministry leaders may have only an hour or two on Sundays, but parents have 167 Ministry leaders should be parents’ strongest encouragers on Sundays and throughout the week as well.

Ministry leaders should be parents’ strongest encouragers on Sundays and throughout the week as well.

Working together:
As a ministry leader, you can equip your families for discipleship opportunities that parents might have when they are at work, walking along the road, when they lie down and when they get up.

Ministry can be hard, and there is no perfect recipe. As you pray and ask how God may lead you to overhaul your family discipleship strategy, think about the kids to your ministry as you would an unsearched people group. What do they love to listen to? Where do they hang out? Why do they read certain book series? Remember to parents to do what works best, when it works best, and how it works best to lead their kids to Jesus and grow in their relationship with our Savior J.C. Ryle once said, “He who has trained his children for heaven, not for the earth, for God rather than for man — he is the parent who will be called wise at the last.” Ministry leaders, you are tasked to encourage and equip parents as they strive to bring up their children for heaven as they are sitting at home, walking along the road, when they lie down, and when they get up. Do not grow weary!

Stephanie is the director of Children’s Ministry at North Wake Church.

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How to Keep Back to School Time from Busting Your Budget
By Rachel Cruz

I remember as I was growing up, I always thought school was free. I mean, I understood that private school costs money, but I went to public school, and I didn’t think a whole lot about the expenses associated with it.

Now that I’m older, I realize how much parents actually spend on their kids when they go back to school. In fact, the National Retail Federation reports parents plan to spend $696 on back-to-school supplies this year. Isn’t that crazy?

There are the obvious school supplies like notebooks, markers (my favorite!), and backpacks. And as a kid, I always needed new clothes and shoes. But there are not-so-obvious ones that nickel-and-dime you to death.

One of my coworkers told me that he had to buy football gear for his son that totaled $720. Understandably, it gave him a bit of sticker shock. There’s nothing wrong with paying for this kind of thing if you have the money, but you still need to have a plan for how you’re going to pay for it.

As the school year is gearing back up, it’s important to make a list of things you need to budget for. So, think about these categories and come up with a dollar amount you plan to spend in each one.

School supplies:
- Uniforms
- Sports equipment
- Fall clothes and shoes
- Meal plans
- Fees for clubs, sports, band, and other extracurricular activities

I’d like to point out that this is a great time of year to teach your kids that money isn’t an infinite supply. Teach them the value of working within a budget. They don’t need the ready-made brand shoes or the fancy notebook that costs more. You’re setting your kids up to win when they understand money can — and often does — run out.

Now, if you’ve already busted your back-to-school budget, here’s what you can do:

Get your budget back on track. Where can you cut back this month to make up for the overspending? Is there anything laying around the house you can sell? Can you pick up some extra hours at work?

Plan for future school expenses. Once school is back in session, there will be other costs that come up. School pictures, yearbooks, field trips, and more extracurricular activities are just around the corner. And now you know how to get ahead of them!

I know paying for all these school expenses can feel overwhelming, but if you plan ahead and pay with cash, you’ll feel a lot better when September rolls around.

About Rachel Cruz
At a 61 New York Times best-selling author and host of The Rachel Cruz Show, Rachel helps people learn the proper ways to manage money and start out debt free. She’s authored three best-selling books, including Love Your Life. Not Theirs and Smart Money Smart Kids, which she co-wrote with her father, Dave Ramsey. You can follow Rachel on Twitter and Instagram at @RachelCruz or online at rachelcruz.com, youtube.com/rachelcruz or facebook.com/rachelramsey.cruz

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GriefShare

By Carolyn Dorn
Mitchell County

The Western Carolina Church ministry of GriefShare has been reaching out to those in grief since 2008. I'd like to share how this ministry came to exist in Mitchell and surrounding counties, but in doing so, I must revisit my own grief experience of losing my husband back in May of 2007. I have shared my story in BRCN at the distant past, and some of you may remember the actual event.

My husband, Jim, was a drafting and design teacher at Etka High School, which was quite a drive from our home there in Ledge. He left around 6:15 that Thursday morning. I was told the accident occurred only a few minutes later as he pulled out on to Highway 226. As he rounded the curve, a small truck carrying five men to their job crossed the centerline. It was a head-on collision with no survivors. I was getting ready to leave for my own job as a Special Education teacher at Granville Primary when I received a call from my principal that there had been an accident on the road I traveled. I was checking to be sure none of his teachers had been involved. I thought of my husband and called his cell phone several times, but he didn't answer. I jumped in my car and arrived at the scene, but no one had any information. Emergency vehicles lights were flashing in the curve which was blocked from my view, and traffic was starting to back up.

I stood with several people I didn't know by the side of the road and, finally, two state troopers approached me. The showed me Jim's license, asked me to identify him as my husband's, then informed me gently that he had died in the accident. Even this many years later, there are no words to adequately describe my anguish and disbelief. My son arrived soon after, and I was taken back up to my house. Family, friends, and food began pouring in as is the usual custom when a death has occurred. The first few days I was in shock and welcomed the distraction of planning the Celebration of Life service. I had no real time to focus on the grief that would come later, when I was alone.

Fast-forward several months, when school began in August, and I resumed my teaching position. When I would get home from work, I would allow the tears to flow. A friend had given me a stack of books on grief, which had been given to her when she had lost her own husband the previous summer. I devoured the books, seeking relief from the pain. It was in the appendix of the last book I was reading, late one Saturday evening, where I discovered a reference to GriefShare. The website explained the support groups, and eventually, I was able to locate one in Boone that fit my schedule. It was then about 9 months since Jim had died. I attended a friend, and by the end of the 11-week cycle, we agreed that Mitchell County needed a GriefShare support ministry. We enlisted the support of a retired pastor and his wife to get started.

Over 11 years have passed since that first session, and many people attending have been able to find help, hope, and healing through this ministry. Some of you who are reading this may have been helped through GriefShare or have referred someone to the ministry. My own healing continues to this day, and the loss is ever-present, but the intense pain has subsided. Healing comes in stages, but ultimately, true healing is found only through Jesus Christ. GriefShare makes no apologies for a Christ-centered, Bible-based foundation on which the curriculum is built. Our community has suffered much loss in the last few years, but GriefShare is a vehicle God is using to help others find their way in their “new normal.” I have been asked, “Why should I attend GriefShare, where people just sit around and cry about their loss?” It would just make me feel worse.” It’s true, tears are part of the process, but God gives you permission to grieve in a safe place where others truly understand your pain. Telling your own story is part of the healing process, along with the video and workbook.

I invite those who are walking this journey of grief to join us in the full cycle of support of GriefShare. It is a process that helps you understand the stages of grief, which you will at some point. We have already met for Session 1, but you can join in anytime. We meet on Thursdays at 6:00 PM in the Wing of the church, which is in the old Hampton Hosiery building. There are signs posted to guide you. A light meal is served, and you will be warmly welcomed. No charge to attend. If you would like to register or need more information, please call Carolyn Dorn at 828-767-6432 or 828-467-1433.

I look forward to your joining us and helping our community heal through the GriefShare ministry.
New Dimensions Charter School

Beginning of the Year
By David Bartelson
Burke County

It is hard to believe that summer is over, and 354 students came back to New Dimensions Charter School on September 3. I hope our students have spent time with their families, enjoyed their summer vacation, and are excited to come back to school to experience another year of learning.

New Dimensions is a North Carolina Public Charter School. Many of you may wonder “What is a public charter school?” Charter schools are public schools of choice that are authorized by the State Board of Education and operated by independent non-profit boards of directors. State and local tax dollars are the primary funding sources for charter schools, which have open enrollment and cannot discriminate in admissions, associated with any religious or religious group, for tuition. Charter schools operate from freedom with many of the regulations that govern district schools, but charter schools are held accountable through the State assessment and accountability system.

What makes New Dimensions special?
- Established in 2001, New Dimensions today enroll approximately 350 K-8 students. Our school provides parents the choice to have their children in the same school from kindergarten through eighth grade.
- New Dimensions relocated to the former Shadowline manufacturing facility on 26 beautiful acres bordering the Cane River.
- View Dimensions offers small class sizes and the strong Core Knowledge Curriculum.
- Music, Art, Computers Technology, Spanish, and Physical Education are offered kindergarten through eighth grade further enriching our curriculum and developing a broad base of knowledge.
- New Dimensions empowers students to make positive choices about themselves, each other, and our environment, producing Respectful, Responsible, Safe, Kind, and Good Learners.
- Quality communication between teachers and families boosts each student’s success.
- The uniforms policy creates a positive environment where the focus is on learning.
- Middle School electives include Band, Music, Art, Physical Education and Health, Technology.
- Athletics include Indoor/Outdoor Soccer, Baseball, Basketball, Cheerleading, Cross Country and Flag Football.

I want to take this time to thank our entire community for their support of our school and each student we serve. I am especially grateful to the faculty and staff for all they have done to make me feel welcome and to prepare for another school year. We just finished New Teacher Orientation for six new teachers where we shared with them the philosophy of New Dimensions, provided them suggestions on how to become a master teacher, and gave them an opportunity to prepare their classrooms for their students. We are very excited about our new teachers and believe they will help us continue making a positive difference in the lives of students.

Our school is very appreciative of the BRIDGE crew for their work around our campus. The crew did an excellent job making our school look great for the first day of school.

I encourage each student to set goals this year to make this the best year they have ever had, to work hard, and to get involved in their school. I also appreciate the way our students represent our school and encourage them to continue to take pride in their school. Although they have learned at home, in the faith community, and at school to be good citizens in our community. It is always encouraging to hear the positive stories of how New Dimensions students make a difference in our community and in the lives of others.

Our major goal this year focuses on student’s success. One important tool for New Dimensions is to make our school a true community school. We believe that our school should be the center of our community in regard to activities, sports, gatherings, events—you name it! We want to open our school up for our community’s use. We also want our parents to feel comfortable visiting our school, involving themselves in the programs offered, and knowing the teachers and staff.

Another goal is to create a learning environment where students can be successful. New Dimensions cares about each child. We will continue a collaborative, cooperative working relationship between the school, the parents, the businesses/communities in the area. The successes we achieve this year will be due to dedicated people, positive attitudes, and the support of our entire school community. My door is always open and I encourage your calls, emails, or visits! I want to know how our school can better serve our students.

I am looking forward to the new school year and working with you to provide as well for our students with their education possible.

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

The Orchard at Altpass

Eddie Graham and Terry McKinney
On Stage At The Orchard
By Kate Greff
Mitchell County

On Saturday, September 7, at 6 p.m. Terry McKinney and Eddie Graham will join forces in one of the most memorable, high-energy concerts at the Orchard this year.

Graham has led a star-studded professional life, working with such notables as Jack Jones, Elvis Presley, and Aints O’Day; touring with Roberta Shewstock, Vicki Davis, and Kay Stevens. Setting down roots in Las Vegas, he began a long-term professional relationship with Lita favorite pianist, Esquival. While in Hawaii in the early seventies, he met, there worked with the legendary Earl “Fatha” Hines for several years. On concert tours around the globe and in the states, Graham has appeared with such artists as Benny Carter, Joe Venuti, Bobby Hackett, Red Nuovo, Dorothy Dumas, Ronnie Stodart, Stan Getz, Eddie Harris, Sunny Davis, and Johnny Mathis. The list of accolades could go on.

Terry McKinney, by comparison, has led a life of quiet adventure, but just as full. A local boy, he grew up surrounded by music—pickins’ on the porch with friends in the summers, playing the guitar in his living room during the winters. He remembers Scott and Lula Ball playing him on stages to sing with them when he was a teenager. Never forgetting their generosity, McKinney continues to do the same with other talented youth. He’s played with Clyde Moody, one of Bill Monroe’s early guitarists, lead singer, and a Grand Ole Opry veteran. When drafted, he formed a band and played gigs in and around his Newport News base. On his return home, he played with the Gate City Ramblers, performing in the Glenwood Opry House.

Also, McKinney played traditional bluegrass with Clear Creek for 11 years. During the next two decades, he had a family band with his fiddle-playing brother Jack, and Jack’s wife, Arnetta. McKinney has been an Orchard standard and audience favorite for over 10 years. Graham and McKinney come together on the Orchard stage for one night this season for some heavy piano playing, mighty drumming and personalized renditions of new and old classic country. The concert begins at 6 p.m. Suggested donation is $50 and available at the door. Many have listened to the ears of Eddie Graham’s drums, and many have heard the twang of Terry McKinney’s guitar strings, but the two together is something altogether different and not to be missed. Get there early to get a good seat.

The Orchard is located at 1015 Orchard Road near Spruce Pine at mile 323.3 on the Blue Ridge Parkway and is a non-profit working orchard, music, and educational venue. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Wednesday-Sunday. Family and pet friendly. Wheelchair accessible. Buses welcome. For information please visit www.altpassorchard.org, or call 828-755-9531.

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

Sudoku

Solution on page 14

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

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The Workshop Lesson

By Steve Biez
Barke County

My grandfather, my dad’s father, was a farmer for much of his life. My grandparents, David and Edna Biez, lived in the small farming community known as Cleveland, North Dakota. My grandparents owned right at 1000 acres of land where my grandfather planted and harvested barley year after year. I enjoyed my young years of mostly being in my grandmother’s way and, as she let me ride in the cab with him in his green John Deere combine tractor. Up and down and back and forth we would go all day across the fields of barley.

But the day would come, while my grandfather was still in his 50s when he would have a severe heart attack. Though he would survive, it was felt that it would be best if my grandparents sell their farm. My grandfather would live into his 80s, no longer farming, but still active in retirement.

Actually, it was after my grandparents sold me farm that I saw the extent of my grandfather’s gifts that went beyond farming. I discovered my grandfather was a carpenter. He could build you a house, but his passion was roll-top desks, footstools, and table, chins cabinets, rocking chairs, and on and on. Much of his work he sold, but so many times, he just gave the items away.

My grandfather’s workshop was the basement of their home, which was now in town if you call Cleveland North Dakota a town. There was a constant aroma, as yes entered my grandfather’s workshop of wood grain. Scattered all over the place were the wood shavings and sawdust from his work.

One summer, I spent several weeks in Cleveland North Dakota with my grandparents. I was somewhere around 13 or 14 years old. As I got out of bed one morning, I heard noises coming from the workshop in the basement. Still, in my pajamas, I headed downstairs to see what grandpa was up to so early in the morning before breakfast. He was working on a rocking chair, but almost immediately I could sense that he was frustrated. I wasn’t sure what the problem was, but finally, my grandfather sighed and set down on his stool.

He looked at me, with a slight grin on his face and said “well Steven, this is why we call this place a workshop because sometimes it doesn’t work.” After grandpa fixed us breakfast, back to the workshop we went. I watched as my grandfather took apart the rocking chair and then rebuilt it. That late afternoon, I was pleased that my grandfather gave me a brush so that I could help with the staining of that rocking chair.

I wish I knew what became of that rocking chair. But I have no idea where it is today and who might be sitting in it and rocking away. But I do know the lessons of the workshop that I learned and how connected it was to the wisdom we find in a loving Carpenter named Jesus Christ.

This world is not heaven. However, it is a workshop where God’s people are being chiseled, shaved, and sanded. The Great Carpenter, Jesus, gently builds our characters. He has had to do a lot of sanding on me and has also taken me apart and put me back together when I just don’t fit right. But, like my grandfather, I sense a gain on my Lord’s face as he says to me, “it’s ok Steven, that is why we call this place and time, a workshop.”

Christ, our Carpenter, vows and we and chairs are left at each of us, until our characters are stained by His blood and sealed by His Character. There is a poem written by Paul Warren, that I like as it describes the work of a carpenter. In this case, the carpenter Jesus.

“For several years, wood very carefully taught the man to understand the beauty of wood. Looking along the edge of the table, And feeling it, it has a good weight. Remember to measure twice and cut once, is the rule of thumb you’wrong. He knows the work and the craftsman’s tools! As he saws, planes and sanding to carpenter’s rules. The joints are with precision and accuracy. When glued together, wood will not break. The piece of the carpenter’s work is at hand. To finish is to wax the wood for a look that is grand.”

Thoughtful words, I sometimes forget that Jesus was a carpenter. Fortunately, the pain of a foreman’s words. Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Psalm 127:1.

May we gladly lay on the workshop table that belongs to our loving Carpenter, Jesus. May we welcome the necessary sanding, cutting, and waxing, till our Great Carpenter’s Character glows in each of us each day.

Steve Biez, Pastor, Morganton Seventh Day Adventist Church.

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Burke County Public Schools

BCPS Ranks No. 22 On List Of Best Districts In The State No. 13 in Best Teachers And No. 14 In The Best Place To Teach
By Cheryl Stashier
Burke County

A national website that researches schools ranks Burke County Public Schools 22nd overall and tied for third compared to districts its size on a list of the best school districts in North Carolina. The site, Niche.com, released its 2020 Best Schools rankings earlier this month. On its list, Burke County Public Schools is the 13th best district for teachers, the 14th best place to teach and the 15th safest district in North Carolina out of 113 school districts.

Burke County Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Larry Putnam said, “Being ranked in the top 20 percent in the state overall and in the top five among other districts our size is something to be proud of, but I’m competitive and our district is competitive, and we want to be No. 1. We are proud of our teachers and disagree with this ranking as we know we have the best teachers in the state. As we begin our third year of our District Strategic Plan, I am reminded that the biggest reason for our high rankings is because we have committed teachers. Having dedicated people and a passionate board of education solidifies our success for students. The excitement as we look ahead to the next few years in Burke County Public Schools is contagious as together, we will continue to find new and innovative ways to better serve our students and the community.”

Niche.com gives Burke County Public Schools an A in teachers and diversity and B in health and safety, academics, clubs and activities, administration, food, college prep, sports and resources and facilities. Reviewers on Niche.com praised Burke County Public Schools’ teachers and administrators, saying they are nice and knowledgeable, show an interest in helping students learn, are nurturing and encourage families to get involved in their children’s educations.

Cheryl Stashier is the Public Relations Officer for the Burke County Public School System.

Morganton First Baptist Church

A Balanced Perspective
By Dan Quarillo
Burke County

Most likely, you have had moments in your life when you questioned if things were truly worth it. To be sure, these moments were probably not moments of great answers to prayer in which God showed Himself to be God. These moments were probably not when the bank account had more than sufficient funds to meet the immediate demands. Nor were these times when God gave you the amazing privilege to lead a soul to Him. These were times when nothing seemed to be going right.

A man by the name of David can truly identify with this reality, and he recorded much of his feelings in the book of Psalms. One of the reasons we love studying Psalms is because of the candor with which the various psalmists wrote. They wrote what they often think. David was appointed by God to be the next king of Israel. This was not the result of some selfish ambition or aspiration of David; this was God’s choosing. But the years leading up to his eventual assuming the throne were anything but favorable. He was forced to flee into the wilderness and live in undesirable locations. He was not granted the privilege of any degree of security, including the place from where his next meal might come. As we read through the book of Psalms, we find many examples of the inward struggles this man faced.

But David balanced these struggles with the reality of who God is and what God does. He wrote, “The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD; and he delighteth in his way” (Psalm 37:23). He acknowledged that every step he took was ordered by God. Therefore, God knew all that he was experiencing, including the internal struggles that perhaps nobody else knew. Contrary to what some have erroneously concluded, God is good. Inasmuch as His actions flow from His nature all that He does is good. James 1:17 reminds us, “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.” Therefore, we can face challenges with the confidence that God will turn everything into something beneficial for my life (Romans 8:28).

Are you struggling today? Keep a balanced perspective by remembering it’s not your problem, it’s God’s! Serve Him faithfully. His plan is always best.

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


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Be a Risk-Taker!

Joyce Meyer

Throughout my years in ministry, I’ve discovered that living by faith requires us to take risks because God’s plan for us is always bigger than what we could ever do on our own. I love Ephesians 3:20, which says that God “is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us” (NIV).

The bottom line is anybody who is not willing to risk anything will never do much in this world. I know this is true from personal experience.

When God put it in my heart to start teaching a home Bible study, I had a full-time job and made good money, so we didn’t have any financial pressure. But I didn’t know the Bible very well and needed more time to study. I couldn’t do that with a part-time job and three children, and I knew God was speaking to my heart to quit my job.

Now I’m a responsible person, and that didn’t make any sense to me because our bills would exceed our income if I didn’t work. So, I bargained with God and quit my full-time job but got a part-time job.

It’s like I was telling God, “I don’t want to do that, but how about I do this?” I’m still obeying You, but I’ve got a back-up plan. But God didn’t want part-time obedience! I had to get rid of my back-up plan and learn to trust Him completely.

Well, I got fired from my part-time job. I was a good worker and yet I couldn’t do anything right at that job. It became obvious that God wanted me to totally trust Him and stay home full-time.

At that time, we were short $40 a month to pay our bills. It wasn’t a huge sum of money, but it meant we needed to believe for God to make a miracle every single month to meet our needs.

I had to take a step of faith to do that. You know, sometimes we think when we take a big step of faith, God is just going to shower us with blessings right away. It’s easy to have that attitude, “Look at this sacrifice I made today. I can’t wait to see what God is going to do for me tomorrow.”

But for six years, we had to trust God to provide for our most basic needs. I found a journal where I had written a prayer list to God, asking for 12 new wash rags and a new skillet. I can’t even tell you how excited I got when the doorbell rang one day and a woman didn’t really know was there and she said, “I hope you don’t think I’m crazy, but I felt like God told me to bring you 12 new wash rags.”

When you’re learning to trust God, He does something for you—even if it’s a tiny thing—that’s what prepares you to believe for bigger things later on in your life.

I didn’t know then why I had to go through all those hard things, but I knew now. In the ministry we have today, we need a lot more than $40 a month to pay the bills. And God is faithful to provide all we need! Our bills are paid on time and we aren’t in debt.

I don’t think that anybody will ever do anything of my magnitude without going through some tests. If you’re going to live by faith, it means you’ll have to take step one before you know what step two is. And you won’t have everything figured out before you move forward, doing what you can to do God’s plan for your life.

The amazing thing is that you get so close to God when you have to depend on Him. And that’s when life is really adventurous and exciting.

I want to encourage you today that God doesn’t fulfill God’s plan for you. Don’t let the devil discourage you with his lies, telling you that you can’t do it or you’re not good enough for God to use you.

It’s so important for you to see yourself the way God sees you, because what you believe about yourself is much more important than what anybody else believes about you. When you really know He loves you, then you can boldly approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, knowing Jesus will give you grace to help you in your time of need (Hebrews 4:16).

The truth is God loves you and Jesus gave His life for you so you can be filled with His love, joy, and faith that will take you places you never thought you could go. Get up every day determined to follow God’s leading, wherever He takes you. Step out in faith and watch Him do great things through you!

Joyce Meyer is a New York Times bestselling author and founder of Joyce Meyer Ministries, Inc. She has authored more than 100 books, including Bestseller of the Mind and Overload: How to Unplug, Unwind and Unlearn Yourself from the Pressure of Stress (4th edition). She hosts the Enjoying Everyday Life radio and TV programs, which airs on hundreds of stations worldwide. For more information, visit www.joecymeyer.org.
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