



BLUE RIDGE CHRISTIAN NEWS



GOD IS LOVE!

Evergreen Church

A Meditation on Love

By John McCoury
Roan Mountain, Tennessee

Hosea 11 presents the idea of God's steadfast love in high definition through the story of a man's unfailing love for a failing wife. Sixteen times in this sustained revelation, God uses I to show that He is the One who loved and sustained His people through every step of their lives. He demonstrates the all-encompassing characteristics of His love by employing three illustrative analogies: He loves us as a father (helping his son learn to walk), as a husband (wrapping his beloved with bands of love), and as a shepherd (removing the yoke from their neck and stooping to provide food). In these tender images, we see how great the Father's love for His children is (Jer. 31:2,3,20). I regard [this passage] as one of the jewels in the Bible, for in it we see ... what the love of God means to God Himself. Astonishingly, in this passage the prophet tells us that what we find ... is a broken heart, the broken heart of a deserted parent.

Hosea insists that there is one very fundamental and important way in which God is like us, He loves and loves in a way that we human beings can understand and experience. And because He loves, He feels. He can be hurt. He can suffer." Does God feel pain? Does God suffer when we sin and show contempt for His love? Verse 8 seems to indicate He does. Some say this is simply God's way of helping us understand the deity in the language of humanity—the only language we understand. Certainly, at some level, we must concede that Jesus' life—a life filled with emotions, pain, and suffering—helps us understand who God is. You and I are created in God's image. That means if we feel hurt when someone abuses our love, it is because we are made in the image of God, who is also hurt when His love is abused.

UNCONDITIONAL LOVE - Ps. 103:10-12 God doesn't gauge His love based on conditions. With God it is not "If you perform, I will love you" or "If you fail, I will reject you, hardly! His love is unconditional. You can turn to God, warts and all, and bring Him your crushing experiences of failure. You will never hear Him shame you for coming to Him. He is ready to hear from you because He is overflowing with a compassionate love that never fails.

LOVE - 1 Cor. 13:1-3 Relationships need love. Congregations do too. What pastors need with their flocks is love, and flocks need it with their pastors. Love is what spouses and parents and children need—what bosses and employees and business relations need. It's the essential employees and business relations need. It's an essential ingredient in all relationships. It isn't optional. Remove love, and you



reduce life to a grinding, boring, labor-filled series of demands, requirements, and unfruitful assignments. Let me be clear: Love is not just an emotion, or a thought. Love must be demonstrated. Love does (or does not). Love means more than good thoughts and feelings. Love is a demonstration, not an attitude. Love is action. 1 John 3:12-18 IT IS HARD to think of a more tangible expression of hatred than murder. It's no surprise that Cain, the first murderer, is John's example of hate (1 Jn. 3:12). In contrast to hate stands love, and in contrast to those who would take life are those who would give their lives. Christ's self-sacrificial death on our behalf—even while we rejected Him—he proved His love for us. Why on earth would He go to that cross and die? Why on earth would a good man die for sinful people like us? Love is why. From the example of Christ, we see what real love is. After establishing this, John sets the hook: If we really love, what will we do? "We also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters - If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion—how can God's love be in that person?" (1 Jn. 3:16-17). Our compassion for others proves our love for God. How do others know we love God? Because we are there for them in their need. We're moved by it. We're touched by it. Do you notice the change from the plural to the singular in those verses? John begins with what "we" ought to do but then turns to an individual: "someone." When we focus our attention on the purpose of action, we focus on an individual. Loving everybody can be an excuse for loving nobody. That's how we get out of it. That's how we handle our guilt. You might say, "Oh, I love the world! I just love everybody." But if I asked you to name one person whom you have proven it too, that will be a different story. That's John's point, and his exhortation is simple: Show the truth by love in action (1 Jn. 3:18). John is writing to believers in this passage. He is writing to you and to me about the battle between love and hate in our lives. Our names are all over this section. So where are you in the real expression of God's love in your life? I can only answer for me—and that's a full-time job! You must answer to you. I want to give you a project. This week ask God to help you focus on just one person. Not everybody in your office or on your team—just one person. Maybe one of your children, or one parent, or one neighbor. All week long, ask God to open your eyes to some need in that individual's life. You won't see people's needs if you try to look at the plural instead of the singular. So, pray about just that one person: "Lord, give me eyes to see a need in that person's life. I open myself to be used by You." Then, once God reveals that need, do something unexpected to help meet it. We all know many people with needs. The necessary part is doing something about it—putting love into action.

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

God-Honoring Relationships

By Dan Qurollo
Burke County



Because Valentine's Day occurs in February, it seems that much of the month of February focuses on love and relationships. As part of relationships, it is inevitable that we will experience hurt at some point. The Bible has a tremendous amount of material devoted to establishing godly relationships. Proverbs is filled with warnings regarding associating with ungodly and foolish individuals, including those who are given to anger (Proverbs 22:24), drunkards and gluttons (Proverbs 23:20-21), and the immoral (Proverbs 5:8, 7:25). The Bible also teaches certain principles that are to govern our relationships.

Matthew 18 clearly establishes the biblical principle of how we are to respond when we are wronged. Unfortunately, few people actively take the steps necessary to restore relationships. Beginning in Matthew 18:15, we find the instruction that an individual who has wronged us is to be approached privately. The issue is not to be ignored nor openly discussed. Instead, the matter is a private matter that is to be resolved between those two individuals exclusively. Many Christians fail at this point. Matthew 18:16-17 contains additional steps if the issue is unable to be resolved privately.

An additional message that establishes godly relationships is contained in Ephesians 4. According to Ephesians 4:25-32, our relationships are to be characterized by the truth (4:25). Furthermore, anger must not be allowed to continue but must be restored lest an opportunity be given to Satan (4:26-27). Unresolved anger opens the door for Satan; therefore, anger must not be tolerated. Furthermore, relationships are to be characterized by honesty and sacrificial giving (4:28). Corrupt communication should never characterize relationships; rather, the only communication should be that which seeks to edify and minister grace to those who hear (4:29). We must avoid grieving the Holy Spirit of God (4:30). Rather than allowing our relationships to be characterized by the works of the flesh, we must instead exercise kindness and forgiveness (4:31-32). Godly relationships are such that bring honor and glory to Him.

God places a premium on being sure that our relationships are what they should be. Matthew 5:23-24 teach, "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; 24 Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." We must seek to establish relationships that honor and glorify God.

Pastor Dan Qurollo 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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"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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Wednesday
Praise, Prayer & Proclaim -
7:00 pm
www.morgantonsda.org

Faith Fellowship Church

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www.fccn.org
www.fccradio.org

Pastor: David Gillespie

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"The steps of a good man are
ordered by the Lord;
And he delighteth in his way."
Psalm 37:23

Plumtree Presbyterian Church

4527 Hwy 18E
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Pastor Ryan Bridgeo
pastor@plumtreepresbyterian.com

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

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

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(828) 437-4082
www.pleasanthillbc.church

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Dr. Jack Hodges**

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

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

Pastor: Terry Long

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spumc3@bellsouth.net
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What's the Deepest Desire of My Heart?

John Piper

The created universe is all about glory. The deepest longing of the human heart and the deepest meaning of Heaven and Earth are summed up in this: the glory of God. The universe was made to show it, and we were made to see it and savor it. Nothing less will do. Which is why the world is as disordered and as dysfunctional as it is. We have exchanged the glory of God for other things (Romans 1:23).

"The heavens declare the glory of God" (Psalm 19:1). That is why all the universe exists. It's all about glory. The Hubble Space Telescope sends back infrared images of faint galaxies perhaps twelve billion light-years away (twelve billion times six trillion miles). Even within our Milky Way, there are stars so great as to defy description, like Eta Carinae, which is five million times brighter than our sun.

Sometimes people stumble over this vastness in relation to the apparent insignificance of man. It does seem to make us infinitesimally small. But the meaning of this magnitude is not mainly about us. It's about God. "The heavens declare the glory of God," says the Scripture. The reason for "wasting" so much space on a universe to house a speck of humanity is to make a point about our Maker, not us. "Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these [stars]? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name; by the greatness of his might and because he is strong in power, not one is missing" (Isaiah 40:26).

God at the Center

"The deepest longing of the human heart is to know and enjoy the glory of God."

The deepest longing of the human heart is to know and enjoy the glory of God. We were made for this. "Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth . . . whom I created for my glory," says the Lord (Isaiah 43:6-7). To see it, to savor it, and to show it—that is why we exist. The untracked, unimaginable stretches of the created universe are a parable about the inexhaustible "riches of his glory" (Romans 9:23). The physical eye is meant to say to the spiritual eye, "Not this, but the Maker of this is the Desire of your soul." Saint Paul said, "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:2). Or, even more precisely, he said that we were "prepared beforehand for glory" (Romans 9:23). This is why we were created—that He might "make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy" (Romans 9:23).

The ache in every human heart is an ache for this. But we suppress it and do not see fit to have God in our knowledge (Romans 1:28). Therefore, the entire creation has fallen into disorder. The most prominent example of this in the Bible is the disordering of our sexual lives. Paul says that the exchange of the glory of God for other things is the root cause of the homosexual (and heterosexual) disordering of our relationships.

"Their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature . . . the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another" (Romans 1:26-27). If we exchange God's glory for lesser things, He gives us up to lived-out parables of depravity—the other exchanges that mirror, in our misery, the ultimate sellout.

The point is this: We were made to know and treasure the glory of God above all things; and when we trade that treasure for images, everything is disordered. The sun of God's glory was made to shine at the center of the solar system of our soul. And when it does, all the planets of our life are held in their proper orbit. But when the sun is displaced, everything flies apart. The healing of the soul begins by restoring the glory of God to its flaming, all-attracting place at the center.

Starved for Glory

We are all starved for the glory of God, not-self. No one goes to the Grand Canyon to increase self-esteem. Why do we go? Because there is greater healing for the soul in beholding splendor than there is in beholding self. Indeed, what could be more ludicrous in a vast and glorious universe like this than a human being, on the speck called Earth, standing in front of a mirror trying to find significance in his own self-image? It is a great sadness that this is the gospel of the modern world.

But it is not the Christian Gospel. Into the darkness of petty self-preoccupation has shone "the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Corinthians 4:4). The Christian Gospel is about "the glory of Christ," not about me. And when it is—in some measure—about me, it is not about my being made much of by God, but about God mercifully enabling me to enjoy making much of Him forever.

Greatest Good of the Gospel

What was the most loving thing Jesus could do for us? What was the endpoint, the highest good, of the Gospel? Redemption? Forgiveness? Justification? Reconciliation? Sanctification? Adoption? Are not all these great wonders simply means to something greater? Something final? Something that Jesus asked His Father to give us? "Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me" (John 17:24).

"It's not about my being made much of by God, but about God mercifully enabling me to enjoy making much of Him forever"

The Christian Gospel is "the gospel of the glory of Christ" because its final aim is that we would see and savor and show the glory of Christ. For this is none other than the glory of God. "He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature" (Hebrews 1:3). "He is the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15). When the light of the Gospel shines in our hearts, it is "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6). And when we "rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:2), that hope is "our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). The glory of Christ is the glory of God.



In one sense, Christ laid the glory of God aside when He came: "And now, Father, glorify me together in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed" (John 17:5). But in another sense, Christ manifested the glory of God in His coming: "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). Therefore, in the Gospel, we see and savor "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6). And this kind of "seeing" is the healing of our disordered lives. "We all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

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John Piper is founder and teacher of DesiringGod.org and chancellor of Bethlehem College & Seminary. For 33 years, he served as pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota. He is author of more than 50 books.

Charity suffereth long, [and] is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, 1 Corinthians 13:4-8



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What's In It For Me?

By Kurt Bomar
Avery County



The Bible has several messages that at first glance seem to be contradictory. For instance, Proverbs tells us to consider the ant and work hard to prepare for an unknown future. At the same time, Jesus tells us in the sermon on the mount not to worry about what we are to eat or drink, that our heavenly Father knows what we need and will provide for us. Paul tells us that "I have become all things to all men so that I might win some to the Lord". Yet James says that "anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world, becomes an enemy of God".

Why the apparent contradictions? I believe it because there is more than one personality type that God is trying to reach. Are you by nature a lazy person? Then you need to focus on the ants. Are you just the opposite, a workaholic? Then you need to stop trying to do it all yourself and rest in the Lord.

Most importantly, when it comes to our salvation, those of us who take it too cavalierly need to read the verses that give us a kick in the seat of the pants (Jas. 1:21, 2:24). Others who are always worrying that God is mad at them or that they have committed the unpardonable sin need to focus on the scriptures that show God's unconditional love for his children regardless of our failures (Rom. 5:15-17 and the Psalms).

Remember it is God's desire to comfort the afflicted as well as to afflict the comfortable. Know who you are and look for God's message to you! Selah, (think about it)

Kurt Bomar is pastor of Walnut Grove Church.

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

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Marlene's Meditations

Listening to Ruth's Wisdom About the Daily Grind

By Marlene Houk
Burke County

The hands of older women tell stories of countless days patting babies and changing diapers. Reddened spots and tiny white scars speak of surprise and panic while cooking. I remember my mom's chapped hands, fingers tightened in a death-grip, wringing water out of freshly washed clothes before nudging the cold garments between the wringers of our old machine. The clothesline bore their heaviness on icy-cold days, hanging lifeless and stiff or drooping lethargically on hot muggy days. Her hands testified to the roughness of her work, veins, and age-spots confessing to days spent hoeing weeds out of the corn and tomatoes and scrubbing four dirty little bodies.

Today, we may not show the toil due to excellent skincare and time-saving machines, and the work may solve technology problems and create paper trails, but the daily grind goes on.

Yet somehow, in the mundane, God builds His children of grace. They emerge, strong, beautiful, and willing to focus on the Lord. The Bible demonstrates the power of these mundane ordinary daily tasks in the story of Ruth, a simple account, but filled with complex and relevant truths.

Ruth accepted the God of the Israelites after meeting Naomi. She married her son and lived for ten years in Moab until they moved back to Bethlehem, Naomi's hometown. In four short chapters of this Old Testament book, the Lord displays many layers of truth, including weaving our inconsequential duties into His plan for us, creating a tapestry of His glory.

Ruth's labor differed from her companions only in the sense that it was part of a much larger and more majestic plan than the field that stretched endlessly before her. Her seven-day workweek trudged forward, broken only by the Sabbath rest. But, as a baby grows bit by bit, so she grew in grace and knowledge, step by step, not only toward a bountiful harvest but toward her God, yielding rich sheaves of grace and truth in her soul. Isaiah 28:10 declares, when explaining spiritual growth, that God leads us to Himself in small incremental steps. The verse says, "For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little." Those small steps also include the daily grind, and they build an astonishingly solid foundation that empowers us to prove God's promises.

Daily activities enable us to be a part of God's plan. As Ruth worked her way around Boaz's field, picking up stray stalks of barley that the reapers ignored, the back-breaking toil underscored His plan for her. As the ripened barley and wheat proved the benefit of the right environment, so God placed Ruth in the field to grow a daughter of faith who would become King David's legacy. (Ruth 4:22) As Ruth beat the stalks to separate the grain so that she could make bread, the Lord positioned her with people who could help her to glean knowledge about Naomi's God. Then, she could absorb the truths that would make her a mighty woman who held a place in Jesus's earthly pedigree. (Matthew 1: 5)

When we produce spiritual fruit by walking in the daily grind of our lives, we can see the cumulative effect on the kingdom of God and His use of our gifts. The daily grind that Boaz observed in Ruth formed the foundation of his statement that she was virtuous. (Ruth 3:11)

A daily grind enables us to track God for He dwells in the minute everyday repetitions as well as the magnificence of our lives. As Ruth walked to and from the field, she had time to think about the Lord. Washing the clothes by the creek, perhaps she reflected on this strange greeting that Boaz's reapers offered, "The LORD bless thee." The barley and wheat harvest may have lasted up to three months which provided Ruth with many daily pieces of evidence of God's presence in the lives of the Bethlehem citizens.

We admire people who have long marriages, care for special needs or fragile parents for years, or perhaps those who serve their country with multiple tours. Daily struggling with unimaginable odds and being cheerful to those who can't respond likewise slowly builds patience, understanding, and clarity. We give it names and call it having character: dependability, perseverance, and inner strength and beauty. Ruth displayed this nobleness of character with every day that she appeared in the field. We chafe at mind-numbing tasks, but when we focus on the LORD during the daily grind of life, we, like Ruth, move toward God Himself. As 2 Corinthians 3:18 says, we are changed into his image.

Focus on the Lord in your daily grind, and others will want to see Who you are seeing.

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



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

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HAPPY

Valentine's Day

BLANKET OF LOVE

By Joy Baldwin
Madison County

When Jesus had finished His mission
The Father wrapped Him in a blanket of love
And rolled it up like an ancient scroll
Into Heaven He was taken above.

Then God sent the gift of His Son back to us
In the form of a scroll penned by man
The word of God from beginning to end
First in flesh, now in print by God's hand.

The heart of God revealed in the Bible
Through Christ Jesus the Living Word
Perfect love and manna from heaven
Of this bread, friend have you heard?

Joyce (Joy) Harwood Baldwin

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



February- Month of Thanksgiving???

By Jody Griffin
Avery and Mitchell County

"O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth forever." (Psalm 136:1 KJV)

February: That wonderful month of the year known for... Thanksgiving??? (The Chaplain is really confused!) Those who know me understand that confusion is my home state! But this month truly IS the month for Thanksgiving! I should have some turkey and dressing, a little cranberry sauce, and some pumpkin pie as a commemoration of the faithfulness of God, much like we remember the pilgrims and the "community meal" shared with their "neighbors"!

And when I do, I will bow my head in humble thanksgiving to God Almighty Who has blessed me with the privilege of walking beside the incarcerated AND beside the professionals who oversee, protect, encourage and assist them. This work is not always easy, it is not always fun. But when God reveals the reason for the ministry of a chaplain, many blessings are found.

This month of 'Thanksgiving' is made possible through the prayers and the financial support of churches and individuals who generously give that this position is funded. Last year this chaplain made numerous appeals for said support from the readers of this column. I prayed that God would grant this ministry the stability provided by ample resources to sustain this position for as long as God desires. Some months we're down to the wire for High Country Prison Ministry. The future of the ministry looked to be completely depleted of the finances needed to sustain the Chaplain and the ministries the Chaplain leads in supporting.

Now, please allow the privilege of proclaiming the faithfulness of God! The Lord has provided through many of your financial blessings that will provide another six months of service by your Community Funded Chaplain!

For 2020 the answer is that as long as people remain faithful to the leading of the Holy Spirit to support this effort, the work will go on! "To God Be the Glory! Great Things He Hath Done!" And through this Provision incarcerated men and their families, staff members and volunteers will continue to be reminded that the Lord is the Source of "every good and perfect gift".

Your faithfulness is living proof that you are willing to minister in places many could/would never go. But by helping keep a Chaplain in place you help to ensure that religious activities continue and that special events like One Day with God Camps, Kairos Prison Ministry and much more can continue to operate. You ensure a Pastor (Chaplain) is available in times of crisis for offenders and staff. You provide a trained professional Chaplain who is present to provide counseling and comfort for the grieving, hope for the hopeless and challenge for each person to grow beyond where they are into the person, they have potential to become.

See what I mean? God IS Good! His mercy does, in fact, endure forever! And for as long as God desires, Community Funded Chaplains will be available to serve in Correctional facilities through the resources of those who desire to share in order to provide this opportunity and privilege. Thank you all for helping this ministry continue and thank GOD for the privilege of shining the Light of Love in Jesus Christ to the incarcerated!

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



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"We've Moved Across the Street next to Rural King. Come See Us!"

By Doug Harrell
Mitchell County



February is the month of Valentine's Day; I look at it as the "Love Month". There is nothing outside the saving grace of our Heavenly Father that has an impact on our lives that love does. Our lives center around being cared for, being needed, being worthy, and most of all, being loved! The Bible talks about the love of God all through the chapters and verses that we read. John 3:16 is the standard by which many of us hopefully build our lives. For God did so love the world that He was willing to give His only begotten Son that you and I, yes us, could have eternal life, not just a hole in the ground to rot and decay in! One of the most important things in life is for us to spread that love to those around us. Starting with our family, how often do you tell them that you love them, do you voice that every day of your life, do you ingrain that in their minds to the point that there is never a question about that? As you are raising your children do you love them enough to correct them, to guide them in the right direction? Think about it. Being their best friend is not necessarily your job. Your job is to love them enough to equip them to face the future in a tough world with the ability to survive and be a contributing adult when they mature. Do you take the time to tell your mate daily, several times, that you love and treasure them, that you give thanks to God for having been blessed with them for a partner over the years? Do your actions also bear this out?

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 King James Version (KJV): 4 Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth, not itself, is not puffed up, 5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; 6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; 7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

In the King James Bible, the word Charity is used for love. Love is called the most important of the traits mentioned. Do you really understand how critical it is for each of us in our personal life and the lives of those whose paths we cross each day? It is all too easy to become judgmental in our acceptance of those around us and we oftentimes overlook the fact that we are all children of God and that His grace is sufficient to deal with it all. We all have access to a High Priest that was exposed to all sin but sinned not, and He understands our human nature; but most of all, He loves us enough to forgive our sins, and the sins of those around us, if we will confess and turn back to Him.

We cannot bring others into the fold of God if we turn away from them because they have fallen short. We don't have to condone evil or sin, but we are commanded to love and forgive as God forgave and forgives each of us. The Lords Prayer tells us that we are asking for God's forgiveness as we forgive others! We are part of the equation; we have a role to play by being willing to forgive also. Carrying a grudge around or being angry with a family member or neighbor does more to harm us than it does them. Anger is like cancer in our hearts. It eats it away and destroys it. Always strive to be the first to say I am sorry, and be the first to accept someone's apology, forgive even if you may not forget. I truly believe that when God forgives, He also forgets, our sins are no more! I pray for that ability!

Determine to be an open book, admit your frailty and accept the same in others. Strive to let your love be evident even in times of correction, guide and direct with sincere love, but be willing to use tough love at times when it is needed. Don't tell folks that is all okay when it is wrong but be conscious of how you do it. Remember that the tongue is a little member of your body, but it is like a rudder of a large ship, it can turn the ship around. Turn the ship around with love in your voice. Remember the Proverb, a soft answer turneth away wrath. Guard your words, count to ten first, think about the WWJD bracelet (What Would Jesus Do) and act accordingly. What did Jesus do when talking with the woman caught in adultery, neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more! Be more conscious of giving love than hostility, love does conquer all. To God be the glory.

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

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

Gifts of Love

By Patricia Jackson
McDowell County



Valentine Day is a special time for many, as we show our love for our family, friends, husband/wife, and Christ and the Church. Loved ones hope or expect the day will be memorable; perhaps a beautiful card, jewelry, flowers, box of candies, dinner out, etc. The list could go on and go. But there is a love that transcends all other love - the gift of love from God and our special, personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Matthew 2:11 tells us the wise men (Magi) from the East came to worship the baby Jesus, bringing gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. All three gifts are ordinary offerings and gifts given to a king. However, these three gifts had a spiritual meaning: gold as a symbol of kingship on earth, frankincense (an incense) as a symbol of deity, and myrrh (an embalming oil) as a symbol of death. Jesus' purpose was not to be a receiver of gifts but to give to all those who believe a special everlasting gift - salvation, the greatest gift we could ever receive.

Daily He bestows His love on us, dwells in our hearts by faith, comforts and leads us. "He is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother". (Prov. 18:24). Where does our ability to love our self and others come from? As followers of God, we are to "walk in love as Christ also hath loved us". (Ephesians 5:2). Valentine's Day will soon come and go, flowers and memories will fade and be forgotten. "But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord". (Romans 6:23). We must daily strive to love one another with a pure heart, so that others may see Christ's love in us.

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

Allen's Offerings

Faith and Giving Your Life to Jesus

By Allen Buchanan
Mitchell County



"There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. "The time came when the beggar died, and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So, he called to him, "Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue because I am in agony in this fire." "But Abraham replied, "Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been set in place so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us."

Luke 16:19-26 NIV

Pain and death are terrible subjects to think about. You can escape these for eternity if you simply accept Jesus as your Savior. Otherwise, you are destined to spend eternity in Hell. Nothing to laugh or joke about.

Nothing here on earth today can keep you out of Hell except excising faith and giving your life to Jesus.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16 NIV

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

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Genesis is History!
By Jonathan Sarfati

Our ministry supports the authority of the Bible from the very first verse. However, some opponents of biblical (‘young-earth’) creation also claim to believe in the authority of Scripture but claim that Genesis 1–11 is poetry or allegory. Others rebuke us by claiming, “Genesis is not a scientific textbook”. If I’m in a playful mood, I’ll reply, “Thank goodness, because scientific textbooks become outdated in a few years”. Otherwise, I reply that we claim it’s really a book about history—events that really happened in the past.¹

To justify this, it’s important to show what type of book Genesis is.² To do this, we should compare Scripture with Scripture.

Other biblical writers treat Genesis as history

Hebrew scholar Dr. Steven Boyd has shown that different types of the verb (perfect and imperfect) are frequent in Hebrew poetry, but not in historical books. So from his verb analysis, he found that the probability that Genesis 1:1–2:3 is narrative (not poetry) is 0.99997.

As we have shown in a number of articles, the rest of the Bible treats Genesis as real history.³ The other writers of the Bible, both in the Old and New Testaments, treat the people, events, time frames,⁴ and even the order of events, as real, not merely literary or theological devices.⁵ And the reality of history is foundational to crucial teachings about faith and morality.⁶ Furthermore, it’s clear that the New Testament authors presupposed that their readers, as new converts in the first churches, received detailed instruction in Genesis.⁷

What does biblical history look like?

Let’s ask opponents the question: just suppose, for the purposes of the argument, Genesis is history, how would you expect it to look? We can answer from the style of the undisputed historical books such as most of Exodus, Joshua, Judges, etc.

Hebrew grammar experts have shown that historical narratives in the Old Testament have a very distinctive verb pattern. They start with a type of verb called a qatal (perfect) and continue with another type of verb called the waw (vav, ו) consecutives, or wayyiqtoles.⁹ This verb type is frequent in the historical books of the Old Testament.

Apply this to Genesis 1, the first verb, בָּרָא *bārā’* (create), is qatal, while the subsequent verbs that move the narrative forward are wayyiqtoles (וַיַּעַשׂ *wayyā‘as* ‘and ... said’), וַיְהִי *wayyehi* (‘and there was’), וַיַּרְא *wayyār* (‘and ... saw’). Thus this has just the pattern one would expect from a historical narrative.

Furthermore, Genesis 1–11 moves seamlessly on, with no change in style, to Genesis 12–50. No one doubts that the latter is intended to be read as history. Therefore, any doubts with the former don’t stem from the grammar and style of the text itself. Rather, they come from considerations outside the text, such as long-age uniformitarian geology and evolutionary biology.

What would poetry look like?

So, what would Genesis look like if it were poetry? Hebrew poetry, such as the Psalms, has a different style.¹⁰ The defining characteristic of Hebrew poetry is not rhyme or metre, but parallelism. That is, the statements in two or more consecutive lines are related in some way. For example, in synonymous parallelism there is one statement, then it is immediately followed by another statement saying the same thing in different words. Psalm 19:1–2 nicely illustrates this:

*The heavens declare the glory of God,
and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.
Day to day pours out speech,
and night to night reveals knowledge.*

In antithetical parallelism, the first statement is followed by a statement of the opposite, as in Proverbs 28:1 and 7:

*The wicked flee when no one pursues,
but the righteous are bold as a lion.
The one who keeps the law is a son with understanding,
but a companion of gluttons shames his father.*

In synthetic or constructive parallelism, the first statement is extended by the next one, e.g. Psalm 24:3–4:

*Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord?
And who shall stand in his holy place?
He who has clean hands and a pure heart,
who does not lift up his soul to what is false,
and does not swear deceitfully.*

However, parallelism is absent from Genesis, except where people are quoted, e.g. Genesis 4:23–24. However, they stand out from the rest of Genesis—if Genesis were truly poetic, it would use parallelisms throughout.¹¹ In fact, the Bible has a poetic celebration of God’s creative work of Genesis: Psalm 104—so if we want to see what a poetic account of creation looks like, that’s where to look. For example, Psalm 104:7, 11 illustrates parallelism perfectly:

*At your rebuke they fled;
at the sound of your thunder, they took flight.
They give drink to every beast of the field;
the wild donkeys quench their thirst.*

Also, Hebrew scholar Dr. Steven Boyd has shown that different types of the verb (perfect and imperfect) are frequent in Hebrew poetry, but not in historical books. So from his verb analysis, he found that the probability that Genesis 1:1–2:3 is narrative (not poetry) is 0.99997.¹²

Structural similarities of Genesis and other passages

One of the passages most similar to Genesis 1 in structure is Numbers 7. Both are structured accounts, both containing the Hebrew word for day יוֹם (*yôm*) with a numeric—indeed both are numbered sequences of days. In Numbers 7, there are 12 consecutive numbered days, where a representative of each of the 12 tribes of Israel brought an offering for the altar.

*The one who brought his offering on the first day was
Nahshon, son of Amminadab of the tribe of Judah. ...*

*On the second day Nathanel son of Zuar, the leader of
Issachar brought his offering. ...
On the third day, Eliab son of Helon, the leader of the
people of Zebulun, brought his offering. ...
On the twelfth day Ahira son of Enan, the leader of the
people of Naphtali, brought his offering.*

The day-numeric parallel is even stronger as Numbers 7 not only numbers each day but also opens and closes with ‘in the day that’ referring collectively to the entire sequence, which no one doubts are ordinary-length days. This refutes the false claim that “in the day that” (בַּיּוֹם *bayôm*) in Genesis 2:4, summarizing Creation Week, shows that the Genesis 1 days are not normal-length, as this is a Hebrew idiom for ‘when’ (as many English translations render it).¹⁴

Further, no one claims that Numbers 7 is merely a poetic framework for teaching something theological and that it is not history. There simply is no grammatical basis for denying the same for the Genesis 1 days. Both are straightforward history.

Numbered days = ordinary length days

It is as though it said: 24 hours measure the space of a day, or that, in reality, a day is a time that the heavens starting from one point take to return there. —Basil, 4th century, on Creation Day 1

Note that the numeric for Days 2–6 in the Creation Week account in Genesis is in the Hebrew form of an ordinal number,¹⁵ as it is with all of the numbered days in the Numbers passage—i.e. the days are numbered second (שֵׁנִי *sheni*), third (שְׁלִישִׁי *shlishi*), fourth (רִבְעִי *rivi*), fifth (חֲמִישִׁי *chamishi*) and sixth (שִׁשִּׁי *shishi*).

But there’s a key difference with Day 1 of Creation Week. That’s because Genesis 1:5 does not say “first day” (which would be מִיּוֹם וְאֶחָד *mî yom v’echad*)—i.e. day with an ordinal number—but instead “one day”, (יוֹם אֶחָד *yom echad*)—i.e. day with a cardinal number.¹⁶ This is the first moment in recorded history that anyone has spoken the word ‘day’ with a numeric—and so the cardinal number is apt. A day can be only a “first” if there are other days; but at the beginning of Creation Week, there was only that one day. Also, God himself in Genesis 1:5 is defining what a day is: darkness (night) and light (daytime) cycle, “there was evening and there was morning, one day”. One rotation of the earth equals one day. The whole creation was completed in the time it took for the earth to rotate just six times. Six ordinary-length earth-rotation days.¹⁷

The great theologian Basil (AD 329–379) pointed this out long ago in a homily on Creation Week:

“Why does Scripture say ‘one day’ not ‘the first day’? Before speaking to us of the second, the third, and the fourth days, would it not have been more natural to call that one the first which began the series? If it, therefore, says ‘one day’, it is from a wish to determine the measure of day and night and to combine the time that they contain. Now 24 hours fill up the space of one day—we mean of a day and of a night; and if at the time of the solstices, they have not both an equal length, the time marked by Scripture does not the less circumscribe their duration. It is as though it said: 24 hours measure the space of a day, or that, in reality, a day is the time that the heavens starting from one point take to return there.”¹⁸

Conclusion

Genesis really is history. This is what the other Bible writers understood. And rightly so, as shown by the great similarity in style and verb patterns to other undoubted historical books of the Bible. Further, it looks nothing like the poetic books like Psalms.¹⁹ (Adapted from the author’s new book *The Genesis Account: a theological, historical and scientific commentary on Genesis 1–11*).

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We Love Him

By Bruce Cannon
Mitchell County

"We love Him because he first loved us." (1 John 4:19)

February is termed the month for love. We focus more on those we love on February 14th more so than at other times of the year. Flowers are sent, candy is given, and we take those special folks in our life to special places to eat. Florists are busier on February 14th than at any other time of the year. Restaurants have waiting lines and reservations need to be made to make certain one can get a table.

Two observations need to be made: 1) Every month, even every day, needs to be known for love. We should never let time go by without telling others we love them; most especially those closest to us. Children need to hear parents say daily, "I love you." Spouses need to hear daily, "I love you." Family and friends need to hear daily, "I love you." It is so much easier to live a life of "love" than a life of anger, bitterness and so forth.

The second observation is: why do we love? There is an inherent desire in the heart of everyone to love and be loved. There is a huge place in the heart that needs to be filled with the emotion of loving and being loved. But why? Because we were made in the image of the greatest Lover of all time! "We love Him because He first loved us."

Before the foundation of the world was laid and long, long before we came into the world God showed His love to us. Paul said in Romans 5:8, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Because of the omniscience of God, there has never been a time when He has not loved us with a John 3:16 type of love. There has never been a time when He did not want us to know Him. There has never been a time when He did not want to redeem us.

Because of His great gesture, we love.... especially if we are believers. And, most especially if we are walking in fellowship with Him. His Holy Spirit is reproducing the character of Christ within us every day as we pray, study the Word and so forth. One of those character traits is love. As we walk in fellowship with Him, we grow in love, we grow in the capacity to love, and we know more how to love others. He began it all by extending love to us.

I am so thankful the Lord does not have a special month for love. Can you imagine going 11 months without feeling the Lord's deep love? Every day is Valentine's Day with Him. Every day He shows love. He grants peace, encouragement, strength, answered prayer, understanding and wisdom, grace and so many more blessings because of His great love toward us.

May I suggest to us today: feel His love, know His love, experience His love, express His love. Let the knowledge of knowing that the King of the Universe loves us cause us to be filled with joy and amazement.

The chorus of the song, Who Am I? says, "Who am I that a King would bleed and die for? Who am I that He would pray, not My Will, Thine Lord? The answer I may never know, why He'd ever love me so, that to an old rugged cross He'd go for Who am I?"

Have a blessed, love-filled February!

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



The Visit Behind the Curtain

By Steve Bietz
Burke County

Sometime back, I was visiting a church member who was a resident of a nursing home. Edith and I had been friends for many years. Several times I felt like we may have been too loud with our conversation since the room was not private. There was a curtain that divided the room in half. Edith's half was nearest to the door, and with the curtain pulled, I had not seen the roommate. The other side of the curtain did not seem to have a light on, although there was light coming in from the window that had let me see the end of the bed. My visit with Edith was coming to an end and I stood up from the chair and took Edith's hand as I prayed. As I ended the prayer and we were saying our goodbyes, a voice from the other side of the curtain spoke up. "Pastor, could you visit me too?" I walked to the edge of the curtain so that I could get my first look at Edith's neighbor on the other side of the room.

As our eyes met, she said, "my name is Beverly and I sure would like you to visit with me." After introducing myself and walking to her bedside to take her hand in mine, I said, "Beverly, I would be very happy to visit with you." For the next 15 minutes, Beverly and I had a wonderful time as we became acquainted. She thanked me, and thanked me, and thanked me still more for my visit. By the time I had prayer with Beverly, I was thanking God for the visit behind the curtain and how I had been greatly blessed. I suspect that many pastors have found themselves in similar circumstances.

That is how it is when we take up the question that we find in scripture. Who is our neighbor? The Lord said, "you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:30-31). I discovered, with the visit behind the curtain, that my heart was blessed as I was neighborly with Beverly. Remarkable how that works, isn't it?

There was a farmer who raised seed corn. His seed corn won the blue ribbon every year. It was the best. It seemed unusual that each year he shared with his neighbors seed from his blue ribbon corn for them to plant their fields. A newspaper reporter interviewing the farmer asked, "If you want to have the best seed corn anywhere, why do you share with your neighbors the seed from your best corn? Shouldn't you keep the best for yourself?" The farmer replied that the reporter must not understand how to raise corn. He went on to explain that when the breezes blow, the pollen from the corn is carried on the wind. Therefore, the corn is cross-pollinated from corn-growing around it. The farmer said that for him to have the best seed corn, his neighbors must also have the best. If they had inferior corn, that would lower the quality of his own corn crop.

How about that. Being neighborly blesses the one being neighborly. Luke 6:38 expresses that sentiment. "Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over...for with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."

The lawyer asked Jesus, "who is my neighbor?" That is to say, who counts, who am I responsible for, who should I give my care? Jesus responded by telling a story that redefines the word neighbor as He shares the story of the Good Samaritan. Yes, going to visit my church member Edith in the nursing home was neighborly. But visiting Beverly on the other side of the curtain, blessed my own heart with the realization that we are all vulnerable and in need of a neighbor.

Being neighborly involves not only giving help but also being willing to receive it. The neighbor behind the curtain isn't the only one in need, but rather the one who provides a neighbor's care for another, their need for a neighbor is equally supplied.

What a fantastic blessing awaits us all when we are neighborly.

Steve Bietz, Pastor, Morganton Seventh day Adventist Church.



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-H.O. Hirt, ERIE Founder

God Loves Variety

By Alan Griffin
County

There are enough bits of information in a single cell to fill 31,000 books. A single cell contains approximately 1 trillion atoms, of which, not one has ever been seen by man. Inside its fully enclosed nucleus is all the DNA necessary to create a duplicate body. Then we have proteins, such as histones, to form chromosomes. The genes within these chromosomes are the cell's nuclear genome and with a lot of patience, we can take that down to the string theory ending we think with Higgs boson which is a particle that is in all matter. To say that God loves variety is an understatement. Every single person on earth is different, every animal, fish, and plant are different.

There are two issues with the church today that turn off so many believers. The first is conformity. We just seem to get stuck in our way of doing things and refuse to give in to new ideas. I struggle with it myself. A good example is a church here where I live has a plastic, throw away container they use for the Lord's supper. The top of it is a wafer and then you peel off another layer of plastic and you have the fruit juice. The way we do it in my church is very structured and formal. What is so amazing is the new church with the plastic throw away container has thousands of people showing up for their multiple services. Where we, on the other hand, can barely get enough people in the door to keep the church open. So, you have one group of people who think one way and another who thinks the other way. Who is to say this is wrong? Some will conform to the existing standards of a church while others, who don't like the standards, go and start another church. This, in turn, attracts more people to Christ.

God loves variety. Our universe is made up of billions of galaxies which consist of billions and billions of stars. Each star and each galaxy are different. Now imagine the cells in a planet or a star and the infinite number of cells that are in the universe. Oh, by the way, the universe is not necessarily the proper term anymore. They've now changed the word to "multiverse," or more than one universe. Can you possibly imagine that a cell is like a universe, and some of the atoms in a cell are planets with living beings, animals, and plants? Or, what if each universe is a cell of God and He is out walking on another planet somewhere. The concept staggers my mind.

The Body of Christ has perhaps twenty-two spiritual gifts. Combine those with the diversity of mankind and you have untold billions of spiritual combinations, each person with Christ in their own special way. We have Christians who walk differently, dress differently, and read different Bibles. Many of us who try to



shape the world into our own formula miss out on some of the greatest blessings that God has to offer. Human beings are creatures of habit, so we tend to judge people based on our perspective on life. Too many times I have received emails from people throughout the world who have become discouraged with going to church. Someone has judged them because of the way they dress, their belief, or the type of Bible they read. I have gone to some churches where people are speaking in tongues, others where there are plenty of robust "AMENS", and others that are as quiet as a mouse. None of these things are wrong. We all worship God in a slightly different way, and I think this is wonderful because God loves diversity. Give two pastors the same Bible verse and you will get two completely different sermons every time. Read a Bible verse one time and we will get one meaning. Read it again and we will get another meaning. God is infinite.

Let us please try to give others the benefit of the doubt. So, let us please put a Christ-like foot forward, and set an example for others to follow. We are followers of Christ and leaders of others. Just like Jesus. I use this three-letter guideline to help me deal with other human beings. It is "FJL".

Forgive lest we not be forgiven - The Bible says, "Forgive us our sins as we forgive others who sin against us."

Judge not lest we be judged - God judges us as we judge others.

Love always, because love never fails - There are many people in this world, who aren't Christians, and yet love their families. We must do more. We must love those who judge us, hate us, humiliate us because that is what Jesus taught us - to love our enemies as we love ourselves.

"And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice." 1 Kings 19:11-12. I have been very fortunate through Bible study and prayer to be able to recognize the still, small voice of God. It has been a tremendous blessing to me to receive the comfort and counseling of the Holy Spirit daily. It is an inner voice we hear inside of our mind that brings our thoughts to light as to whether we are in or out of the will of God. It is always there with us wherever we go, and whatever kind of conflict we may have to endure to survive the day. It is God's blessing upon those who love Him and spend time with Him. Do you talk to yourself? Well, so do I, and I have found that when I say something to myself if I will just pause for a moment God will respond. It's usually a time when HE IS PUTTING ME IN MY PLACE, reminding me who I am and who I am not. Now, most of the time, I am not necessarily talking to Him. I will be going over some subject in my mind, either trying to solve a problem at work, or talking to myself about the project at hand, and He will join in my conversation, instructing in the way I should go.

Many times, I have complained about someone else's behavior, and the Holy Spirit immediately responds, "You've done the same thing yourself." I am very fortunate to have a great recollection of my past including my past behavior. Many of us aging Christians try to forget our past because it is an embarrassment to us. By doing this it makes it easy for us to pass judgment on others. I am thankful I have that still, small voice reminding me who I really am. I am a sinner. I have sinned greatly in the past, I am sinning now, every moment of every day, and I will be sinning in the future until I am called home. I will watch the news and ask myself, "How could someone kill another person like that?" The Holy Spirit will respond to me in that still, small voice by saying, "You have done the same thing in your heart many times." I don't want you to think that just because I am on the other side of the keyboard that I am any different from anyone else. If there is any difference between the two of us it just might be that little bit of precious time, I spend with the Lord every day.

I have never had a homosexual relationship and every time I complain about their promiscuity, He reminds me of my own. The Bible tells us to refrain from homosexual behavior, to refrain from sexual behavior out of wedlock, and to refrain from adultery. All these sins are against us and are very damaging to our souls. A sin is a sin, and we can't be talking about someone else's behavior without looking at our own. We all are human and have sexual desires that we need to keep in check. It is the fallen man who judges others, and it is the grace of God when we forgive. Too often our churches are represented by unregenerated souls pursuing their own agenda. We need to be on guard against such individuals and toughen up our skin so as not to let them rent space in our minds. Instead of responding defensively, we need to hold our tongue and set a Christian example for others to follow. I myself don't really care what others think of me because most of the time their thoughts don't have any bearing on my life. I do care what God thinks of me because He holds my soul between His fingertips, and I fear His power over me.

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



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High Peak Baptist Church

7 Tips for Studying the Bible on Your Phone

By Kevin Purcell

Most believers carry around a smartphone today. If you do, don't miss the opportunity to use this powerful little computer for personal Bible study. You can get a library of great Bible study tools without carrying a huge backpack or briefcase full of heavy reference books like you did 20-30 years ago.

Let's look at 7 Tips for studying the Bible on your phone. I know that some of you read that and think, why would I ever do that? Maybe it's not the best option for everyone, but don't dismiss it. Even if you prefer to carry a copy of a paper Bible and record what you learn with a physical pen and notebook, a good Bible study app can still help you. Get the Right Bible App.

A lot of great Bible apps exist, but if you want to do more than read the Bible, highlight passages, add digital notes and share the verses with friends or family via text message, email or social media, then you need a good app. Let me mention the three best Bible study options in order of my personal preference ...

1. Olive Tree Bible App – a great smartphone or tablet app with a lot of excellent reference books in a simple to use user-interface.
2. Logos Bible Study – one of the most powerful Bible apps on a phone or tablet that you can use to do some in-depth, advanced Bible study.
3. Accordance Bible Software – not as advanced as Logos or as mobile-friendly as Olive Tree, but it is simpler with enough room to grow for advanced Bible students

Search your device's App Store. These all work on iOS, Android and Kindle Fire tablets. You can also get versions to run on your Windows or Mac computer. If you own a Chromebook, you can use the Android app or go online and use the Logos Web App. Neither Olive Tree nor Accordance offers a web app.

If you don't care about dictionaries, commentaries or other tools, then the YouVersion Bible app is the best option. It doesn't offer these advanced study options, however, so I don't include it above.

Use Strong's Dictionary-based Bibles.

Even if you don't read a bit of Greek or Hebrew, you can do advanced language Bible study using tools with Strong's number tagging. You will find a good Bible with important words tagged with Strong's numbers. This will link to Hebrew and Greek dictionaries to show the range of meanings of every word in the original languages of the Bible.

Using the programs above you can tap or press and hold a word and see the entry for that word in either Hebrew (for Old Testament passages) or Greek (for New Testament passages).

Get Good Commentaries

Each of the above Bible study apps will let you add a good commentary set. Commentaries come in one of three flavors.

1. A one-volume commentary - covers the entire Bible in one book. The Matthew Henry Commentary is an example of this. It's not the best one available, however. We also think of these as devotional commentaries.
2. Study Bible – a good study Bible is a commentary of sorts. Consider something like the ESV Study Bible, the Apologetics Study Bible or Faithlife Study Bible. The last one only works with Logos. You can find dozens of decent study Bibles for Bible apps.
3. Multi-volume commentary – when a commentary has one book for each book of the Bible, it has more space to go more in-depth in the comments the author makes about each verse. You will often see a section for each verse or maybe a small range of verses. The one-volume commentary listed above often has one comment for a section or chapter of a book. You get more in these. That also results in higher prices. My personal favorites include the New American Commentary, the NIV Application Commentary or Expositors Bible Commentary.

Which of the above should you get? Start with a good Study Bible. If that's not advanced enough try a one-volume commentary or devotional commentary to save money. If you regularly teach or preach, then get a good multi-volume commentary. The latter can cost anywhere from \$100 to \$2000.

Learn to Use Advanced Features

Bible apps offer some advanced features. Learn how to use them. Head over to the app developer's website and read their tutorials and watch their help videos. Go to YouTube and find good how-to videos. I create videos at my channel - www.youtube.com/user/kevinpurcellorg and I write about using Bible study at my website: www.kevinpurcells.org.

Set Reminders

Most Bible apps offer a feature to remind you to read the Bible. Set them for a good time each day. If you're a morning person then set aside a time each morning to study the Bible. Some prefer to do this during a lunch hour or before bed at night. Find out how to set the reminder and set it. Then don't ignore it.

Share What You Learn

Even if you don't teach or preach the Bible, tell others about what you learned. You'll learn more when you talk about it with other people. Talk to your spouse, your kids, your parents, a good friend or coworker. Don't ignore talking to non-believers. Ask them what they think of what you learned. It could turn into a great witnessing opportunity then or at a later point.

Read with Others

Find someone to read the Bible with you outside of Sunday school or an organized Bible study class. Pick a friend, your spouse or family member. If you're married, then never pick someone of the opposite sex. You can read the Bible with 3 other people to great effect. Find someone more advanced in their faith than you are so you'll learn. Find someone at the same level so you can rely on each other to keep one another accountable. And find someone that you can help grow stronger. You can be their more advanced Bible learner.

If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to me through my website (www.kevinpurcells.org) my Twitter account @kapurcell or email (kevin@kevinpurcell.org).



kevinpurcell.org) my Twitter account @kapurcell or email (kevin@kevinpurcell.org).

Dr. Kevin Purcell is the pastor of High Peak Baptist Church off Exit 107 on I-40. He's also written about church and Bible technology for www.ChurchTechToday.com and other publications. He covers Bible software and tech at www.KevinPurcell.org and on his YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/c/KevinPurcellBehindThePulpit.

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Sudoku Solution

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

WECR AM Radio/Glory 1130

For God So Loved

By Phillip Greene
Avery County



"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God." – John 3:16-21, ESV

These words speak volumes to each of us who follow Christ. One of the things that I find many doing is stopping at 3:16 but never going any farther. Many stop at simple belief, but Jesus continued on to tell us that there is more than just believing. Scripture tells us that even the demons believe.

Jesus, in these words to Nicodemus, tells us all that He did not come to the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He elaborates on this by continuing the conversation and explaining that those who believe are not condemned. He then says some of the keywords to our Christian faith in verse 19, saying, "And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil." What does this mean?

It means, when someone is living in sin, they love the darkness, they love to be around others who live as they do, those who are also in the darkness, those who will not condemn them. Light has a way of exposing that which is hidden in the dark, and when the light is revealed all sins are made known.

Today, we must examine what we are doing. We must realize that we are not being what God has called us to be when we live outside of the light. Christ is the light, and he has called us to be in the light.

James 1:19 tells us to be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger. James continues by telling us that we must be hearers and doers of the word, not hearers only. There are many who hear and believe the word, but there are few who do and truly believe the word. So many stop at believing that Jesus is the Christ, but they forget that being a believer of the Word means that they are putting faith into action each day.

Are you putting your faith into action today? Can others see Christ in you? Are you living in the light or the dark today?

Examine your heart today. I encourage you to be more than just a simple hearer of the word but to embrace what Christ is offering today through our 'doing' the word. Be more than a hearer today. Let God expose you today so that you can be all he needs you to be.

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



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Clint's Chronicles on the Funny Farm

The Rest of the Story

Clint and I worked several months together here on the farm and I do believe that this was one of the most hilarious events we had happen during that six-month period of time. My great uncle, Hal Byrd, built a cattle shed on the side of an old chicken house that Aunt Mae Byrd had used. The shed roof did not have much pitch and was prone to leak quite bad. I had been working on it and built a feed lot around the barn so we would have an additional place to work the cattle when they were up on this farm. We were putting in a chute and head gate on the inside but when we went to check it out it was really muddy, as in wet, wet, wet cow manure. We had just had a real hard rain and it had leaked bad right where we were putting the head gate. I decided to use a big 2-inch pump and just pump out the water and manure and in the process of doing so I accidentally caught Clint square in the face with a full 2-inch hose wide open with liquid cow manure. I swear, really, I don't swear but I do affirm, that I did not intend to do this. The force of the hose almost knocked Clint down and I will never forget the look he gave me as he asked, did you mean to do that? I honestly told him, no I did not mean to do that, but I had to admit I was laughing my head off. A good shower was in order for both of us after this and Barbara made us strip down to our underwear outside and spray ourselves, and our clothes, off before we could bring them or ourselves in the house.

Farmer Doug

Clint's Chronicles on the Funny Farm

By Clint Pollard

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

Ancient Cow Manure!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Humbled in the Hills,

Farmer Clint



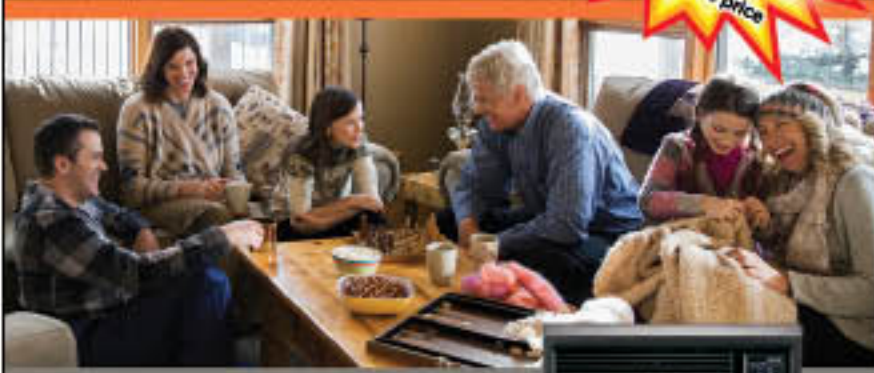
How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! Isaiah 52:7

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- Return to text.
13. Actually, in Numbers 7, the phrase is bayyôm, where the 'a' in bayyôm represents the definite article, 'the', meaning 'on the day [xth]', unlike bayôm, which lacks the article. Return to text.
14. McCabe, R.V., interview in Creation 32(3):16-19, 2010; creation.com/mc-cabe; Graves, D.G., "... when Yahweh God made the earth and the heavens,"—a proposal for the right translation of הַיּוֹם [bayôm] in Genesis 2:4, J. Creation 23(3):119-122, 2009. Return to text.
15. Ordinal numbers are used to refer, for example, to the order of runners finishing a race—first, second, third, etc., as opposed to cardinal numbers: one, two, three, etc. Return to text.
16. An English Bible version that reflects this distinction is the NASB. Return to text.
17. And this numbering pattern, including the deliberate use of the definite article for Day 6 (and Day 7 in Genesis 2:2-3, as well as for all the days in the Numbers passage) further emphasizes this. Sarfati, J., The numbering pattern of Genesis, J. Creation 17(2):60-61, 2003; creation.com/numbering—after Steinmann, A., כִּתּוּב as an ordinal number and the meaning of Genesis 1:5, Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society (JETS) 45(4):577-584, 2002. Return to text.
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19. For a detailed critique of some of the compromising attempts to deny the history of Genesis based on literary style, see Kay, M., On literary theorists' approach to Genesis 1 (two parts), J. Creation 21(2):71-76; 21(3):93-101, 2007; creation.com/literary-theory-1 and creation.com/literary-theory-2. Return to text.



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Standing Up for What is Pure

By Cody Penland
McDowell County



"Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rebuke the oppressor; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow." — Isaiah 1:16-17 KJV

You're on break at work. You're sitting there eating your lunch with your work buddies—probably both of those that are believers and those that are non-believers—when one of them shares a dirty, sexually-fueled rambling that passes as humor. Your friends chuckle, and for some reason, you fall in line and laugh at it too. Sound familiar?

It seems to be the easiest and most popular thing to fall in with the world, enjoying things that the Bible says are not pure. We say dirty things, we cuss, watch dirty movies, and listen to dirty music. We read our Bibles and we go through the motions at church, then we live no different than the rest of the world for the rest of the week. Hallelujah if you have sought and achieved a more Biblical sense of purity in your actions out in our ministry field that is Earth. You're not alone if you struggle with this from time to time.

I frequently encounter all these things at work, in conversation, in the grocery store, while turning the dial on the radio; you name it, it's there. Whether they are in the world or identify as Christian, many people constantly engage in flattery and half-truths. There is a great issue in the world in its understanding of what is pure and right. I know what you're thinking, "Well Cody, as long as I live the best that I can and look the part, it does not affect me, right?" The Bible would disagree with you.

Other than the Isaiah passage that stands above this article (clearly telling us to cease to do evil, do good), Paul told the church in Philippi that, "...whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any true virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things" (Phil. 4:8). The stress placed upon the phrases "are," and "there is" are quite telling. To know what is pure, ask yourself, "Does the Bible agree that what I am thinking or doing is pure? Praiseworthy?"

We know there is an issue. We know there is a problem. What is there to do about it? Isaiah, Philippians, and Proverbs say it clear as crystal: Confront it at the source in our own lives, and in the world around us. What does Proverbs say? "As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend" (Prov. 27:17). The passage does not say "Christian friend," "brother," nor "other church member." In fact, when one investigates a Hebrew lexicon, they will find words like "brother," "friend," "companion," and even words like "citizen" and "another person." Do not get it twisted, nor attempt to cheat yourself in the refusal of responsibility that is the statement, "that is between them and Christ." We are called to confront all that is not pure in the church AND in the world. Paul rebuked Peter because Peter was wrong (Galatians 2), Jesus did the same (Mark 8), so we are definitely to do this in our churches just as much.

How do we confront such issues in the world? First, I encourage you to live it in your own lives. Do as the prophet Isaiah said to the Judeans in chapter one, and learn to do good, turning away from the evil you learned and inherited from the world. Secondly, keep the impurities out of your home. This is not to say that you should not have non-believers in your home—quite the contrary—but instead to keep the dirty music and movies out of your home. I find happiness in seeing the response that many Christian people have had considering Netflix's release of "Messiah." We must refuse to partake in things that are not Christlike. Stop buying these songs off iTunes, stop buying these movies, and stop watching these things on streaming apps. Lastly, we should be ready to confront these dirty things, doing this in truth and love. In all correction and confrontation, the Christian is commanded to do this in gentleness and love (Galatians 6:1, Ephesians 4:32).

Admittedly, I find it educational to view or listen to certain things that are integral pieces of the world around us—however, if your intention is to listen to it in enjoyment, or you find yourself becoming enamored with things of the world, we must cast that out of our lives. Matthew 5:29a reminds us that "And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee." Later, we read that "No man can serve two masters... Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt. 6:24). We must equip ourselves but know that we are still foreign ambassadors for Christ that live on this planet. The Christian should already know quite well what is going on around them, just from experience.

If we engage with the things of this world that are blatantly unclean, then how can we be the salt of the earth? How can you expect to win souls for Christ if you're displaying that He has made no real change in your own life? I close in the spirit of Branch Rickey in the movie "42" when I say that: One day, God will watch the entirety of your life with you standing in judgment, and He will ask why you denied the standard that He has for us in those moments. I am quite confident that "I wanted to fit in," or "I did not want to lose my friends" will not be adequate answers.

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

And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. 1 Peter 4:8

An Act of Love

By Christy Lowman
Burke County

For the month of February, this animal was chosen for its act of love during the latest Australian bushfires. This small animal lives in a series of underground tunnels and chambers. It can only be found in Australia and the islands surrounding it. During the recent fires, they allowed other animals to stay in their homes until the fire was put out and it was safe for them to come out. They have saved the lives of wallabies, echidnas, rabbits, skinks, and lizards. Any guess at what animal this might be?

It's a Wombat! Wombats are marsupials, (pouched animals), that are mammals. They are herbivores that can weigh up to 80 lbs. Most of them like living by themselves but some do like living in colonies or mobs with up to a dozen members sharing the underground lair.

Wombats look like small bears and can be grayish-black or sandy brown in color. They have very strong jaws and continual growing teeth like rodents. Their legs are so powerful that they can run up to 25mph. Their hindquarters have extra thick skin that protects them. When a predator chases them, they will run into their tunnels, blocking the only entrance with their rear. A bite on the rear-end is not very threatening to them thanks to their thick skin. They also have a tiny tail and bad eyesight.

Wombats are known as master diggers thanks to their wide strong feet and huge claws. They are nocturnal animals that can move up to 3 feet of dirt each night, making their living complex as much as 650 feet long.

Wombats, when not digging, spend most of their nights grazing on food such as grass, bark, and roots. They have a special gland in their stomach that helps them digest these tough foods. They do not need much water because they get most of the moisture, they need from what they eat. It takes wombats a week to digest their food. Their poop is square-shaped and is the driest of all the mammals. They poop as much as 80-100 squares an evening.

Baby wombats, called joeys, are the size of a jellybean when they are born. They live solitary in their momma's pouch for up to 5 months before coming out. The pouch, unlike a kangaroo's, opens towards the rear. This allows the pouch to stay free from dirt when the mom is busy digging.

Wombats get mad easily if they feel threatened. They have been known to crush uninvited animals that intrude in their homes by mashing them against the walls and ceilings of the tunnels. That is why it is so amazing that these animals that like to live alone, and who don't like intruders in their home, willingly let other animals live with them to escape the harsh Australian fires. This is a perfect example of how God wants us to show love and be Christ-like. These wombats have saved countless other animals by just opening their homes up to them even though they more than likely didn't want to. How can you demonstrate God's love to others around you? Especially to the people that you really don't like or want to hang out with? Let God use you to pour out His love to others!

Dear Lord, please let us be open to letting You use us to show Your love to others. Let us look past ourselves to help others in need and most of all help us include and be nice to the people we necessarily don't like. Help us love one another as you love us! In Jesus' name Amen.

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." John 13:34 NIV

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



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

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

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Snow Hill Baptist Church

Love for a Lifetime

By Dean Honeycutt
Mitchell County

As I have thought about how to have a successful marriage, I have come up with a reasonable solution. Husbands do everything your wife tells you to do. As one man was asked, "who is in charge in your home?" The man replied, "that is easy I wear the pants in my family, but my wife tells me what to do." We joke about this all the time and it is funny. Most of the time when you ask a man about something, he will say you will have to ask my wife. A lot of times in my family Pam knows what is going on with our children and the agenda for the week. And most of the time our children will convey information to Pam before they tell me anything. I do not know how many times I have heard "dad I told you, you just forgot." And to be honest that is true. It goes in one ear and out the other. Men, we have been accused of selective hearing, and at times I know this to be true. Pam is a much more detail person than I am.

We have been married 28 years and have faced a lot of challenges. We have faced every adversity with God. In 28 years, there has never been a time that God has not been in the center of our relationship and problems. It is God that has brought us through financial strain, miscarriage, death, dealing with alcohol abuse, health problems, and caring for our aging parents. The Lord is our strength and the One we lean on and trust. One thing I would tell every couple is to make prayer a priority in your relationship. Prayer places God at the center and the source of help in every situation.

The Bible says "25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;" Ephesians 5:25. Christ sacrificed His life for the church because He loved the church. So, my love for my wife is expressed in sacrifice. As the extreme expression of this love, I would die for my wife, for her to live. Jesus died so we could live. I benefited eternally from the death of Jesus. In comparison, my wife will benefit from my giving myself to my wife. This is an act of selfless living or living for the sole purpose of benefitting someone else. Paul expressed this type of selfless living in Romans. Romans 12:1 "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

Wow, a living sacrifice that places the needs and concerns of my wife and family above my own. This is difficult at times; our wives need this type of love. A love that is deeper and stronger, a love that Paul described as "a great mystery." At times it is difficult to sacrifice our time, hobbies, desires, goals to fulfill the needs of our wife. A Father giving his daughter away in marriage handed a note to his new son in law that reads "fragile handle with care."

I can remember my dad when problems came along, he would say "I have got broad shoulders I can handle it"; well instead of trying to handle it, he should have been giving it away. What I mean by this is instead of holding onto our sin and problems we need to crucify our flesh for the benefit of the family. This is part of the problem today in marriages and families Men are selfish and we are not willing to sacrifice our life for the life of our wife and family.

Men when we love our wife the way the Bible says we will see our wives living in submission to us and our children respecting us. The Christian family is a model of the Christian Church. Jesus is the head of the church, as the husband is the head of his family. I have a lot of work to do and by God's grace, I will do it, and be the husband and Father God has called me to be.

Happy Valentine's Day
Live life with "No Regrets"

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



Berry Chapel Baptist Church

Words of Wisdom - Love

By Steve Williams
McDowell County

Here we are coming into the second month of 2020. Most of us when we think of the month of February we think of Valentine's and Love. It's a time to show you love your Wife, Husband, boyfriend, girlfriend or maybe your closest friend with a card or a box of candy.

I hate to say it but many times I believe the word LOVE is used without really thinking about its true meaning. Now when you hear the word Love what comes to your mind? When you are young you think of Mushy stuff, Kissy, Kissy, Huggee, Huggee. But then as you get older Love starts taking on a different meaning. When I think about what true love is now, I think of my wife who I've been married to for some 41 years. I think of my kids and my grandkids, and I think of my other family members.

This goes along with what God shares with us in His precious Word. God's Word describes us as Brides of Christ. God's Word describes us as Children of God. God's Word also describes the Church as a Family of God. But in God's Word, Love means Sacrifice. What are you saying? Well in a Marriage there are Sacrifices and without Sacrifices there are problems. I'm saying in Raising a Child there are Sacrifices. Without making these Sacrifices there are problems. And in being a part of a Family there are Sacrifices and without these Sacrifices, the family will fail.

1 Cor 13:4-8 "4Charity suffereth long, (love) charity and is kind; (love) charity envieth not; (love) charity vaunteth (boast), not itself, (love) charity is not puffed up, 5 (love) charity Doth not behave itself unseemly, (love) charity seeketh not her own, (love) charity is not easily provoked, (love) charity thinketh no evil; 6 (love) charity Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but (love) charity rejoiceth in the truth; 7 (love) charity Beareth all things, (love) charity believeth all things, (love) charity hopeth all things, (love) charity endureth all things." These verses tell me that Love is Victorious, and that Love does not come without Sacrifice.

John 3:16 tells us how Jesus sacrificed His life for us because He Loved us. "For God so loved the world that (He sacrificed) gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

John 15:12,13 "This is my commandment that ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends." Again, we see the sacrifice. If God's Love is ever going to be seen in our lives, we must learn to Sacrifice.

Words of Wisdom

- Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Love is when the other person's happiness is more important than your own. H. Jackson Brown, Jr.
- Friends show their love in times of trouble, not in happiness. N/A
- What we love usually manages to get into our conversation. What is down in the well of the heart will usually come up in the bucket of life. Vance Havner
- Keep love in your heart. A life without it is like a sunless garden when the flowers are dead. Oscar Wilde
- "It is not a lack of love, but a lack of friendship that makes unhappy marriages." Friedrich Nietzsche

Something To Think About.

"Though we are incomplete, God loves us completely. Though we are imperfect, He loves us perfectly. Though we may feel lost and without a compass, God's love encompasses us completely. ... He loves every one of us, even those who are flawed, rejected, awkward, sorrowful, or broken." Dieter F. Uchtdorf

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

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



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Neighbors Feeding Neighbors Food Ministry

By Josh Robinson
Mitchell County

The Neighbors Feeding Neighbors Food Ministry experienced a lot of growth and production in 2019, and we have hit the ground running in 2020. In 2019 we served 3,855 families, which breaks down to 9,020 individuals. We hosted 21 Community Meals and distributed a total of 192,130 pounds of food last year! We have been so busy at the ministry, we haven't had time to reflect on how much we have grown since January 2019. We went from serving 300 people and 8,913 pounds of food last January, to 1,490 people and 31,935 pounds of food in December. God has really blessed the ministry and we want to thank everyone who has had a part in helping this ministry grow, whether it is through volunteering or donations, we thank you very much and may God Bless You!

With the growth we have experienced, the need for funding and volunteers has never been greater. People can deny it all they want, but food insecurity is a problem in Western North Carolina. We see new faces every week coming to the ministry for help. I believe that the main reason that we have so many people come to us for help is that we treat everybody with love and respect, and without judgment. What a lot of people do not realize is that it's not just low-income families that have food insecurity. Some families may have a decent income; however, the amount of debt they have acquired could be draining them financially where they are having trouble putting food on the table. We treat all of our families the way we would like to be treated. We hear disbelief all the time from various people in the community who say things like "well some of those people can help their self". Or I have also heard it said: "some of those people have brought trouble on their self". To that I say - So What? Did God look down on your sins and say "you got yourself in that mess, so you can find your own savior". Certainly not, He loved us so much that He was willing to send and sacrifice His own son to pay the sin debt we owed! God expects us to do the same for others. How can we expect God to forgive us if we are unwilling to forgive others? It is very simple, He won't! (Matthew 6:15)

If you look at the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7:3-5, Jesus was speaking about pointing out the splinter in another man's eye while disregarding the beam that was in your own eye. He didn't say remove the beam from your own eye so that you can be self-righteous and point out the splinter in the other man's eye. What Jesus was saying is that we need to examine ourselves first. It's all about looking in the mirror and seeing your own faults and then, instead of judging others, reach out to help them. So as we go throughout 2020, let it remind us to look clearly (20/20) in the mirror at ourselves first. Then we must "drop the stones" and reach out and help a neighbor who may be carrying a heavy burden.

If you would like to donate or volunteer with the Neighbors Feeding Neighbors Food Ministry, you can visit us online at www.nfnfoodministry.org or email us at nfnfoodministry@gmail.com. You can also visit us on Facebook for the latest news and events. The Neighbors Feeding Neighbors Food Ministry is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit corporation with EIN# 83-0928892.

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There was Jesus

By Chris Rathbone
Mitchell County

There's a struggle sometimes when writing these articles. Struggling to decide whether to share our own life experiences. In this life, we tend to avoid bearing our hearts for others to see. Those hard chapters in life that come our way we often even avoid talking about with others, even our own family. For some reason, we fall into the belief that those struggles should be covered and hidden in the background or simply ignored by only sharing what we think people want to hear and see. The mistake is made that we should only focus on those positive places in our lives and then we end up not dealing with our inner emotions and spiritual struggles. There is even pressure put on pastors and preachers to only share "positive truth". We bury our hurts and struggles deep inside until they reach a point where they overwhelm us all at once.

Over the years, Jesus has taught me many lessons in life. One of the lessons that I personally don't always like to learn is this: We grow more in our walk with Him during hardships. There's not one of us that wants to admit that truth. Everyone enjoys those periods in life when all is well, and life seems to be rolling along smoothly. While we all are very thankful for those times, we often take them for granted and will come to a place spiritually and emotionally where we tend to put ourselves on cruise control. Our focus will become blurred and our commitment to the things in life that should be of the utmost importance will begin to fade into the background of our lives. We never really know what we are made of during these good times. How I wish it weren't true! The fact is hardships and struggles cause us all to dig deep inside our soul. They force us to search out places in our hearts we haven't been. We discover, more often than not, just how shallow we have been living. Our hearts become an open book, exposing to our Savior all those areas we thought we were keeping hidden from everyone, even Him.

The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 5:3-5 when speaking of tribulation: "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." In the trials, tribulations, and hardships of life is where we grow. Those are the times when we find more intimately the faithfulness and grace of our loving Heavenly Father. For it is there in those chapters of life that He works in depth. These "tribulations worketh patience". According to Vine's Bible Dictionary, the word in the original language for "patience" almost always means "an abiding under". In tribulation, we abide there in Christ. "Experience" means "the process of proving". Tribulation "worketh" or produces patience where we abide while God is in the process of proving us spiritually. Then when we are proved or tested through those times, we find hope! I hope that God is with us and has been the entire time. He has used these tribulations to reveal His love in our hearts through His Holy Spirit which is given to us.

In 2 Corinthians chapter 12, Paul wrote about praying for God to remove his "thorn in the flesh". Whatever it was, Paul did not want to experience it. He prayed and asked God to remove it from his life. Do you realize that God said no? "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." 2 Corinthians 12:9-10. Paul concluded that he would rather suffer through the hardships of life with his own weakness exposed so he could experience the grace, presence, and strength of Christ. Wow! And all I do most of the time is pray for everything to change so I won't have to go through things!

We are often skipping through life thinking of how strong we are and how nothing is going to bring us down. Hardship comes and we come to the realization that we weren't strong at all. Our weakness is exposed, and we come to understand our great need for Jesus. We cry for answers and struggle because we do not understand. Sometimes we get angry, we intentionally blame God and even stop praying because we somehow believe if we ignore Him things will become better. They don't. We have been plunged deep into things that we don't want to experience, and we had no choice about it. Like it or not we have to admit that we will not make it without Jesus and His strength.

Over the years in ministry, I've watched people, good people, go through experiences that have brought even the most committed and strong Christians to their knees, both physically and spiritually. I have listened to cries that have described brokenness more clearly than words ever could. Questions have been asked for which I have no answer. My own heart has been broken for others knowing that I have no idea how they are feeling because I've not experienced for myself what they are going through in their life. There have been times when words, even words in prayer, could hardly be spoken. Times when silence and tears were all that could be expressed. Times when the burden was so great you could physically see people bowing under the load.

And right there in the middle of it all.....there was Jesus.

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



Don't Get Trapped in an "Affordable Health Plan"

By Steve Gaito
McDowell County



For many lower-income people, the Affordable Care Act (ACA) has been a welcome relief for higher health-care costs. They provide excellent benefits and cover pre-existing conditions. What is often lost is that these plans are actually very expensive plans. They have to be because of all that they cover. The way ACA plans work is that they subsidize the plans based on your income. To qualify for a subsidy your income has to fit in a range and is based on how many people are in your household. Generally, for 2020 the income level to qualify is for a single person between \$12,490 to \$49,960 for a family of 3 the range is between \$21,330 to \$85,320 according to KFF the Kaiser health foundation. If you qualify and are in the lower or middle range of these incomes I believe that you should consider these plans as they are a great value. If you are near the top of the range or you have variable income that may push you over the limit these plans can be a trap. As I mentioned earlier these are subsidized plans, which means that the government is actually in effect loaning you the money until you file your taxes and the income is verified. If you exceed the limit you no longer qualify for the subsidy and have to pay it back when you file your taxes. I have heard horror stories of people that exceeded the limit by just a few dollars and received tax bills for \$15,000 to \$25,000 for repayment of the subsidy. This is, in my opinion, a risk that they should not have taken, but people often do not know and sometimes it is difficult to estimate accurately income and something as innocent as a withdrawal from your retirement account for an unexpected expense can move your income up rapidly. This is why it is critical to understand how these plans work.

There are options to ACA plans and many of them provide excellent benefits. I like to use the Health Sharing Ministries. In my experience, some of these plans provide networks like health insurance. It is important to know that these plans are not insurance but provide similar benefits. When looking at these plans they can cover everything from routine physicals and lab work to major surgeries. There are also other plans that are for more catastrophic situations and provide only bare-bones coverage and payments are sent from other members to cover the cost of any procedures. This can create a problem if you do not have the money to pay upfront and wait to be reimbursed. There are also minimum essential coverage plans that while they do not provide hospital care they do provide urgent care and doctor visits for a co-pay. These plans, while not ideal are better than no coverage. A nice feature that is becoming available in most plans is telemedicine. This allows the patient to call and talk to a doctor live on the phone and some issues can be dealt with immediately. If more testing or doctors care is needed a recommendation to an in-network physician can be made. Like insurance plans, you need to read the fine print and understand how each plan works. I am available to help you evaluate the different options and make an educated decision.

If you have already signed up for an ACA plan and you feel that you may be impacted by the income limit and may have to repay the subsidy then there is good news. You can cancel your existing plan and sign up for one of these Health Sharing Plans.

I hope this helps people understand their healthcare options.

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

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The Gospel Makes Things Better

Dr. Tom Walker
McDowell County



Our consideration in this study is how the Gospel makes things better. We are going to consider verses in the Book of Hebrews to find the golden nuggets we are going to reflect upon. "Better" is the keyword in Hebrews used some 13 times in our King James Version of the Bible. The Greek New Testament word (kreisson) means far more advantageous or useful.

It is because of our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that we enter into a knowledge and experience of the "better things" brought to our attention by the writer of the Book of Hebrews.

We are going to ponder seven different "better things" found within the pages of God's Word in this one book.

It Produces a Better Hope

Hebrews 7:19 says, "For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by which we draw nigh unto God." There was nothing wrong with the law God gave to man. The problem is with a man being prone to wander from and obeying the law of God. Man has sought throughout his history, by being as good as he could, to make himself acceptable unto God. Since man cannot fully keep the law, it cannot make him perfect and acceptable unto God. At his very best, mankind comes short of keeping the laws of God.

The Bible says in Ephesians Chapter 2 that we were without hope when we were without God (Eph.2:12). That is partly because of our inability to perfectly and completely meet the standard God required for full acceptance.

Our hope in the church age is the Lord Jesus Christ. We have a confident, good expectation for the future. According to 1 Cor. 19:19, our hope is in Christ. Our Lord met all the demands of the law and fulfilled it all.

We do not have to produce our own righteous, His is put on our account when we believe on Christ. Believers are made the righteousness of God in Christ (2 Cor. 5:21). That is why our hope is better than the one under the law.

It Produces a Better Testament

Hebrews 7:22, "By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament." In the Old Testament, the high priest died and had to be replaced from time to time. The priesthood would have to change every few years.

The priesthood of Jesus is so much different. It is unchangeable because Christ ever lives to make intercession for the people of God. There must be a priest who is acceptable to God and who can stand as a Mediator between God and man. There must be a priest who can make God accept sinful mankind. His name is Jesus. Saints of God approach God through our Great High Priest Christ (John 14:6).

It Produces a Better Covenant

A covenant is an agreement between two parties. But note a significant fact: the

new covenant of God is not of man. Man has absolutely nothing to do with the terms of this covenant. It is a covenant between God and man, but the terms are set exclusively by God.

In life, there are two kinds of covenants.

1. There is a covenant where both parties set the terms and agree to them. 2. There is a covenant where one party sets the terms, but both parties agree to them. This kind of covenant is usually called a will or testament. The covenant of God is the latter covenant, a covenant of God's will and testament. God sets the terms and conditions, and man accepts the covenant or else rejects it.

The new covenant of God has now been established with man. It has been established and given to man by the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the Minister of the new covenant, and it is far, far superior to the old covenant. The new covenant, a "better covenant...established on better promises" (Heb 8:6), rests directly on the sacrificial work of Christ, according to Hebrews. The new covenant accomplished what the old could not, that being the removal of sin and cleansing of the conscience (Heb 10:2,22).

It Produces a Better Sacrifice

Heb 9:23 says, "It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these."

In the Old Testament sacrifices were offered year after year. If you look in verses 25-26, you will discover there is not a demand for another sacrifice because Jesus paid it all. Because Jesus bore the penalty of judgment for man's sin, no other sacrifice is necessary. It is one time for all sacrifice; it is all that is needed.

It Produces a Better Substance

Heb 10:34, "For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance."

The word "substance" speaks of wealth, possessions, goods, and property. What we have in Heaven cannot be taken away from us. It endures and will not disappear like wealth in this world may do so. Your inheritance and enjoyment of it will be forever if you are a genuine, born again, transformed child of God. What we have in the glory world will endure; it will last forever.

It Points to a Better Country

Heb 11:16 states, "But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city."

Heaven is described in Revelation Chapters 21 and 22. Whatever it is, the glory world yet to come is far better than anything we know here on the earth. The Apostle Paul spoke of departing to be with Christ and said of that departure it is "far better" (Phil.1:23). Socialism is certainly not an acceptable form of government, capitalism has flaws, but the society of the world to come will be far better than any system we have known in this present life.

It Produces a Better Resurrection

Heb. 11:35, "Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection." Many believers suffered according to Hebrews 11. Oliver Greene wrote when they were sawn asunder following happened: "a person was put in a hollow log then someone sawed through the log and through the person." Life became so difficult for them that it moved them to anticipate their death, resurrection and a world that is eternal, never-ending, and is with God and Christ forever.

All these better things are true because of the Good News that the Lord Jesus Christ became incarnate, lived a sinless life, died a vicarious death, and arose in a glorious resurrection. Thank God for the Gospel of Christ!

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



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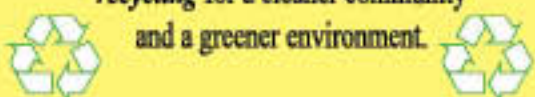
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First Baptist Church of Marshall

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



I invite you to look at a second internal "habit of the heart"—prayer. Once we have committed ourselves to come into His presence and have begun to practice the discipline of meditation, we will find ourselves in the presence of Almighty God. Prayer is that moment and that place where we find ourselves face to face with our God, connecting and conversing with our Maker on a deep, intimate level. God, our Savior, calls us and invites us into a deep, intimate, ongoing conversation with Him. We are able to have that conversation because we are His children.

Eternal God wants us to have and to experience a deep, ongoing, and eternal relationship with Him. And in that relationship, He invites us to both speak to Him and listen to Him as He converses, leads and guides us. The spiritual discipline of prayer, like a conversation, consists of both listening and speaking. Prayer brings us into the deepest work of the human spirit—our loving communion with God, our creator. Real prayer, says, Richard Foster, is “life creating and life-changing.” To pray is to change—for it is through our conversation with God that He seeks to transform us. Foster argues that the “closer we come to the heart-beat of God the more we see our need and the more we desire to be conformed to Christ.” The whole discipline of prayer, the whole conversation with God is about changing our hearts, minds, and souls to look like, sound like, and act like Christ. In prayer, we begin to think God’s thoughts after Him, to desire the things He desires, to love the things He loves, to be passionate about the things that He is passionate about, and to be aware of His wonderful plans and purposes.

Not only did Jesus pray for Himself and ask for God's presence and power, but He also prayed for others. The Incarnate Lord, the God/man, entered a deeply intimate moment with the Father. He heard the Father's heart. He spoke His heart to the Father. He understood clearly through each and every conversation what the plans and purposes of the Father were—and then He committed Himself to obediently follow God's desires. Jesus never concluded any of His prayers with "if it be Thy will." Neither did any of the apostles nor the Old Testament prophets repeat that phrase when they prayed for others. Clearly, they believed that they knew what the will of God was before they prayed a "prayer of faith." Indeed, a prayer offered on behalf of another is a prayer of faith! We are believing that God is Sovereign, and He is willing and able to do all that He wants and desires. We are trusting that He will act completely and fully out of His character. What is His character? He is love! He is faithful! He is just! He is good! He will work for His good will and pleasure.

A "prayer of faith" is more than just a conversation. Fueled by Christian compassion, our faith and prayers motivate us to move. Our heart moves us to get personally involved and commit ourselves to personally invest in the object or person of the prayer. And that is exactly what the Lord is seeking to do with our lives—He is mobilizing, assembling, marshaling, and calling His people to action and to arms. Again, our hearts, minds, and souls are moved to look like, sound like, and act like our wonderful Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Chip Ingram, in a recent teaching episode, described prayer as "communion with God." As believers and followers of Jesus, our hearts and souls must long after such daily communion. As so, "Let us pray....!"

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



By Buddy Freeman
Madison County



"LAUGHTER IS HEALTHY FOR YOU"

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

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

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

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

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

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February in Avery County

By Nancy Malik
Avery County



February in Avery County is a time of special beauty and love! "For God so loved the world, He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him, shall not perish, but have eternal life! With Valentine's Day in the middle of a cold, winter month, what joy to share His love with others. Valentines have a Christian history of a Roman politician who became a believer, was thrown into the Colosseum with other believers for their faith where lions awaited them. He left notes of Christ's love before he died for Jesus. That's love! Showing love to others when we have the light is so fun at this time. Children, parents, grandparents and other family and friends love to share their love notes. Schools, Sunday Schools, businesses and other groups will also be sending out forms of love. Flowers, candy and other gifts are also a part of this special day.

A fun day in the middle of winter, Feb 2nd involves a cute groundhog and his prediction of how long until spring. February also celebrates the birthdays of two amazing US Presidents; President Lincoln who was born on February 12, 1809, and President Washington who was born on February 22, 1732. What a blessing from God of these two great men were for our nation; one in the middle of a terrible war between the states and one for his nation in a battle against England. God's hand was upon both these men; the men who wrote the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution and the one who wanted to bring a broken nation back together.

With two amazing ski areas in the county, there are always fun things to do. Besides skiing, ice skating, and sledding, there are cross country ski trails, snow-shoeing and hikes on the Blue Ridge Parkway. Sugar Mountain has long slopes; Beech Mountain has high altitude and there are so many ways to enjoy them.

National Day of Prayer will be May 7th this year and the theme is Pray God's Glory Across the Earth and the verses used are from Habakkuk 2:14; "For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters of the sea." This year children will be praying as well.

Two Christian businesses are on Beech Mountain. White Wolf Lodge, owned by the Watren Family, has a beautiful view of the Blue Ridge Mountains, fun gift shop and restaurant, ski shop and room for many people. Larry and his family have a deep concern for troubled children. Larry's heart is truly geared for helping kids who need help! This is a very special family in a beautiful place! They are talking to youth group leaders about bringing up their groups for fun and great experiences in the area in the summer. God's nature is healing and bringing up children that might not have experienced the beautiful out of doors will truly thrive from the experience.

Another great business is Brick Oven Pizza across from the sledding hill on Beech. The brothers, Jimmy and Dave, make the biggest, tastiest pizzas ever and great desserts are there as well.

As I write about Beech Mountain, I want to thank the Beech Mountain Police Department for their service, as well as our Sheriff's Deputies and police officers throughout Avery County!

Next month we will step into spring and for many of us, it is welcome! I do love winter, but welcome spring and all its beauty as we slide into our next season! And please listen to WECR 1130AM, in Avery County M-F, 8:50 am and 12:50 pm for Adventures in Creation with Mrs. Nancy!

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



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Toxic World
By Monica Kurtz-Henley
Mitchell County

Our world is toxic. I believe everyone would agree with that. Even now as I write this, tears fill my eyes. People have no idea how much Jason suffers because he was overexposed as a child to fragrance and chemicals. As a result, he is so cautious to go anywhere. He gets so sick physically when he encounters fragrance or chemicals. His head hurts so bad, that I have seen him hit it against a wall many times, just to get relief. It is heart-wrenching to watch. He wants to feel good. He wants to go places. And even if he was able to hide how bad he feels, I know and can see it. He gets really pale, and I know he's sick, many times before he even tells me. Can you imagine not being able to go to the store, because of so many fragrances and chemicals? Let's face it, our world is toxic! If you walk down the aisle where laundry detergents and dryer sheets are found, the smell is almost overwhelming! He would love to go to local revivals and camp meetings, but he can't because of the vast array of fragrances.



We almost feel guilty, when we ask family and friends, students and customers to please not wear any fragrance. But we shouldn't feel guilty. It is not our fault. It is not Jason's fault. He wants to be well. Can you imagine what his life... our life... is like? He gets exposed, feels bad for days, then begins to feel better. He gets exposed again, feels bad for days or weeks, then feels better. It is a cycle, and he gets very discouraged. We are currently going to a nutritionist/homeopathic doctor, who treats with homeopathic supplements and herbal remedies. This is the only relief he has had, and it is a true blessing! But it can get expensive when he must keep returning after exposures.

The whole truth is fragrances and chemicals are affecting all of us, even if we are not to the point that Jason experiences. This is the reason for this article. Fragrances and chemicals are so hazardous to our health, even deadly. We are slowly poisoning ourselves. All you have to do is research the word "fragrance" or "fragrance-free", and you can read about all of the ingredients found in products (from cosmetics, hair products and body products to cleaning chemicals and laundry products, scented candles, air fresheners, as well as pesticides). It is very eye-opening! And very scary!

I write this out of a broken heart and with a heart full of concern for all of you. We want to raise awareness of this very serious danger and share it with all our loved ones.

~It is like sharing the good news of JESUS CHRIST. It is "tough" and even, "intimidating" sometimes to share it but ultimately, it is for good!

*Please, please do some research for yourself. EWG is a website that will rate products according to how hazardous they are (cancer-causing, allergic reactions, etc.). Also, look at the "invisible disabilities" website, which has a lot of helpful information.

This is showing up more and more in many people's lives. Jason's aunt, who works for a major insurance company in Florida, told us of the company's decision to make the whole office building fragrance-free! Also, I have heard of more businesses learning to clean with cleaning vinegar, which can be purchased at local grocery stores for only \$2!

***I cannot imagine how it breaks The LORD's heart to watch as His creation slowly destroys themselves. ***

If you have any questions, please text Jason at 828-385-0897 or me at 828-765-8789. Also, check out Women's Nutritional Health Center in Johnson City, Tennessee. Their website is womensnutritionalhealthcenter.com. Their number is 423-202-6216. The first visit is free. This is for men and women and children.

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

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NCBAM Senior Adult Ministry
State Leadership Conference
By Carol Layton

NCBAM's 2020 Senior Adult Ministry State Leadership Conference will focus on the challenges and rewards of waiting on the Lord during difficult seasons of life. The conference will take place on May 5, 2020, at Bay Leaf Baptist Church in Raleigh.

The 9 am-3:30 pm event features a keynote address by Rev. Michael Barrett ("The Waiting Room Experience") and 12 breakout options focusing on holistic strategies for gaining peace, wisdom, and renewal during seasons of waiting.

Michael Barrett will present "The Waiting Room Experience" referencing Isaiah 40:31 and Psalm 27:14. Michael retired from Pleasant Garden Baptist Church after pastoring for thirty years and now serves the Piedmont Baptist Association. He attended Gardner-Webb University and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has served as a Trustee with the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Participants will be able to choose four breakout sessions to attend. Topics will cover issues such as legacy, faith, bearing fruit while aging, fall prevention, hospice care, long term care options, social isolation and loneliness, estate planning, and downsizing.

NCBAM is accepting a limited number of sponsorship opportunities for the event. The State Leadership Conference provides an excellent opportunity to connect with senior adults, senior adult ministers, and professionals within North Carolina's aging network. With the mission to help adults 65+ maintain their independence, NCBAM develops innovative programs and services and boasts a wide range of partners to help meet the spiritual, emotional, and physical needs of aging adults. Learn more at ncbam.org/aaim or by calling 877.506.2226

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



Being Grateful is Tough Some Days
By Patti Jensen
Mitchell County



Sometimes being grateful is just tough to do. I have to be honest, I actually forget sometimes to be grateful. So many days I get up out of my warm bed, get into my hot shower, put on my clean clothes, eat a hot breakfast, and drive to work in a car I own to a job that I enjoy. All of that in one hour or less and many mornings I have gone without even thinking about how grateful I should be.

I am trying to do better though. Now, before I even get out of bed, I say "Thank you Lord for this day and all that you have planned for me." Some days I go on to continually thank Him throughout the day for all the big and little things He does for me. Some days it may be the only breath of gratitude I give until I go to bed at night. But He knows my heart (something else to be grateful for) so I hope He knows I am trying.

It should come easy though, right? I mean, aren't we really the most blessed people we know? We...Christians. He gave us the greatest, most unselfish gift...His Son...and all that came with that gift...salvation, mercy, grace, healing, and forgiveness. How many times a day do we truly kneel our hearts and thank God for THAT gift much less our material gifts and blessings? I'd guess not many.

I am ashamed of my lack of gratitude. I am ashamed that I just get so busy enjoying all my blessings that I forget to be grateful. I have seen and been given so many blessings in my life...my children, my grandchild, my husband's miracle recovery from leukemia, my children's health, a praying mother and so many, many, many other things.

I saw a quote some time ago that said..."What if you woke up today with only the things you thanked God for yesterday?"

Boy, wouldn't that wake us up to gratitude?

And our lack of it?


"Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! For He satisfies the longing soul and fills the hungry soul with goodness." Psalm 107:8-9,

Could I even list the many blessings that God has given me in my life? In one day? In one month? In a lifetime? I think I might start a daily gratitude list just to amaze myself daily of His goodness~ Do you have a daily gratitude journal? I would love to hear about it! Reach out to me on Instagram @a.grateful.girl or Facebook @AGratefulGirl.

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

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Grand View Baptist Church

Christian Justification

By Glenda Ward
McDowell County



Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Romans 5:1

We through the Spirit gain the hope of righteousness by faith. But faith worketh by love – the Law of Christ. 1- The Spirit gives victory over sin. 2- The Spirit is against the flesh. These two are contrary one to the other. If you are led by the Spirit you are not under the law. Your works in the flesh make clear or prove ... that of your characteristics displayed in life. Christian character is the possession and proving of God's grace produced by the Holy Spirit. Together they present a moral portrait of Christ. This character is possible because of the believer's vital union with Christ (John 15:5; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13) and is wholly the fruit of the Spirit. In a Christian's life, the Spirit is unified in purpose and direction; which, in contrast with the life in the flesh we find inner conflicts and frustrations. We that are in Christ have crucified our affections and lusts of the flesh to the Cross! If we live in the Spirit, we will also walk in the Spirit, not having a desire – worthless and empty of God's glory, provoking one another. If we are overtaken in sin, those which are spiritual in Christ are to restore such a one in the spirit of being submissive to God, giving correction, leadership, and guidance. Everyone is to prove his own work and rejoice in himself alone, and not in another in sin.

Characteristics displayed in the life of a Christian should be justified by our faith and faith alone. Christian Justification is to vindicate or to set right, a judicial act of God based upon Christ's completed work. It is God's divine declaration of "not guilty" in that of a sinner. The requirements of justification are all fully met in Jesus. It is important to know the act of justification by God does not make one righteous but declares one righteous based upon the complete righteousness of Christ. Justification is credited upon the completed work of Jesus. *"For he hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him"* (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Reference Psalms 32:1-2; Romans 4:7-8. By the one sacrifice of Himself, the Lord has made us perfect forever. *"Nothing can be put to it, nor anything was taken from it."* (Ecclesiastes 3:14). Belief and faith in Jesus is the intervening thing through which Justification is founded. God sent forth His Son Jesus as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in His blood. (Romans 3:25) Faith is not something wholly dependent upon us, but our faith also comes from God. It is a gift from God. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

The immediate benefit of justification is the remission of sin, with the sinner being declared righteous. This is a declaration for God that the believing sinner is now justified, a legal decree of "not guilty." God sees us all through the perfect sacrifice of Jesus. We appear to Him as if we had never sinned. Being justified we have peace with God and with our own conscience. (Romans 5:1) Not only in God's eyes are we justified and free from condemnation but we are ushered into God's eternal Kingdom, as righteous people. Read God's promise in Romans 8:16-17. Justification brings eternal life for all who believe. It marks the beginning of the fullness of life spoken of in Scripture. A life is unhampered with guilt, condemnation, fear or dread. It's a life in which we can enjoy God's blessings and His presence forever.

Justification by faith is what separates Biblical Christianity from any other belief system. Only in true, Biblical Christianity is a person saved as a result of grace through faith. Justification is apart from self-works. Justification is a complete work of God and is instant. Knowledge of justification and of grace motivates good works and spiritual growth in the receiver. Justification leads to sanctification – an ongoing process of growth in which we become more Christ-like (the act of "being saved"). Sanctification occurs after justification: and justification being a finished work of God means that Christians have an assurance of their salvation. Without an understanding of justification by faith alone, we cannot truly perceive the glorious gift of God's grace. Our justification by faith helps us maintain pure devotion to Christ. Holding to the promise of justification by faith; it is only by God's grace, in response to our faith, that God has credited to us the Holiness of His Son. *"The just shall live by faith"* (Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38).

Justification is the legal standing that results from the process of "being justified". Being justified from sin is not to say that one is innocent of the sin; but rather the offender has been exempted from the penalty that one justly deserves. So, the death passed upon all men has been set aside of those who have been justified, consistent with the righteous Judge's system of justice (Roman's 5:12). *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord"* (Romans 6:23). The sinless "Lamb of God" takes the penalty for the sinful individual who submits to the conditions imposed by the Judge, God, toward those individuals who earnestly seek forgiveness for their sin. Justification is the equivalent of forgiveness as well as the "in Christ" relationship.

Out of a genuine faith flows submission to God in response to His sacred leadership and guidance. To sinner's "faith" is essential to God's justification. Valid faith yields obedience and obedience is gained from faith. Faith apart from submission to God is simply non-faith. He who is dead to sin is justified. Dying to sin is a resolution to no longer live the unrestrained life in sin but submits to God's Will accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Becoming justified is the process of being *"obedient from the heart"*, being *"delivered"* and *"made free from sin"*. (Romans 6:17-18). *"Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"* (Acts 2:21). Believing and calling upon the name of the Lord are the equivalents of obeying the gospel. Faith obeys! Faith is the guiding principle of obedience. But faith does not justify without that submission to Jesus Christ and God's Will.

The goal of justification is "peace with God". And that justification and peace with God are only available through the Lord Jesus Christ. Peace comes from God but comes by means of the sacrificial mission of Jesus Christ.

Lord Jesus Christ: (a) He is "Lord", the one who exercises authority. (b) He is Jesus (Savior), His mission was to seek and save the lost. (c) He is the promised "Messiah", the one who fulfills hundreds of Old Testament prophecies.

Let's rejoice in the "glory of God" and the eventual joy of being in the very presence of the Lord God Himself.

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



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Regional News

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

Ombudsman Program - Volunteers needed to advocate, protect the rights of long-term care residents Boone, NC (June 26, 2019) - The High-Country Area Agency on Aging Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program is calling for volunteers in Avery, Mitchell, and Yancey Counties. Volunteer ombudsmen, also known as Community Advisory Committee's (CAC) serve as advocates for residents living in nursing homes and assisted living facilities.

CAC members are trained, certified volunteers who are assigned to a local long-term care facility to advocate for residents' rights.

To learn more about becoming a volunteer ombudsman or to request an application, call Stevie John at (828) 265-5434 Ext. 126 or visit the High-Country Area Agency on Aging website at www.highcountryaging.org.

Bible Study Fellowship - Acts and Letters of the Apostles

In The Acts and Letters of the Apostles study, we see evidence of God's Unstoppable Spirit, the growth of His Unstoppable Church, and the Unstoppable witness of His people. Join us for this incredible study. Women Begin Thursday, September 12 - May 7, 2020

Women's Day group meet @ First Presbyterian Church, Spruce Pine 10 am-11:30 am Mitchell County Women's Evening group meet @ Grassy Creek Baptist Church, Spruce Pine 5:45 pm-7:15 pm Mitchell County

Men's Begin Tuesday, September 10, Men meet @ Higgins Methodist Church, Burnsville 6:55 pm-8:25 pm - Yancey County Contact: Nancy Ball (843)597-1196 (Day Women) - Angie Woody (828)467-3830 (Evening Women)

Avery County

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

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

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

Burke County

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

Hurricane Relief - We have an exciting mission opportunity for folks in our Association. There are many people in the eastern part of our state who are still recovering from hurricane devastation and we are planning to take a team of men and women February 24-27 to do clean-up and some construction in Rose Hill, NC. The cost is \$10 per person per night which covers all supplies, lodging, and food. If interested, please call our CRBA office at 828-437-0137 for more information and to register.

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

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

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

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

Great Hope Seventh-Day Adventist Church - Reversing Diabetes seminar is about to begin again for those who want to reverse their diabetes and for those who want to prevent diabetes. Proven scientific methods are shared in a group setting.

The seminar begins Monday, January 27 and continues on Monday evenings, 6:00 pm through March 2. Free admission, but seating is limited so please pre-register to secure your seat by calling Sharryn at 828-334-0084. Great Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church, 2907 US Hwy 70 E, Morganton (Drexel, across from Foothills Thrift Store). You will love feeling healthier!

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

God's Closet - Morganton Free Shop Day! Sunday, February 23, 2020, from 2:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m., at the Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church, 2187 Jamestown Road, Morganton, N.C. There will be clothes for children ages 0 - 18 years old. \$1.00 Entrance Fee and then all the clothing is FREE and FREE childcare while you shop! For more information please Like us on Facebook [@MorgantonSeventhday-AdventistChurch](https://www.facebook.com/MorgantonSeventhday-AdventistChurch) and [@GodsClosetMorganton](https://www.facebook.com/GodsClosetMorganton)

Diabetes / Health Informational Seminar with Dr. Phil Collins - Learn ways to improve your health and prevent or manage diabetes. This three-part series will take place Friday, February 28th - Saturday, February 29th., at the Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church, 2187 Jamestown Road, Morganton, N.C. First Session - Friday, February 28th., at 7:00 p.m.; Second Session - Saturday, February 29th., at 10:45 a.m.; Fellowship Lunch; Third Session - Saturday, February 29th., at 3:00 p.m.

Mount Home Baptist Church - We are having the Collingsworth Family in our church for a concert on Sunday evening, February 23 at 6:00 pm. Mt. Home Baptist Church, 2278 Mt. Home Church Rd., Morganton, NC 28655, Tel: (828)437-0593.

Valdese Events

Concerts at the Rock presents: Nu Blu with Merle Monroe - Feb. 15, 2020, 7:30 p.m. - 10 p.m.

Old Rock School Auditorium 400 Main Street West Valdese, NC 28690. Tickets \$20 per person

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

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

McDowell County

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

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

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

Mitchell County

Give Kids A Smile Event - February 7

Ever have a toothache so painful it was hard to sleep? Many North Carolina children face this reality each day and can't smile, pay attention in school or even sleep because of tooth decay. February is the kickoff of the national ADA Foundation's Give Kids A Smile® program.

ECU School of Dental Medicine in Spruce Pine will be hosting a Give Kids A Smile event on February 7, 2020 at their office in Spruce Pine for children ages 1-2nd grade. Services provided include an exam, cleaning, X-rays and a treatment plan. All services are free on this day. C

Children do need to be pre-registered for our Give Kids A Smile event. Please contact the ECU School of Dental Medicine at 828-765-0110 to pre-register or for more info. A parent/guardian will have to be present. Together, we can give kids a smile!

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

Mayland Small Business Center

28705 Business Breakfast: 2020 Business Growth Planning (1.5 Hours) NEW! The 28705 Business Breakfast is a great place to gain valuable local information, build networking, discuss entrepreneurship, and grab a light breakfast. Sponsored by the Mitchell County EDC, the Town of Bakersville, the Mitchell Chamber of Commerce, and the Mayland Small Business Center, the free breakfast workshops

place a focus on providing applicable information and business networking that will link entrepreneurs and spur local growth. Starting January 9, meetings will be on the second Thursday of each month through October. In this first meeting of 2020, Allen Cook, Director of the Mayland Small Business Center will discuss key areas that affect local business growth. Allen will also be asking for input from attendees on areas where local businesses need help in 2020. 2020 breakfast workshop topics will be built from your input. Networking and the light breakfast will start at 7:30 am with the workshop beginning promptly at 8:00 am. The meetings are always finished up by 9:30 am. Everyone is welcome at the business breakfast so make plans to attend.

1/9, TH, 8:00-9:30 a.m. Fee Waived Instructor: Cook Mitchell County Administration Building, Bakersville 828.766.1295
Top 25 FREE Apps for Small Businesses (2 Hours) NEW! Save time, increase mobility and grow productivity with these 25 business-related apps for your tablet or smartphone. SBC Director, Allen Cook, will provide insight and features of each app as it relates to specific business tasks. This is a great workshop for those who like to conduct business via their smartphone. 1/16, TH, 1:30-3:30 p.m. Fee Waived Instructor: Cook Avery 828.766.1295

Mayland SBC Entrepreneurship Certificate:

Attend one class or all six! In this series, learn how to be a successful entrepreneur. SBC business professionals and guest presenters will increase your business savvy by providing current and applicable information. Upon completion of all six classes, participants will receive a certificate from the Mayland Small Business Center which is a great document to include in a business plan. Completion of the Mayland Small Business Center Entrepreneurship Certificate is a requirement to apply for Downtown Entrepreneurial Assistance Grants in Spruce Pine and Burnsville. CLASS THREE: Basics of Bookkeeping (2.5 Hours) - This class will discuss common bookkeeping methods used for small businesses as well as popular online bookkeeping platforms. Attendees will gain a workable knowledge of how to properly record and archive transactions. The seminar will also discuss how financial statements factor into small business bookkeeping. 2/4, T, 1:30-4:00 p.m. Fee Waived Instructor: Hammering Yancey 828.766.1295
CLASS FOUR: Your Small Business Taxes (2.5 Hours)- Attendees will become familiar with the common local, state, and Federal tax requirements typical to local small businesses. The seminar will also discuss tax planning and strategy for entrepreneurs. The class will be taught by a CPA. 2/6, TH, 1:30-4:00 p.m. Fee Waived Instructor: Hammering Yancey 828.766.1295
CLASS FIVE: 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, attendees will explore a variety of market research tools that provide critical information about the competition, industry, and customers. 2/11, T, 1:30-4:00 p.m. Fee Waived Instructor: Drum-Dickson Yancey 828.766.1295
CLASS SIX: Marketing your Business (2.5 Hours) - This class will discuss common marketing practices for local entrepreneurs. Discover how to most effectively and efficiently use the many marketing tools available. Gain insights to understand and reach your customer, analyze your industry and business environment and differentiate between branding, advertising, and grassroots marketing techniques. Explore the components of an effective marketing plan in this comprehensive seminar. 2/13, TH, 1:30-4:00 p.m. Fee Waived Instructor: Brossman Yancey 828.766.1295

Mitchell County Chamber – Candidate Forum, Mitchell County 2020 March Primary Candidates, Buladean Community Foundation Center, February 10, 2020. 6:30 pm to 9:00 pm, Moderator: Brandon Roberts. Hosted by the Buladean Community Foundation Board.

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

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

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

YaYa Village - We are announcing the Opening of YaYa Village Commercial-Share Kitchen!
We've realized there's a gap that needs to be filled between the production of local food and their consumption. That's why we started YaYa Village Commercial Shared-Use Kitchen so that we could provide a certified area at a reasonable cost for locals trying to sell their products. This way we strive to help community entrepreneurs with their part-time business.
So, if you have a product you want to market and sell (like jams, jellies, baked goods, etc.) or if you need a commercial kitchen for catering, having a private Pop Up dinner, hosting a class or whatever you're imagining, we hope our Shared Use Kitchen can provide you with a solution.
Come visit our space, get an application and let us talk to see what is that you

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

Yancey County

Feed-A-Child Yancey County - Higgins fills bags on the second Tuesday of each month. We have been fortunate to have enough volunteers to fill the bags so far. They are going to continue the program this summer through the churches in the county that have Wednesday night meals. If you have any questions about Feed-A-Child they can be directed to Bill & Nancy Watkins at 828-675-5367.

Burnsville Wedding Expo - February 15 @ 11:00 am - 3:00 pm - \$5
The Burnsville Wedding Expo invites brides-to-be, and their fiances, family and friends, to meet local vendors and explore area options for WNC weddings.
A favorite expo tradition returns with brides digging through a tiered cake to find a wedding band hidden inside. The lucky participant who uncovers the ring gets to keep it.
The expo showcases approximately 35 vendors including venues, planners, dress shops, menswear retailers, florists, stationers, caterers, jewelers, photographers, videographers, DJs, transportation companies and more.
Although many aspects of the wedding planning process are carried out through emails and phone calls, the expo provides face-to-face interaction. With an event as highly personalized as a wedding, matching personalities can be as important as comparing budgets and calendars. Attendees can talk with vendors, sample their products and ask questions.

Burnsville and the surrounding Blue Ridge Mountains are a popular spot for wedding ceremonies and receptions for local residents and those planning destination weddings. Downtown Burnsville offers a couple of venue options right on Town Square, including Nu Wray Inn and Burnsville Town Center.

Pruning Workshop
by N.C. Cooperative Extension, Yancey County
Date And Time - Sat, February 22, 2020 - 1:00 PM – 3:30 PM EST
311 Arbuckle Road, Burnsville, NC 28714

Vegetable Fermentation Workshop
Thursday, February 6, 2020 at 5:30 PM – 7:30 PM
41 Charlie Brown Rd. Burnsville, NC 28714
Thursday, Feb 6 5:30-7:30 PM

Fermenting vegetables is a fun and delicious way to increase digestibility and nutrition of vegetables while preserving the garden's harvest for later enjoyment! Join Olivia Sanders of Soil Shine Farm & Ferments to learn the ins and outs of fermenting your own vegetables. The class will be hands-on and you'll get to take home a quart of sauerkraut-to-be. The price includes materials for a quart of organic sauerkraut, and there will be additional equipment and books for sale. This class makes a great gift or a way to commit to your New Year's resolution of eating healthier!
Olivia Sanders has been a fan of fermentation in various forms since college, when she had access to endless vegetables from her college's farm and couldn't eat any more salads. For her, fermentation and gardening have always gone hand in hand as ways to improve your health and that of the land. She and her partner founded Soil Shine Farm & Ferments, a small farm and fermenting business located in Celo, NC, in the spring of 2019. They sell a wide variety of homegrown, organic fermented products at the Yancey County Farmers Market and many small stores in Yancey and Mitchell County. Follow them on Facebook and Instagram for updates from the garden and kitchen. Soil Shine Farm & Ferments
Cost is \$20. Register online here: <https://www.locallygoodfarm.com/products/vegetable-fermentation-with-olivia-sanders-of-soil-shine-farm>

NOTES

Justification

By David Valls
Mitchell County

This month, we will be continuing our series of articles about the purposes of salvation. This article will focus on justification. Justification is the act of being declared righteous in the sight of God, or to be made acceptable in his sight. Christ places His righteousness on our account the moment we are saved. Many people have been persuaded that when we stand before God, the goodwill outweighs the bad and that will make them acceptable in His sight. While this may be a convenient theology, nothing could be further from the truth! My friends, the reality is our good is never good enough and our bad is worse than we think. The Bible says there is none righteous, no not one. Our righteousness amounts to filthy rags when compared with the righteousness of God. If Adam could not save himself, don't think that we can be spared from the curse of sin apart from justification. The only way we will be made acceptable, is if the blood has been applied to our soul. Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins. Jesus paid a debt He didn't owe. He took God's wrath for our sins upon Himself and is not guilty, He bore our sins in His own body and He died in our place. It does not make us not guilty; it simply means He does not hold the guilt to our account. He paid the balance for our sins. He put it on His account and its paid in full! We read in the Bible the parable of the servant who owed a great debt to his master. He begged forgiveness and his master had compassion on him and forgave his debt. That my friends is a justification! That's the love and compassion our Savior has for us. If we could have achieved this on our own, Jesus would have never had to die...but we can't save ourselves! The Bible says for by grace you are saved and through faith and not of yourselves, it is the gift of God not of works lest any man should boast. We can take nothing from nor could we add anything to it. We are saved not by our own works but by the redemptive work of Christ. If we could justify ourselves that would take the emphasis of our justification off of Christ and place it on us. It was God's design that the emphasis always is on Christ. As the old song says. "On Christ the solid rock I stand all other ground is sinking sand." Let us also remember if we cannot forgive others, we will not be forgiven. The servant that had his debt forgiven had someone who owed him a debt and yet he failed to demonstrate the same forgiveness he had received. In the end, he himself was not forgiven because his master saw that he had no compassion. God commended His love toward us by sending His only begotten son to take our place and forgive our transgressions. What a wonderful Savior we serve! May we ever praise His HOLY name!

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



NC General Assembly Must Do More to Protect Churches from Mass Shooters

By Rev. Mark Creech



After a gunman opened fire in the West Freeway Church of Christ during a worship service last month, the Associated Press noted that 2019 was "one of the worst years in recent history for attacks on religious groups or places of worship."

According to the Violence Project Database, which is funded by the National Institute of Justice, "mass shootings in places of worship are becoming more frequent, starting in the mid-2000s, and the number of shootings motivated by religious hate has increased most dramatically in the last five years."

But the shooting that took place at the West Freeway Church of Christ in White Settlement, Texas, shows parishioners' understanding of Jesus' command to "turn the other cheek," doesn't mean they should give up their right to self-defense. The church in White Settlement had a security team that swiftly took down the assailant. The gunman killed two, but it could have been a much deadlier scenario.

Like West Freeway Church of Christ in the Lone Star State, many churches across the Tar Heel state have also developed voluntary security teams that have concealed carry permits and are "packing heat." By the time the parishioners of these houses of worship start with the opening prayer, the policies and plans of their security teams are already working.

North Carolina law allows firearms in churches unless the church prohibits them. Nevertheless, the state forbids guns in schools. So, what happens, in this day of escalating church shootings, if your church is meeting in a school building as many currently do across the state? It could only mean parishioners would be entirely vulnerable for some mass shooter motivated by ethno-religious, anti-Christian hate, or some other ungodly reason. God forbid.

This gap in protection for churchgoers became the concern of former Rep. Rena Turner (R-Iredell) last year. She sought to address the problem in HB 110-Protect Religious Meeting Places. Turner's bill would have authorized persons with a concealed handgun permit to carry a concealed handgun, under certain conditions, on education property that doubles as a school and a place of worship. The gun, however, could only be taken on educational property outside of school operating hours.

The legislation was more than reasonable. It passed the North Carolina House, but when it got to the Senate Rules Committee, it was never taken up and died a quiet death. Thus, churches or church groups in North Carolina meeting in schools today are left as defenseless as shooting fish in a barrel.

In the same year when there was a mass stabbing of five people at a Rabbi's house in New York state, a mass shooting at a Kosher grocery store in New Jersey which killed three, and four people shot with one fatality at the Chabad of Poway synagogue in Poway, and now a church in White Settlement, all in 2019, it seems nothing less than derelict for North Carolina lawmakers to have ignored Turner's legislation.

Unfortunately, Turner is no longer around to champion the measure. She decided to retire in June and allow Rep. Jeffrey C. McNeely, who was appointed to fill her seat to get some experience before deciding to run for it. Moreover, the bill is no longer eligible and can't be considered in its current form. It would have to be filed again, and that's precisely what needs to happen as quickly as possible.

Turner says such legislation wouldn't have any problems getting through the state House. She even believes there is more than enough support for it by state Senate members. The problem seems to be that it gets stalled in the Senate Rules Committee.

Turner said she believes public sentiment about guns and gun control also makes the matter more urgent. "I think now might be the best time with all this stuff going on in Virginia," she told the Christian Action League of North Carolina, "People are very aware of their Second Amendment rights."

Few people are likely to remember that in December of 2007, a gunman killed one person and wounded four others when he started shooting the good people of New Life Church in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Like the situation at West Freeway Church of Christ in White Settlement, Texas, a church security officer shot the gunman and kept him from killing others. He was rightly hailed as a courageous hero who saved many lives that day.

The circumstances in both of these situations prove that whenever a lone gunman aims the barrel of his weapon at a church full of people with the presumed intent to kill, mass murders are less likely to happen if people in the congregation are also carrying weapons and prepared to act.

These are wicked and dark times. Churches without security teams need to take steps to protect their members.

The North Carolina General Assembly needs to take steps to allow churches that meet in schools to protect themselves.

The primary purpose of any church should be to lead people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. But if someone insists on coming into a worship service flashing a gun about with the seeming intent to kill indiscriminately, to take the life of innocent people, women, children, and the elderly, then there is no sin in immediately sending that person to meet their Maker.

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



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By Tracy Jessup

"Ascribe to the Lord, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory of his name; worship the Lord in holy splendor...The Lord sits enthroned over the flood; the Lord sits enthroned as king forever. May the Lord give strength to his people! May the Lord bless his people with peace!" --- Psalm 29:1-2, 11

- Although I am fascinated by physics, geology, chemistry, biology, ecology, astronomy and other scientific disciplines, the truth remains that science never was my best subject. However, I did enjoy labs in which my classmates and I utilized microscopes. It was mesmerizing to be able to observe very small objects that appear larger than they really are.

In the summer of 2017, I traveled with my son to Santa Monica, California, to help him get settled in before he began a six-week internship with award-winning composer Hans Zimmer and Remote Control Productions. While there, we visited the Griffith Observatory, “one of the premier public observatories in the world. One of the principal reasons is the presence and regular availability of high-quality public telescopes. Griffith J. Griffith wanted the public to have the opportunity to look through a telescope, which he felt might broaden the human perspective. Mounted in the copper-clad domes on either end of the building, the Zeiss and solar telescopes are free to the public every day and night the sky is clear” (griffithobservatory.org).

Unlike microscopes, which are used to examine very small objects such as unicellular organisms, telescopes are used to observe large objects in space. When

the Psalmist writes, "Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength."

Ascribe to the Lord the glory of his name..." he is calling us to remember the greatness of our God and to help others see God's greatness as well.

The sights and sounds we witness in creation are not merely natural wonders; they declare the glory and power of God. *"The voice of the Lord*

God. The voice of the Lord is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the Lord, over mighty waters. The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars. The voice of the Lord flashes forth flames of fire. The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness... The voice of the Lord causes the oaks to whirl and strips the forest bare; and in his temple all say, "Glory!" (vv. 3-9).

The first and only mention of humanity comes at the end of Psalm 29. "*May the Lord give strength to his people! May the Lord bless his people with peace!*" (v. 11). In light of God's power and sovereignty, we humbly ask for the blessings of God's strength and peace.

Prayer: Lord, as we begin this new year, we commit ourselves to remembering your greatness and to helping others see how great you are.

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



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YOUR GOVERNMENT PAGES

US House of Representatives NC District 11

Meadows, Khanna Introduce Bipartisan Construction Consensus Procurement Improvement Act



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

WASHINGTON, D.C. - This week, Rep. Mark Meadows (R-NC) and Rep. Ro Khanna (D-CA) introduced the bipartisan Construction Consensus Procurement Improvement Act – a bill to promote competition and quality in federally-funded construction projects.

The bill would prohibit federal agencies from using a reverse auction in which sellers continuously lower prices during bids for federal construction contracts. Under existing processes, the lowest bidder is in most cases awarded the construction contract in question. While this procedure generally results in a low price for the item up front, the quality of the product, delivery terms, and other important features may be lacking, and promised cost savings often do not materialize, meaning reverse auctions are not appropriate for design-build contracts that require design concepts, key personnel, and technical solutions. The current process could compromise quality or require a new bidding process down the road, eliminating initial savings. The existing process also risks boxing out small businesses who want to competitively bid on federal contracts.

A similar prohibition on the use of reverse auctions has already been implemented for construction contracts issued by the US Army Corps of Engineers, after they found their use of reverse auctions did not reduce costs in practice and that they are ill-suited to the variability and unpredictability that comes with construction projects. It is time to take this change to the rest of the federal government.

Rep. Meadows released the following statement:

"I'm proud to help introduce this bill to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of federal government construction contracts. This is a simple change, at no cost to the federal government, which will protect taxpayer dollars and put federal funds to better use – something members of both parties can support. I want to thank my friend, Congressman Ro Khanna, for his willingness to work with me on this issue in a bipartisan way."

Rep. Khanna added the following:

"I'm proud to reach across the aisle and work with Rep. Meadows as we work to end reverse auctions for construction contracts with the federal government. American taxpayers' money shouldn't be spent on low-quality work. This bipartisan legislation passed the Oversight Committee last Congress, and under the leadership of Senators Portman and Hirono, already passed the Senate this Congress. I look forward to working with my colleagues as we seize on this momentum to ensure our critical legislation becomes law."

NC Senate District 47



Sen. Ralph Hise
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919-733-3460

Senate Republicans returned to Raleigh on January 14th in hopes of overriding Gov. Roy Cooper's June 28th veto of the state budget. However, Senate Democrats, who had voted for this budget in June, kowtowed to the governor and did not join their Republican colleagues in overriding the veto, essentially blocking billions of dollars for teacher raises, school capital needs, health care for people with developmental disabilities, and priority local projects across the state.

The governor has dug in his heels for many months and said he would not approve any budget that did not include Medicaid expansion. It is past time, though, for the governor and Democrats in the legislature to take a hard, honest look at the negative impact Medicaid expansion is having in other states and ask themselves if that is a scenario they would choose for North Carolina.

Bloomberg News reported in an article published January 21, 2020, on the multi-billion-dollar budget gaps created after New York expanded its Medicaid program. Following are excerpts from the article, titled "New York's Medicaid Budget Is Bleeding; Some Want Cash Infusion."

"New York is looking to overhaul its Medicaid program, which could mean cuts to hospitals, doctors, nursing homes, and other providers as the state aims to fill a projected \$6.1 billion budget gap."

"The cost of the safety net health-care program is a large portion of the deficit..."

"Reimbursement cuts have 'the potential to jeopardize the stability of the marketplace,' Eric Linzer, president, and CEO of the New York Health Plan Association said. The 29 plans his group represents have been operating on thin margins for the past few years, he said."

"To help fill the current hole, the state plans to delay \$2.2 billion in Medicaid payments into the fiscal year 2021 and make the delays permanent, effectively pushing debt into the future in perpetuity, according to the state's mid-year budget report."

"The state has yet to release details on how it plans to close the remaining approximately \$1.7 billion gap before the current fiscal year ends, other than saying it will enact cost-saving measures. Savings may include reductions to rates paid to providers and health plans, as well as discretionary payments, according to the budget office."

There are multiple reasons not to expand Medicaid, but one glaring irony in Gov. Cooper's ultimatum for Medicaid expansion is his veto of the Medicaid transformation funding bill which would have provided more than \$483 million for the transition to a managed care model for the state's Medicaid program. Medicaid transformation was a multi-year, bipartisan effort to lay the groundwork and develop the plans for a new system that would control the growth and costs of Medicaid and improve the health of recipients. The governor hasn't really explained how or why he would expand Medicaid in our state when he is not willing to fix the existing broken system currently in place – one that is bad for doctors and bad for patients. It is my hope that the governor and Democrats in the legislature will give serious thought to what is best for our state and not continue the drumbeat for a policy that is shown to be detrimental when implemented elsewhere. North Carolina does not need Medicaid expansion.

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

NC House District 118



Rep. Michele D. Presnell
Michele.Presnell@ncleg.net
919-733-5732

Session has adjourned to return on April 28 for the Short Session. Joint Interim Committees are now being appointed and a few will begin to meet next week or the following week. Rep. Presnell was appointed to the JT. Legislative Economic and Global Engagement Oversight Committee and as Vice-Chair on the JT Legislative Transportation Oversight Committee. These two committees are working on their schedules for upcoming meetings.



YOUR GOVERNMENT PAGES

NC House District 86

Legislation Addresses DOT Overspending

You may have heard that the North Carolina Department of Transportation projects slowed down or were delayed because of the department's overspending by hundreds of millions of dollars. A report released by McKinsey & Company, an international consulting firm, confirmed the overspending. Overspending on construction was one of two main problems found. In connection with construction overspending, the largest source of overspending was found by the consultants to be a result of poor control and performance by the department. Regarding maintenance overspending, which was found by the report to be the second significant cause, the report concluded that maintenance overspending came from the department's poor management of its operations.

Due to the problems found by the report, the legislature passed a bill, signed by the Governor, providing additional funding so that the Department of Transportation could continue with halted and planned projects. However, included with the legislation were new accountability measures that will hopefully prevent similar DOT overspending in the future. Some of those provisions include:

- Requires DOT to deduct proportionately from all highway fund accounts when DOT's storm expenses are higher than their budgeted projection (DOT has under-budgeted for disasters all-decade)
- Requires DOT to seek federal disaster reimbursements as quickly as possible
- Requires more cash balance reporting, including a weekly cash worksheet similar to what the State Controller produces for all other state funds; and
- Requires the State Auditor to audit DOT

Hopefully, this legislation and the new accountability features will help DOT avoid continued overspending so that poor management and operations will not continue to negatively impact road work by DOT in North Carolina.



Rep. Hugh Blackwell
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Senator Burr Applauds Department of Transportation's Proposed Rulemaking of Service Animals on Flights

Yesterday, the Department of Transportation announced its Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to amend the Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA) regulation of service animals on aircraft.

Senator Richard Burr (R-NC), who led efforts to strengthen the standards of service animals on aircraft, welcomed the Department of Transportation's announcement.

"When individuals are trying to bring any variety of animals on flights by fraudulently claiming disability needs, we have a problem," said Senator Burr. "It isn't fair to passengers, airlines, or those who do require properly trained service animals. It's time we enact commonsense regulations that protect the ability of individuals and veterans with disabilities to travel with their trained service animals. I've been working to create stricter guidelines for service animals on airlines, and I applaud the Department of Transportation for taking steps to ensure our nation's air transportation system is safer and more accessible."

Background:

On April 24, 2018, Senator Burr introduced legislation to better align the definition of a "service animal" under the Air Carriers Access Act (ACAA) with the definition under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), establish a criminal penalty for making misrepresentations about service animals, and require federal agencies to establish a standard of service animal behavior training for animals on aircraft.

During consideration of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Reauthorization Act in October 2018, Senator Burr negotiated the inclusion of an amendment to require the FAA to establish rulemaking to define the term "service animal" for air transportation and develop minimum standards for service and emotional support animals carried on airplanes.

As a result of this successful negotiation, the Department of Transportation yesterday announced it is seeking public comment on its Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on traveling by air with service animals. Specifically, the proposed rulemaking:

- Aligns the definition of a service animal with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) definition.
- It does not require airlines to recognize "emotional support animals" as "service animals." Airlines would be permitted to treat "emotional support animals," which do not have the proper training for qualified individuals with disabilities, as pets.
- It allows airlines to only transport dogs as service animals rather than accommodating miniature horses, peacocks, cats, rabbits, birds, and other service animals that airlines are currently required to transport.

NC Senate District 46



Sen. Warren Daniel
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919-715-7823

I hope your New Year is off to a great start. I don't know what your resolutions are this year, but I decided that I need to read the Bible more regularly, so I am now 29 days into the chronological plan to read the Bible through in a year. And guess what, Lydia and the girls are joining in. I have already learned new insights from the books of Genesis and Job and look forward to many more throughout the year.

In legislative news, last week the General Assembly entered into a single-day session to attempt to get a couple of things accomplished. The first was to pass a bill that would add \$2.4 million to a fund that provides college scholarships to the children of military combat veterans. The other items on the agenda involved attempting to override Governor Cooper's vetoes of the teacher pay raise bill and the 2019-21 budget. I have written much here and on my Facebook page about the millions of dollars allocated for school renovations, parks and the Western School of Science and Math that are in the budget that was vetoed by the Governor. Unfortunately, the Senate could not override the budget veto, because NOT ONE Democrat Senator would work across the aisle due to threats by the Governor. So, for now, a few important budget items that were passed by the General Assembly will continue to be unfunded.

In other news, judicial tyranny continues. You have probably heard about the egregious decision by an unelected federal Judge to halt Voter ID. The Legislature has not been allowed by Judge Biggs to be a party to the case, so we urged Attorney General Stein to seek a stay of Judge Biggs' order in time for the March primary. AG Stein says he intends to appeal but refuses to do so in time for the primary. It's a travesty that the votes of two million North Carolinians to add the Voter ID requirement to our state constitution were tossed aside by one unelected judge. 34 other states have voter ID and our law was modeled after other state provisions that have been upheld by the US Supreme Court.

In other important news this week, January 22nd was the anniversary of Roe v Wade. I believe life begins at conception and is sacred from then until natural death. One of the recent issues that still baffles me is how the NC House has not been able to override Gov. Cooper's veto of the Born Alive Survivors Protection Act, S359. Only three Democrats joined with Republicans to override the Governor's veto when there were six that originally voted for the bill. Since 2011, the General Assembly has passed several common-sense measures to protect life and to discourage abortions, such as: implementing a 3-day waiting period, banning the sale of fetal body parts and regulating filthy clinics. More should be done but it appears unlikely with a devoted pro-abortion Governor in Raleigh. It is a privilege to represent Avery, Burke, and Caldwell counties.

As always, if I can be of any assistance to you, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

God Bless America

“Something to Think About”
How We Should Come to Jesus

By Dennis Love
McDowell County

Mark 1:40 says; “And there came a leper to Jesus, beseeching Him, and kneeling down to Him, and saying to Him, if You will, You can make me clean.” Notice several things about this man who came to Jesus. First of all; He Came Earnestly—v40a Verse 40 says that this man came beseeching Him. Do you see this man coming to Jesus for cleansing? He’s coming to Jesus beseeching Him. In other words, he comes to Jesus pleading with Him. There was nothing more important in this man’s life than receiving healing from his leprosy. Would to God that more people could see the need for the healing of their souls as this man saw the need for the healing of his leprosy. Shouldn’t people be pleading with Jesus today to heal their souls, because if they don’t have their souls healed, they will spend eternity separated from God in a place of torment called Hell? But notice also that; He Came Reverently—v40b here in Mark we are told this man came kneeling. He is coming humbly before the Lord of glory. This is what moved Jesus into action. I cannot stress enough in this article the importance of coming to Jesus humbly and reverently. Jesus doesn’t try to stop this man from kneeling before Him, and He doesn’t stop this man from falling on his face before Him. If you really want to be blessed by Jesus, then show Jesus great honor. But notice also that; He Came to Believingly—v40c

I love what this diseased leper said to Jesus. He said, “If You will, You can make me clean.” This old boy truly believed that Jesus could do what no person could do, and that was to cleanse him from his leprosy. Notice also that; He Came Honestly—v40d Notice this old boy doesn’t ask Jesus to heal him. He says, “If You will, You can make me clean.” Do you see what he’s confessing to Jesus? He’s confessing that he’s unclean. He’s not trying to hide his condition. He’s simply being honest about his condition. When we come to meet with Jesus in His house, we need to be honest before Him. We need to say, “Lord, I know I have sinned and I know I’m not right with this person or that person, and I know there are some things in my life and in my heart that shouldn’t be there.” We need to just be honest with ourselves and with God because He already knows it all anyway. Now right here is how each of us should be coming to Jesus on an ongoing basis. We should be coming to Him earnestly—reverently—believingly—honestly. If we could begin applying these four things in our worship of Almighty God, it would radically change the way we worship, and it would radically change the outcome of our worship services. In my humble opinion, that’s really something to think about!

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



Be Motivated by Joy

By Josh Reed

In his posthumously published work Letters to Malcolm, C.S. Lewis wrote, “Joy is the serious business of heaven.”

Joy is experienced in virtually limitless ways. A child’s first memorable experience at the ocean. A senior adult’s conversation with a dear friend over tea. Laughing, singing, crying and shrieking are all ways to express joy.

True joy transcends circumstances. It has a deep anchor and is not dependent upon temporal and fleeting feelings.

There are few things in this world that awaken joy like seeing someone cross from death to life after hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ. The apostle John tells us what is behind communicating this good news: The joy of communion with the life of God.

In 1 John 1:1-4, the apostle opens by speaking of the life of God. It was “from the beginning,” meaning that it has existed since before the foundations of the earth.

True joy transcends circumstances and is not dependent upon fleeting feelings.

John goes on to elaborate on this life. They had heard of it with their very ears, they had touched it with their very hands, and they had looked upon it with their very eyes. How? Because God took on flesh and dwelt among us through the person of His Son, Jesus. This life, this eternal life, was made manifest and revealed to God’s people.

The result of this revelation is stunning. John writes with certainty that they have fellowship with this life through the use of the Greek word koinonia. Koinonia means a “sharing in or a participation with.” John makes the audacious claim that — because of the appearance of the person and work of Jesus — they share and participate in the very life of God that has existed for all eternity.

What does this life consist of? If we take the context seriously, it includes testifying about, proclaiming and sharing this very life with one result in mind — that others would also join in this koinonia.

John then tells us that joy is complete when we give this life away. So, putting everything together, the inner life of God and the life revealed in Jesus is a life of self-giving love. Lewis’ claim, if taken into our hearts, should ignite an evangelistic revolution in the 21st-century church, the likes of which has not been seen since the first generation of disciples.

Are you ready to experience complete joy but unsure of how to begin the conversation? Visit ncbaptist.org/adult-evangelism-and-discipleship/ for 2020 Gospel Conversations Training event dates and locations.

Josh Reed serves as the senior consultant for the Adult Evangelism and Discipleship Team.



To the world you may be one person,
But to one person you may be the world.

Dr. Seuss



Become a Hospice Volunteer (828)-765-5677



Hospice and Palliative Care of the Blue Ridge, Inc.

Context

By Jim Huskins
McDowell County



Every believer should learn to "rightly divide the Word of truth." Technical Bible study is known as "hermeneutics." A foundational concept of hermeneutics is that one must know the context of a scripture passage before they can understand it. I began a formal study of hermeneutics more than forty-five years ago, but I am still amazed by the depth and breadth of God's Word.

I long served a denomination that holds twice-yearly Love Feasts. These include a communion meal and feet washing. Accordingly, I have taught the Upper Room from the Gospel of John many times. I always focused on Jesus' humility and servanthood, but I recently discovered that one Upper Room event has a direct antecedent in the 29th chapter of Exodus. That chapter is part of a discourse that finds Moses atop Mt. Sinai receiving instruction. Part of that instruction includes the process Moses will use to dedicate the Tabernacle and the new priesthood.

Moses is given specifics for animal sacrifices to be used in the dedication ceremony. Sacrifices have been part of mankind's relationship with God since Adam and Eve. Our sin makes fellowship with God impossible since our Holy Creator cannot abide the presence of sin. For us to be in God's presence, we have to undergo something called regeneration. Blood sacrifice is part of that process. Exodus 29 presents a new wrinkle on regeneration. For the first time, God will also require ritual washing.

Moses was more than just the highest leader of Israel. He literally stood before the Most High representing all mankind. And yet, Moses was instructed by God to act as a sort of butler to his brother and four nephews. He was to wash them in front of the assembled nation. It is impossible for us to comprehend how shocking this was.

In that culture, social class was everything. The priests were lower in rank than Moses. Even Aaron would be subordinate to Moses. And yet, the most powerful man on earth, the only man who ever talked with Elohim face to face, is told to perform a service relegated to women and servants: washing another man. Every Israelite will be scandalized. God did not give this command to publicly humiliate Moses. The priests needed to be consecrated for service to God, but first, they had to be clean from sin in God's eyes.

The significance of Moses doing the washing cannot be overstated. Cleansing of sin can only come from on high as a merciful and loving act. When he washed the new priests as part of their ritual of regeneration, Moses was standing in for God.

While studying that ancient cultural prohibition against a man washing someone of lesser rank, I realized that I was already familiar with another supreme leader who stooped to wash his servants. How had I missed the obvious connection for so long? Jesus also consecrated a new priesthood. He washed the feet of men who will be the Apostles of the Church. Jesus: the highest leader on Earth, the Master Teacher, God incarnate, will humble Himself as a servant. But why?

The context of Exodus 29 makes it clear that part of the Upper Room experience is the consecration ceremony for a new, spiritual priesthood. Followers of Jesus are part of the priesthood of all believers. He is our High Priest in the order of Melchizedek, but our priesthood had a beginning as did the Levitical Priesthood. The Twelve who would become Apostles were that beginning. Jesus washing them was part of our cleansing ritual.

1 Peter 2:5 says, "You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." As priests, we have been granted, through the perfect sacrifice of Jesus, direct access to God Almighty. According to Romans 12:1, part of our job is to offer our own bodies as "living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God." The only way to accomplish that is by obeying God's instructions for righteous living.

In the upper room, on the eve of Jesus' sacrifice, I doubt that His bewildered disciples made the connection between what their Master did for them and what Moses did 1300 years earlier. Moses consecrated Aaron and his sons as the first priesthood of Israel by washing them with water was a type and shadow of Jesus washing the Apostle's feet.

We cannot understand the so-called New Testament without knowing that part of scripture which Paul says is: "Breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness." He was referring to the books of Genesis through Malachi: the part of the Bible which many Christians believe is only good for a few children's stories.

Jesus and the early Church can only be understood in the context of the Torah and the Prophets. The Tabernacle and the sacrificial system open our eyes to profound lessons in the Upper Room and throughout the last third of the Bible. In Luke 24:44, Jesus says that everything written in the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms is about Him. First Peter 2:2 refers to the Word of God as "spiritual milk" that will grow us up into salvation. If we desire to grow in faith and understanding, we need to read all of it. The books of Matthew through Revelation are holy and marvelous, but we will never understand them until we place them in the context of God's full story. That story starts with: "In the beginning, God created..."

Jim & Beverly Huskins are members of Obedient Heart Fellowship.



Valentine Banquet

By Carolyn Dotts
Mitchell County



It's that time of year again. Store aisles are filled with pink and red merchandise reminding us of the next celebration right on the heels of Christmas- it's Valentine's Day! Shelves are filled with chocolates and other delicious candy treats, along with boxes of valentines for children to exchange at school parties, while the greeting card section features everything from 3-D pop-up cards to musical cards, all designed to express love.

This holiday is especially difficult for the widowed person because it focuses on a relationship that no longer exists. Too often they are forgotten as others around them enjoy gift-giving, deliveries from florists, cards in the mail and specially prepared dinners. The widow or widower is no longer the giver or the recipient of these tokens of love unless they have entered a new relationship.

Western Carolina Church is preparing for our 2nd Valentine Day Banquet those who have lost a spouse. Morgan Hall and Kelly Jones have a love for the widowed person, especially the women. They initiated this event last year which was well-received by those who attended. Beautifully designed invitations were mailed to each person. Morgan, Kelly and their husbands lavishly decorated the tables with tablecloths, flowers and candles, china, glassware and cutlery-no paper or plastic for them! The catered meal was served to everyone rather than buffet style. A memorial table was set up for guests to bring a photograph of their deceased spouse. Each guest received a gift, a flower, and chocolate to take home. More of the same is planned this year. There is no charge for this event. However, registration is required. The banquet is planned for Valentine's Day, Friday, February 14th at the church. It begins at 5:30 with the meal. Please bring a photograph of the deceased loved one for the memorial table.

The event will also introduce the GriefShare ministry of Western Carolina Church to attendees with a guest speaker. Samples materials will be available to guests for viewing. A GriefShare Loss of a Spouse seminar is planned for Thursday, February 21 at 6:00 at Western Carolina Church. This is a single event designed to help widows and widowers who are finding their way through grief and discovering their new normal. Participants will take home a booklet with devotional materials, grief recovery exercises, and journaling prompts.

In addition, the 13-week spring cycle of GriefShare is scheduled to begin Thursday, March 5 at 6:00 pm. This is a weekly meeting that covers many different topics associated with grief and loss in all relationships. The public is invited to attend, and even those who have not lost someone to death might consider attending to learn how to minister to those who are in grief. For both Loss of a Spouse and GriefShare meetings, a light meal is provided. Childcare is available with advance notice. Both events meet in the Wing, and there is no charge for either event. For more information or to register for the Valentine Day Banquet or any GriefShare event, please contact Carolyn Dotts at 828-467-1433 or 828-765-4633.

Carolyn Dotts makes her home in Ledger and is a retired Special Education teacher. She is a widow with two sons and five grandchildren. She is a member of Western Carolina Church in Spruce Pine.





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Why Do I Feel Lousy?

By Miguel Cruz
Yancey County



Why do I feel lousy, and my lab tests are normal?
The doctor's office told me all my lab tests are normal! This is a statement that I hear often, and it usually makes me sad. My next question is, did you review a copy of the test with someone? And of course, the answer is no. When I request a copy of the lab results, Usually I see one of two scenarios, the first and saddest is that there were indeed abnormal lab tests on the report, but the staff or the doctor did not think them important enough to tell the patient about it or it just was not relevant to their current symptoms. The second scenario is that the labs were "normal" according to the laboratory scales, but not necessarily "healthy". Having lab values just a little high or low can certainly disrupt our health and how we feel. I would like to discuss this at length.

The first thing that is important to understand about most laboratory testing is that "normal" is nothing more than an "average" of everyone who has been to the lab in the past year. There are two problems with this, the first is that when you consider that most of the people having lab tests have some sort of problem going on, then we are being compared to a population of people who are not necessarily healthy.

The second problem is that most labs are graded as pass or fail. Passing means, you fell within the average, failing means you were outside the average, either high or low. Most doctors only look at what was outside the average or the "failing" tests without any regard for the passing tests and if they were close to being high or low.

There is a relatively new category of health care termed "functional medicine or integrative medicine" which can include most branches of health care providers that take a different look at things. When it comes to laboratory values, functional medicine providers use a scale that is more geared to known "healthy" values instead of just an average. The problem arises when people fall into the grey area between the normal lab values and functional healthy values. It may appear as a normal on the lab report but maybe just off enough to be causing problems for the individual.

Another area of concern is that insurance is not allowing doctors to order adequate labs. The average labs ordered on routine yearly exams are hardly enough to catch anything but the most obvious of problems. So, if you are relying on your insurance to cover all treatments and tests to keep you healthy, I'm afraid you may be disappointed in the end. You may need to be ready to have some additional testing that you will need to pay for yourself.

In our office, most if not all the labs I review from other clinics have either an abnormal that was not discussed with the patient or functionally unhealthy markers that were disregarded. In most cases when these issues were dealt with, the patient was able to tell a great difference in their health.

This information is not meant to be medical advice for any conditions. It is meant to stimulate conversation between you and your health care provider. They may not agree with everything I am saying and that is OK, I would encourage the reader to take responsibility for their health and research as much as possible from reputable sources.

Questions may be addressed to me at cruzlifecenter@gmail.com

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



Persistent Prayer

By James Dobson



If a commitment to Christ is the foundation for a successful marriage, then daily prayer together is the steady, brick-by-brick construction that provides a safe haven for genuine intimacy.

It was certainly true for my parents. James Dobson Sr. was a pastor and evangelist for most of his life. He often spent hours-long sessions on his knees, talking with God and praying for his ministry and those he loved. He was known in the small Texas town where I spent my preschool years as "the man with no leather on the toes of his shoes." He spent so much time on his knees that he wore out the toes before he did the soles!

But Dad did not only pray alone. My mother, his beloved wife, whom he called Myrt, regularly joined him to pray in times of crisis, during life's routine periods, and for occasional help and guidance in dealing with a rambunctious son named Jim. Their prayer times together must have made a deep impression on me from my earliest days, for I was told that at just one year of age I attempted to pray with them. I hadn't yet learned to talk, so I tried to imitate the sounds they were making as they communicated with God.

I have no doubt that my parents' unswerving love for Jesus Christ, renewed by daily conversation with Him, in turn, cemented their own deep affection and respect for each other. Their prayer life was the glue that preserved a loving forty-three-year union that lasted until the moment my father left this earth in 1977.

I have tried to follow that example in my own home. The countless times that Shirley and I have bowed before God to offer words of thanks, petitions for assistance, and expressions of love have strengthened our relationship, too, in ways that can never be measured. Prayer has been the stabilizing influence for our life together.

Of course, some people use prayer the way they follow their horoscopes, attempting to manipulate an unidentified "higher power." One of my friends teasingly admits that he utters a prayer each morning on the way to work when he passes the doughnut shop. He knows it is unhealthy to eat the greasy pastries, but he loves them dearly. Therefore, he asks the Lord for permission to indulge himself each day. He'll say, "If it is Your will that I have a doughnut this morning, let there be a parking space available as I circle the block." If no spot can be found for his car, he circles the block and prays again.

Shirley and I have taken our prayer life a bit more seriously. In good times, in hard times, in moments of anxiety, and in periods of praise we have shared this wonderful privilege of talking directly to our heavenly Father. What a concept! No appointment is needed to enter His presence. We don't have to go through His subordinates or bribe His secretaries. He is simply there, whenever we bow together before Him. Some of the highlights of my life have occurred in these quiet sessions with the Lord.

Do not misunderstand—prayer, when you are alone, with a friend, in a Bible study, or in church, is extremely important and valued just as much by our Father. But there is something special about prayer between husband, wife, and God that can't be found elsewhere. It creates a spiritual connection, accountability, and a holy bond that brings strength and stability to the relationship. It can even allow you to communicate about sensitive issues that might otherwise never come out—issues that can be discussed and prayed over in a spirit of humility and purity of motive.

There is something special about prayer between husband, wife, and God. Prayer of this kind can revitalize a marriage. In 1983, after years of discomfort and a vague sense of spiritual unrest, Christian recording artist Steve Green poured out his heart to the Lord in prayer and experienced a spiritual renewal. Just a few weeks later, his wife, Marijean, did the same thing. For the first time in their marriage, the Greens began talking to God, together, on a regular basis.

"I thought we had a good marriage before because we didn't fight, we were compatible, we enjoyed being together," Steve says. "But after our renewal, suddenly we were communicating at the deepest level. There was a bond of God's Spirit holding us and tying us together. Our relationship became a spiritual one, and it just flourished."

For the Greens, the key to unlocking these blessings was a persistent prayer life.

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



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New Dimensions Charter School

By David Burleson
Burke County

January is School Board Appreciation Month, and the New Dimensions Charter Schools wants to say, "thank you" to all our board members who do so much for our school. New Dimensions is represented by eleven dedicated board members who devote countless hours to make sure our students are served in the best way possible. Chair Regina Rhodes, Vice-Chair Kristen Rodriguez, Secretary Shanna Wall, Treasurer David Martin, Pamela Harrison, Tracy Jones, Dorie Evans, Jamie Smith Casey Kinard, Chris Beam, and Brad Buchanan are true advocates for the students of New Dimensions, developing policies and making decisions that help shape the future of our school. Our school board oversees more than 345 students, 45 employees, and an annual budget of over \$3,000,000. I am proud to work with our board, and I congratulate them on their excellent leadership and vision for the students of New Dimensions.

I also wanted to make our school community aware of the new anonymous tip line, Say Something, that our middle school students and staff currently have available to them. New Dimensions joins schools around the state in the first roll-out of this program. Say Something is a school safety program for students – developed by Sandy Hook Promise – that enables students to anonymously report tips about school safety concerns via a mobile app along with a phone call. The tips will be received by school administrators and law enforcement, who will respond appropriately based on the type of tip.

We want to be sure our students have a voice when it comes to feeling safe at school, and that's why we want to be part of this promise. This app gives students the ability to remain anonymous while reporting instances of bullying or fighting involving themselves or others, or if they've seen a weapon at school, with assurances that their tip will be seen and investigated. The Say Something mobile app allows users (who can include students, teachers and parents) to provide tips in categories that include bullying, illegal drug and alcohol use, fighting, weapons and a report category for all other types of tips. Students can submit digital photos or videos along with text information from their cell phones directly to the school administrative team and school resource officer. The app allows students, if they choose, to bookmark a tip so that they can follow-up on the status of their tip, or anonymously text back and forth with administrators to provide additional information. Additionally, if a student has a suicide or mental health concern, they can reach out to trained professionals by using the app. The app is available for download from the Android Marketplace and the Apple App Store.

The Center for Safer Schools, created in March 2013 as part of N.C. Department of Public Safety worked with Sandy Hook Promise in response to a concern noted by students, teachers, administrators and law enforcement during community forums, of a need for a standardized method for students to report safety issues to school administrators, teachers and school resource officers.

• Why it exists

Over 160,000 school children miss school each day in the United States out of fear of being bullied. Being able to report their fears is paramount in reducing these absences. Over 90 percent of students say they would use an anonymous reporting tool if they had one available. This is also important because over 80 percent of school shooters tell someone before they act. An anonymous reporting tool could help prevent school shootings and other safety concerns on school campuses.

In 2013, one of the first activities of the North Carolina Center for Safer Schools (NCCFSS) was to tour the state and hold community forums at several schools. These forums included meeting with students, teachers, administrators and law enforcement in the afternoon followed by an open community forum in the evening. One of the concerns that arose from these meetings was that students needed a truly anonymous, standardized method to report their concerns to school administrators, school resource officers (SROs), and teachers. The NC-CFSS heard this call for help and began developing a plan to find and implement an anonymous reporting application for students that could also be available for their parents and teachers. Say Anything is a tangible anonymous application for smartphones that has been developed with the needs of North Carolina's school children in mind.

Continuing the safety theme, New Dimensions is pleased to announce our partnership with the City of Morganton to place a school resource officer at our school. Starting on Wednesday, January 15 Officer Casey Kinard began as the New Dimensions SRO. Our students, staff, parents, and visitors are in very capable hands. New Dimensions is also excited to partner with A Caring Alternatives to provide School-Based Therapy for our students and families.

New Dimensions is in the process of installing security cameras throughout our buildings and grounds. These cameras will make an already safe school even safer.

Open enrollment at New Dimensions begins on Monday, January 6 and ends on Monday, April 6 at 4 p.m. Applications for the upcoming year will be posted on our website and will be available at the school beginning on January 6. Education night (including a tour of New Dimensions) will be held on Thursday, March 5 from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. A special open house just for rising sixth graders will be held on Thursday, February 27 also from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. If these dates are not convenient, the staff of New Dimensions will be more than happy to provide individual tours. Just give us a call (828-437-5753) or email us at dburleson@nds.school.org to schedule a tour.

At the end of the enrollment period, it will be determined if there are more applications than spaces available for each grade. If the number of applicants for a particular grade does not exceed the number of available spaces for that grade level, all students who have applied by the deadline will be accepted. If the number of applicants for a particular grade level exceeds available spaces for that



grade level, a lottery system will determine admission eligibility. Students who are not offered enrollment will be placed on a waitlist. After all spaces for a grade level are filled, the lottery will continue until all applying students have been assigned a priority number on the waitlist. The waitlist will not carry into the next school year.

The support of our community and the shared desire to keep our students safe is greatly appreciated.

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

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Crossword

Crossword 251 and Solution Across

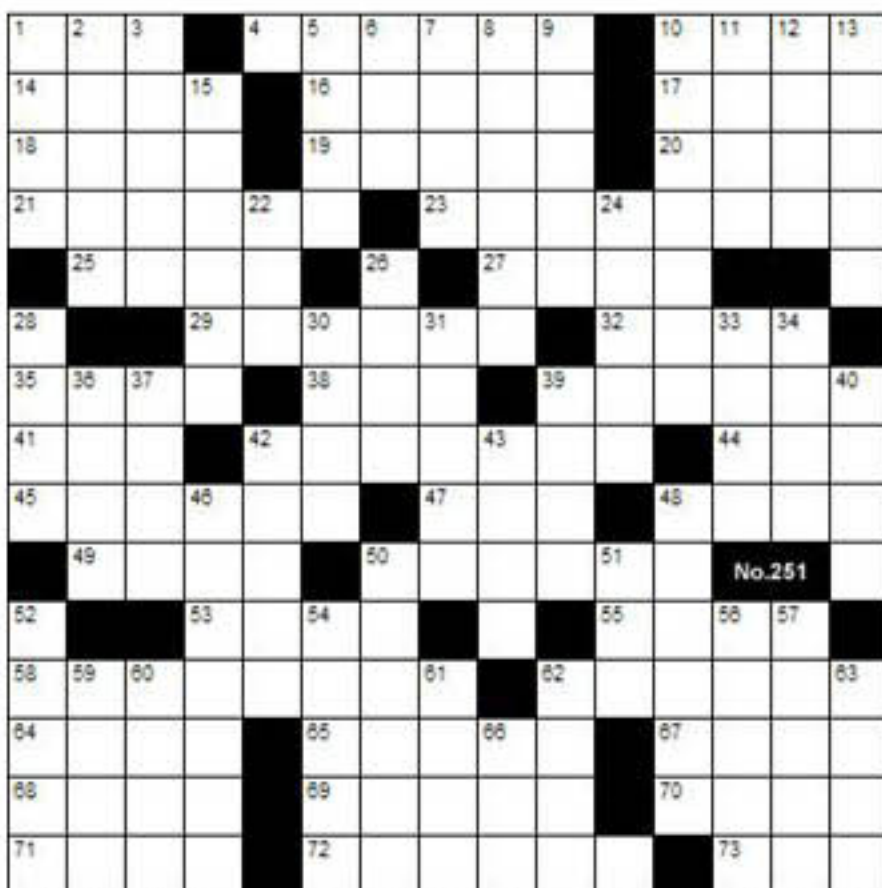
1 And Israel vowed a _____ unto the LORD (Num 21:2)
 4 their rulers will be thrown down from the _____ (Ps 141:6)
 10 Like a _____ melting away as it moves along (Ps 58:8)
 14 the cloud was over the tabernacle only _____ days (1,3) (Num 9:20)
 16 He put _____ of armor on him (1,4) (1 Sam 17:38)
 17 As the Father has loved _____, have I loved you (2,2) (John 15:9)
 18 How you have fallen from heaven, O morning _____ (Isa 14:12)
 19 Worship the Lord your God, and _____ him only (Matt 4:10)
 20 them that had gotten the victory _____ the beast (Rev 15:2)
 21 You will _____ the mountains and crush them (Isa 41:15)
 23 the mouse, and the _____ after his kind (Lev 11:29) KJV
 25 And _____ said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee (Gen 25:30) KJV
 27 The body is a _____, though it is made up of many parts (1 Cor 12:12)
 29 He will _____ his donkey to a vine (Gen 49:11)
 32 the _____ ears devoured the seven good ears (Gen 41:24)
 35 to Ai, which is near _____ Aven to the east of Bethel (Josh 7:2)
 38 thou shalt take an _____, and thrust it through his ear (Deut 15:17) KJV
 39 and you will be _____ from your position (Isa 22:19)
 41 one _____ lamb of the first year (Num 6:14)
 42 like thieves they enter through the _____ (Joel 2:9)
 44 his own elect, which _____ day and night (Luke 18:7)
 45 Jacob gave Esau some bread and some _____ stew (Gen 25:34)
 47 just as _____ was deceived by the serpent's cunning (2 Cor 11:3) KJV
 48 foot covering (Isa 20:2) (KJV)
 49 hand and put it into my side. _____ doubting and believe (John 20:27)
 50 reported it to the king, giving _____ to Mordecai. (Est 2:22)
 53 Provide purses for yourselves that will not _____ out (Luke 12:33)
 55 _____ there be debates, envyings (2 Cor 12:20) KJV
 58 the plowman plows and the thresher _____ (1 Cor 9:10)
 62 Uzziah the king was _____ unto the day of his (1,5) (2 Chron 26:21) KJV
 64 John's clothes were made of camel's _____ (Matt 3:4)
 65 He replied, "Out of the _____, something to eat; out of the strong (Judg 14:14)
 67 in nakedness and _____

poverty, you will serve the enemies (Deut 28:48)

68 But Moses said, "O Lord, please send someone _____ to do it." (Ex 4:13)
 69 take thee _____, and lay it before thee (1,4) (Ezek 4:1) (KJV)
 70 Do not _____ up the words of the prophecy of this book (Rev 22:10)
 71 so that it will be like a _____ swaying in the water (1 Kings 14:15)
 72 They _____ kings and scoff at rulers (Hab 1:10)
 73 afraid of nothing; he does not _____ away from the sword (Job 39:22)

Down

1 'Do you see this _____ army? I will give it into your hand (1 Kings 20:13)
 2 Noah found favor in the eyes _____ LORD (2,3) (Gen 6:8)
 3 My zeal _____ me out, for my enemies ignore your words (Ps 119:139)
 5 The LORD Almighty will _____ them with a whip (Isa 10:26)
 6 The breath of God produces _____ (Job 37:10)
 7 David dwelt in the _____, and called it the city of David (2 Sam 5:9) KJV
 8 The king's _____ is toward a wise servant (Prov 14:35) KJV
 9 they dropped four anchors from the _____ and prayed (Acts 27:29-30)
 10 goldsmith, and he who _____ with the hammer (Isa 41:7)
 11 Reuben, Simeon, _____, and Judah (Exodus 1:2)
 12 also learn to maintain good works for necessary _____ (Titus 3:14)
 13 If a bull _____ a man or a woman (Ex 21:28)
 15 two rows of pomegranates on each _____ (2 Chr 4:13)
 22 if someone wants to _____ you and take your tunic (Matt 5:40)
 24 To _____, mine own son after the common faith (Titus 1:4) KJV
 26 Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and _____ evil. (Prov 3:7)
 28 By faith _____ offered God a better sacrifice than Cain (Heb 11:4)
 30 His _____ swept a third of the stars out of the sky (Rev 12:4)
 31 The _____ shall serve the younger (Romans 9:12)
 33 On the seventh day the priest is to examine the _____ (Lev 13:34)
 34 Roman Emperor at the time of the early church
 36 female sheep (Gen 32:14)
 37 he had pitched a _____ for it at Jerusalem (2 Chr 1:4)
 39 Two men _____ money to a certain moneylender



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(Luke 7:41)
 40 for the tent a covering of ram skins _____ red (Ex 36:19)
 42 I will wipe out Jerusalem as one _____ a dish (2 Kings 21:13)
 43 Every grain offering baked in an _____ or cooked (Lev 7:9)
 46 So it _____ higher than all the trees of the field (Ezek 31:5)
 48 the sound of the hoofs of galloping _____ (Jer 47:3)
 50 Behold, I will _____ new heavens and a new earth (Isa 65:17)
 51 I, Daniel, was exhausted and lay _____ for several days (Dan 8:27)
 52 Neither is there salvation in any _____: for there is (Acts 4:12)
 54 because he was looking _____ to his reward (Heb 11:26)

56 Joseph called his brothers _____ when they came to buy grain (Gen 42:8-9)
 57 the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran (Gen 11:26)
 59 lest he _____ thee to the judge (Luke 12:58) KJV
 60 sins be forgiven thee; or to say, _____ up and walk? (Luke 5:23) KJV
 61 turneth away wrath: but grievous words _____ up anger (Prov 15:1) KJV
 62 behold a man riding upon _____ horse (1,3) (Zech 1:8) KJV
 63 because thou didst _____ on the LORD, he delivered them (2 Chr 16:8) KJV
 66 the two sons of _____, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests (1 Sam 1:3)

Solution on page 14

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LONGSHOOTER

February – Month for Love

By Terry Cheek
McDowell County

February is a month well known for one thing, LOVE. I'm thinking of Valentine's Day! We set aside February 14th every year to recognize our love and affection for husbands and wives. I realize there is no Valentine's Day in the Bible, but if you're a student of God's word you know that every day should be Valentine's Day for the husband and wife in Jesus Christ.

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

It is heartbreaking to see what man has done to marriage and human sexuality. Consider Sodom and Gomorrah; the immoral lifestyle recorded there has taken us down a dark path concerning love and sexuality. Today man tries to justify many things; same-sex relationships, couples living together outside of marriage, adultery, pornography, bi-sexuality and even pedophilia as legitimate expressions of love. God calls these and more like them sin. For the Christian marriage, Valentine's Day is not about sex or lust, it is a celebration of a godly relationship being displayed in many ways through a heart of love. There is no genuine love apart from the love of God's examples. He calls a man and woman into a relationship as husband and wife. For example, in Ephesians 5:22-33 Paul uses marriage as an illustration for the Saints' relationship with Jesus Christ.

I want to take this time to honor the biblical marriage. Not just marriage, but biblical marriage. There is a difference. In Deuteronomy, God told Israel not to marry the neighboring people. Not because of race, but because of idolatry. The neighboring people did not know the God of Israel, they preferred to worship false gods and images made by their hands. God did not want that influence in His people. From 2 Corinthians 6:14 "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" This passage goes much deeper than marriage, it relates to every aspect of the believer's life. Yet, it does include marriage. This is written to the believer. We are responsible for how we approach all relationships, including marriage.

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

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

A godly marriage is a beautiful marriage. A man and woman both born again by grace and through faith in Christ alone. Christ is the foundation of their lives and the foundation of their marriage. Christian marriages have problems too, all marriages do. There are faults and failures, even sin from temptation. However, where Christ reigns there is HOPE! Divorce will not be mentioned in the Christian marriage, why, because the Christian marriage has a foundation that will not crumble and both husband and wife will want to fight for it. If you and your spouse are both born again praise God for that, many today can't say that. Enjoy Valentine's Day as your special day of the year to worship God for His creation of marriage. Remember to cherish each other as Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 7:3-5 "Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise, also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency."

Go to Church, commit yourself and your marriage to the Lord. Love one another as Christ has loved the church. Happy Valentine's Day!

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

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



Stubbornness or Perseverance?

By Shawn Thomas
Angleton, Texas



Reading Numbers 23 I thought, "Man, Balak just isn't getting it ... he's already asked Baalam three times to ask God to curse Israel and He said He is NOT going to do it!" How stubborn mankind can be — always struggling against the ways of God. It's a good lesson: if God is closing a door, don't keep trying to open it!

But then I wondered: isn't there a balance here somewhere? Sometimes persevering is the thing to do, keep asking; keep knocking, and so on. But at the same time, you don't want to be found struggling against God's will.

So, what is the difference? Balak had been told that God had spoken against the cursing of Israel — and yet he kept trying to have them cursed. This wasn't a matter of him persevering towards some good end, but in persisting to ask for something that was directly opposed to the revealed will of God.

This can serve as a good guide for us as well. Perseverance towards a good cause is laudable. Keep at it! You might yet publish that book on the 23rd try! But don't keep seeking something that you know God has forbidden in His word. You will not succeed in it — even if God eventually allows you to have your own way. You aren't "persevering;" you're being stubborn. And Proverbs 29:1 says: "A man who hardens his neck after much reproof will suddenly be broken beyond remedy."

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

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The Death of Qassem Soleimani: What it means, What comes next, and How Christians Can Respond

By Jim Denison



The commander of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps was killed early Friday in a drone strike at Baghdad International Airport authorized by President Trump. An American MQ-9 Reaper drone fired missiles into a convoy leaving the airport, killing Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani and several officials from Iraqi militias backed by Tehran.

US Secretary of Defense Mark Esper explained the action: "General Soleimani was actively developing plans to attack American diplomats and service members in Iraq and throughout the region. General Soleimani and his Quds force were responsible for the deaths of hundreds of American and coalition service members and the wounding of thousands more."

"He had orchestrated attacks on coalition bases in Iraq over the last several months—including the attack on December 27th—culminating in the death and wounding of additional American and Iraqi personnel. General Soleimani also approved the attacks on the U.S. embassy in Baghdad that took place this week."

Who was Qassem Soleimani?

Qassem Soleimani was an Iranian Major General in the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. Since 1998, he commanded the Quds force responsible for extraterritorial military and clandestine operations.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo deemed Soleimani equally as dangerous as Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. In April 2019, the State Department announced that Iran was responsible for killing 608 American troops during the Iraq War. They determined that 17 percent of all US personnel deaths in Iraq from 2003 to 2011 were orchestrated by Soleimani.

A BBC analyst notes that Soleimani was seen as "the mastermind behind Iran's vast ambition in the Middle East, and the country's real foreign minister when it came to matters of war and peace." Soleimani was "widely considered a principal architect of President Bashar al-Assad's war in Syria, the ongoing conflict in Iraq, the fight against Islamic State, and many battles beyond."

According to CNN, the significance of Soleimani's death "cannot be overstated." An analyst for MSNBC calls him "the world's number one bad guy." He states that the killing of Soleimani "means much more in terms of saving current lives" than even the deaths of Osama bin Laden and ISIS founder Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

What led to the attack?

In June 2019, the Iranians shot down an American surveillance drone. Three months later, a barrage of missiles and drones targeted two of the world's most important oil facilities in Saudi Arabia.

Last Friday, the US blamed an Iranian-backed militia for an attack that killed a US contractor and wounded four US service members. On Sunday, the US carried out airstrikes that were said to have killed at least twenty-five militia members. Demonstrators, including members of that Iranian-backed militia, then stormed the US Embassy compound in Baghdad. Gen. Soleimani reportedly orchestrated these militia activities.

Last Tuesday, the US Army's 82nd Airborne Division was told to plan for possible deployment to Kuwait, placing as many as four thousand troops on standby. Soldiers from this division arrived in Kuwait hours before the airstrike that killed Gen. Soleimani.

What comes next?

The New York Times calls Soleimani's death "a staggering blow for Iran at a time of sweeping geopolitical conflict" and "a serious escalation of Mr. Trump's growing confrontation with Tehran." The Washington Examiner describes Soleimani's death as "a monumental event and great news for the United States and the countless victims of his strategy that has unleashed death and chaos throughout the Middle East."

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei warned that "harsh retaliation is waiting" for the US after the airstrike. The US has urged its citizens to leave Iraq "immediately." CNN speculates that American forces in Syria and its allies in Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia could "fall victim to Iranian retaliatory measures." The Associated Press adds that Iran's allies in Iraq, Lebanon, Yemen, Syria, and Gaza could be mobilized.

The Washington Examiner states that "a global terrorist campaign of uncertain duration is likely. In the context of Iranian domestic political instability and deep economic pressures on the regime, Iran might also use this killing as an excuse to destabilize oil flows through the Strait of Hormuz. Each of those developments would require immediate American deterrent response."

The path to true peace

The future is known to no one but God (cf. Isaiah 46:10). Our responsibility as God's people is to pray for our leaders (1 Timothy 2:1-2) and to work for both justice (Amos 5:24) and peace (Matthew 5:9) while seeking to lead all people to the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6).

As C. S. Lewis notes, "God cannot give us happiness and peace apart from Himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing."

We cannot give the world what we do not have. In these tremulous times, our peace can be a powerful witness to a skeptical culture. Here's the path to such peace: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7).

No matter what is happening in the world, in every circumstance and challenge, we can have the "peace of God" today.

Do you?

Jim Denison Ph.D speaks and writes on cultural and contemporary issues. His daily column is distributed to more than 113,000 subscribers in 203 countries. See more on the website www.denisonforum.org. Copyrighted and printed by permission from Denison Forum.

Tumbling over Myself

By Ken and Jan Merop
Avery County



My entrance was less than graceful. In fact, it was downright clumsy.

Tripping while trying to straighten out my rumpled clothes, I pressed in without a second thought. I veered from side to side with ungraceful, bumbling footsteps. I may have been bold in my approach, but I was also irreverent and expectant in an entitled sort of way.

These images floating through my mind reminded me of a child rushing in where angels fear to tread. I wasn't ushered out, just gently convicted.

So, I backed up and began again.

This time I first recognized who I would be approaching. My stride was not clumsy and pushy, rather it was like I was on tiptoe...expectant, quiet...and yet totally confident.

Here I was welcomed with open arms. Here I belonged always. Here I could be myself.

But my approach revealed my heart...and I wanted it to be genuine...not anxiously tumbling over myself.

This picture that I have tried to sketch with words actually went through my mind one morning while praying. First, I must say, it was really convicting as our ladies' Sunday school class had been considering how important it is to not rush into God's presence; but, to consider to Whom we would be talking.

This is the King of kings. The Lord of lords. This is my Savior who leads me into the presence of God the Father who sees me as righteous because of my faith in His Son, Jesus Christ.

As I barreled in that morning words spilling out, I saw the picture above play out in my mind.... distracting me from my prayer. There was God seated on His throne eagerly awaiting me...yet, wondering at my pushy, disrespectful behavior.

And, so, the Holy Spirit took over convicting me by this mental picture.

That's when I backed up, I asked forgiveness and started over.

As I recounted God's faithfulness, His goodness, mercy and grace...my soul quieted so that I could approach Him as he deserved and yet with quiet confidence at His amiable approachability.

No wonder Jesus taught His disciples to pray in a certain way. Not so much to repeat the prayer by rote, but to realize that His name is to be holy on our lips and in our hearts.

We acknowledge His purposes, His provisions, His forgiveness, and sovereignty.

The NLT version of 'the Lord's prayer' in Matthew 6: 9 says it this way, "Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy."

Consequently, as I gracefully entered into his presence, joy and assurance filled my soul. Selah

*Living Above the Clouds
Observe the ever-moving clouds.
Their formations don't stay the same for long.
Clinging to circumstantially cloudy days
is to ride a non-supportive vapor.
But to let God's joy lift us above the clouds
is to look down upon them from His perspective...
living above the clouds.*

*"For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
Nor are your ways My ways," says the Lord.
For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are My ways higher than your ways;
And my thoughts than your thoughts."*

Isaiah 55: 8 & 9, NKJV



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

The Jason Project, Inc.

"The Grandfather Challenge"

Avery, Mitchell and Yancey County

The Jason Project's Hiking Programs for At-Risk Youth Seeks Alliances with Avery, Mitchell, and Yancey County Churches!

If your church congregation includes youth members from ages 14 to 17 who are suffering from mental or addiction problems or who are otherwise "at-risk" because they are facing life-struggles through no fault of their own, we would invite you to explore our two free programs, the "Grandfather Challenge," and the "Appalachian Trailblazers." Through these programs, we try to instill in these young people that God loves them and will help them overcome the unique challenges in their lives.

Youth Leadership, Mentoring, & Wilderness Adventures for At-Risk Youth:

Although he was struggling with mental illness throughout his mid-teens and young adult life, Jason Matthew Nipper found peace and serenity as he and his parents hiked the beautiful, challenging trails in the mountains of Western North Carolina. Jason passed away in 2014, and his parents James & Cheryl Nipper formed a non-profit entity called The Jason Project, Inc., and launched "The Grandfather Challenge" program in 2015 in honor of their beloved son. They then organized the "Appalachian Trailblazers" program in 2019. James and Cheryl believe that this was a perfect way to fulfill Jason's desire to help others and to create a legacy for their son and provide meaning to his life. Although The Jason Project programs serve at-risk kids suffering from mental problems and/or drug addictions, it also assists middle and high school youth who are struggling with personal adversities, including family, school, or other personal problems or challenges beyond their control. They hope that Jason's intense love of nature and hiking, coupled with his desire to help others, will live on through the young persons who participate in this unique wilderness hiking, adventure, leadership and mentoring programs. At no cost to the participants, The Jason Project provides professional hike leaders, backpacks, hiking boots, raincoats, and all other costs associated with these programs, except for transportation to and from the hike trailheads. At the end of these outdoor adventure programs, the students' accomplishments are recognized at a special Awards Dinner, at which each participant is given a special Certificate of Completion and other recognition.

The "Flagship" Program – The "Grandfather Challenge"

The "flagship" program of The Jason Project is "The Grandfather Challenge," consisting of four major weekly hikes along the rigorous trails of Grandfather Mountain in Linville, NC. The underlying goal of "The Grandfather Challenge" program is to use the adventure of mountain hiking and climbing, coupled with the leadership skills of experienced mentors and hike leaders, to teach at-risk kids that through perseverance and commitment, they can overcome their unique challenges in life. Now in its fourth year, this program is now serving middle and high school students in Avery, Caldwell, Catawba, Gaston, and Lincoln counties, and we now wish to expand into Mitchell and Yancey counties this upcoming summer. During these challenging hikes, our hike leaders give each student a leadership "role" to play during each hike, and provide opportunities for discussions centered around leadership, teamwork, and overcoming personal challenges.

The "Appalachian Trailblazers" program centers around a two-day, 15-mile hike along the Appalachian Trail, and was recently created as a supplement to "The Grandfather Challenge." This wilderness adventure focuses on teaching at-risk youth to gain more self-confidence and become more successful by learning the values and methods of personal goal setting and learning to become leaders in their churches and schools. This program centers around casual discussions about personal goal setting and developing the leadership potential of each student. Leadership roles are assigned, and the values of teamwork are taught and demonstrated. Students are taught that there are good people in life who set helpful "blazes" or "markers" for us to follow in order to reach stated goals and get to where we want to be, and that they too can return to their churches and schools and be leaders or "trailblazers" within their own communities.

Impact on At-risk Students:

Testimonies received from students, teachers, and counselors validate the effectiveness of these exciting programs. A 15-year-old student who suffers from autism and struggles in life told his counselor at the end of the first hike: "It was the best day of my life!"

A teenage girl who suffers from anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem told her counselor: "I have never thought of myself as a leader. I don't



want to ever forget this feeling."

A high school student that attends a special class for Exceptional Children told the Nippers a year after he completed the program: "I am not as angry as I used to be. I am a better person."

The above statements are real and reflect the impact that this program has on at-risk kids, who need encouragement, leadership, improved self-esteem and confidence, and recognition from adults who truly care about them and their futures. Such is the essence of The Jason Project and "The Grandfather Challenge."

Seeking Summer Participation Of Local Area Churches:

Because of the success and popularity of our programs, we have more middle and high schools asking to participate in our programs than we can now accommodate. However, we have a lull in our activities during the summer months that the students are out of school. Beginning this coming summer, we hope to align with several churches from Avery, Mitchell and Yancey counties and serve their young, at-risk teenage church members by offering these two-exciting wilderness/mentoring/leadership programs. Once again, there are no costs to the student hikers or churches, except for transportation to and from the trailheads.

Online Articles and Contact Information:

For additional information on these two programs, please go to the article links shown below. To contact us directly, please call James or Cheryl Nipper at (828) 765-6561 or (904) 354-7378, or email us at james@jamesnipper.com, and we would be happy to send you more details.
www.tinyurl.com/TheJasonProject2019
www.tinyurl.com/AppalachianTrailblazers

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Student, Teacher Duo Start Adult English Second Language (ESL) Class

By Jonelle Boback
Burke County

Chelsey Taylor, an ESL teacher at Hillcrest Elementary School, and Luke Elliot, a junior at East Burke High School, have started teaching an English-as-a-second-language class for those wanting to learn the English language.

On Tuesday and Thursday mornings, approximately a dozen parents of Hillcrest Elementary School students drop off their children for school and become students themselves. In the class, they work through a workbook, create flashcards and start conversations with each other to learn the English language. The population of Hispanics at Hillcrest Elementary is approximately 85 to 90 percent.

Elliot tested out of a Spanish class at Western Piedmont Community College and volunteered to help Taylor out during his free morning period. He has a passion for learning and teaching different languages.

Elliot said, "About a year ago, my mother was talking to me about learning Spanish, and I picked it up quickly. I was conversationally fluent within one year, and I am now on my third language in Russian. My mother has always had a passion for (the Spanish speaking population) and it translated over to me."

Taylor hopes that not only do the parents learn the English language but are able to form a community within the school and feel comfortable with teachers and administrators.

Superintendent Dr. Larry Putnam said, "The effort shown here by Mrs. Taylor and Luke represents how important it is to serve all of our students and form a relationship with all of our parents, even when a language barrier exists. I also applaud these parents for being willing to learn something new that will not only help them but also their children for generations to come. We have a great English as a second language program in our schools. It is important to us at Burke County Public Schools to break down language barriers and create a bridge to positive community interactions. This class is one of many ways we are making that happen."



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Let Patience Solve Your Problems

By Joyce Meyer



For more than 40 years now, I've been studying God's Word and growing in my faith in Christ. Throughout these years, God has changed me so much! I've become peaceful and stable in my emotions most of the time, and I've learned how to behave the same way when things are going well and when they aren't so good.

The journey hasn't been easy, and it's taken time. But developing faith and patience in the process has been more than worth it!

As believers in Christ, we walk by faith, not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). This means we're not supposed to live according to how we feel or how our circumstances appear to be but according to the truth of God's Word.

2 Corinthians 5:20 (AMP) says we "are Christ's representatives" to the world, showing others who God is through the way we live. We need to get out in the world and behave like Jesus, remaining peaceful and stable in good times and bad, patiently walking by faith.

Waiting Is Inevitable

The Bible tells us there are times we're going to have to wait on God. Being patient is not just waiting on God but it's waiting in faith with a good attitude for God to do what only He can do in you. It's trusting that God will take care of you in His time and His way because He loves you and He always has your best interest at heart.

Now, patience is a fruit of the Spirit that grows under trial (James 1:2-3 NKJV).

People who know this don't like to pray for patience because they know they're going to get trouble. But it's so much better to have faith and patiently wait on God with peace and joy than to be anxious, upset and confused when life doesn't make sense or you're not getting your way.

The Key to Inherit God's Promises

Hebrews 6:12 (NIV) says, "We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised." This verse shows us that we do not inherit the promises of God just because we have faith... we also must have patience.

Another word for patience is longsuffering. Longsuffering means you're going to have to go through difficult things to grow in your faith. I've discovered through my own journey that the sooner you embrace them and let God do the work in you that He wants to do through them, the sooner you'll get to the other side of them.

I really want to encourage you to do this. Don't fight the inevitable or you'll just be miserable.

Be Like the Farmer

James 5:7 (NIV) says, "Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains." It takes a lot of faith and patience to be a farmer. You have to plant your seed and then you wait...and wait...and wait. You wait for the sun and rain, and for the right season to harvest your crop.

In the same way, we can plant our "seeds" of faith by choosing to trust God and His Word above anything else. We release our faith by believing He will do what He says He will do, waiting with the confident expectation that it will happen at the right time and in the right way.

While we are waiting, we should stay busy being good to others, helping people in need as we have the opportunity to do so. Psalm 37:3 (NIV) says to "trust in the Lord and do good..." Nothing proves our faith in God like waiting for His timing with a good attitude, so let's focus on letting Him bless others through us.

Complete in Christ

Ecclesiastes 7:8 (NIV) says, "The end of a matter is better than its beginning, and patience is better than pride." This is basically saying that the patient man waits on God, but the proud man tries to make something happen himself.

When we try to make things happen in our own effort, we just end up frustrated. We don't have the wisdom in and of ourselves to do what's right in the right way and at the right timing. Instead of trying to make life go the way you want it to, entrust yourself to God and walk by faith, trusting Him to work things out.

James 1:4 (NKJV) says to "let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing." Imagine how it would be if you were completely patient and it didn't matter to you when God did what needs to be done in your life. Think about how it would free you from the stress of trying to control everything (which you can't do anyway). And how you can overcome desires that drive you crazy because you can't get what you want all the time.

Pray today for God to work in your heart, helping you to grow in faith and patience. Let Him transform your life so you live in peace with joy, and experience God's promises for 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 Battlefield of the Mind and Overload: How to Unplug, Unwind and Unleash Yourself from the Pressure of Stress (Hachette). She hosts the Enjoying Everyday Life radio and TV programs, which air on hundreds of stations worldwide. For more information, visit www.joycemeyer.org.



Carriers of Hope to the Lost

By Rev. John B. Sorensen



So many people live without hope. They've been hurt. They feel forgotten, unloved. They feel that the world has failed them and their children. The sad thing is, they truly believe that nothing will ever change.

As Christians, we often forget that we once lived that way too. We were once in darkness, without hope (Ephesians 5:8). But something changed. We found what the world around us craves the most. Our lives were transformed. We realized that God hasn't abandoned us. Just the opposite: He loved us so much that He sent Jesus to die for us so that we could live forever with Him. That gives us hope, not just for today, but for eternity.

Through Christ, we have life. We have a purpose and a reason for being. That hope anchors our soul, firm and secure (Hebrews 6:19). The circumstances in our lives may not change, but we have the hope of eternity with Jesus in Heaven. That changes our outlook on everything.

So, if we have what the world desires so much, then why do we miss sharing it?

Many Christians are afraid, or they don't want to offend others. But consider this: what if the person who told you about this hope never had the courage to speak? Where would you be today if you never had the chance to receive it? The truth is, every day, people around the world die without ever once hearing or understanding that they could have this hope.

The bottom line is that we, as Christians, have been entrusted to carry hope to the lost. When we share our faith with others, we are not shoving our religion down someone's throat. We are sharing healing, forgiveness, love, and ultimately hope. All these things are found in Jesus Christ.

So, are you a carrier of hope? Isaiah 52:7 says, "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation..." When we share the Gospel, we bring that good news. We share that peace. And we point the way to salvation.

Our faith is not about religion. It's about the opportunity to have a relationship with God. Most people don't realize it's the God of the universe who seeks us out. He pursues us. He wants that personal relationship. And when many of them grasp that truth, they run to Him.

If you want to be that carrier and take hope into a world that desperately needs some good news – some hope, start where you are. Pray for opportunities to share your story of hope. Then, be brave. Take a leap of faith and share that story. God just may use you to change someone's life for eternity.

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

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Sudoku

Solution on page 14

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

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Dave Says

By Dave Ramsey

Keep your dignity, and work your way out

Dear Dave,

My wife and I will both turn 30 next month. We have two young children, and we make a little over \$85,000 combined. The problem is we have about \$70,000 in debt. Some of it is credit card debt, but nearly \$50,000 is in two car loans. Her mom and dad have offered to let us move in with them, so we can save up money and start getting a better handle on our finances, but we're not sure how we feel about this. What's your advice? Justin



Dear Justin,

You've got a ridiculous amount of money wrapped up in those cars. I'd sell the stupid things, get into a couple of little beaters, and start living on a budget and paying down debt.

In your situation, the only scenario where I'd even consider taking the in-laws up on their offer is one where the stay is for a very short, agreed-upon period of time. They'd have to be absolutely wonderful people, too, and everyone involved would need to know their boundaries.

But you guys can get out of debt pretty fast if you'll just lose the cars. You could even save a little money on the side while you were paying down debt and buy a better car as soon as the debt was gone. You might love your cars so much that you're unwilling to make the sacrifice. Not me. I'd rather keep my dignity intact and work my way out of the mess I created! —Dave

Playing the lottery robs you of your future

Dear Dave,

I've been struggling financially for the past few months, so I've been playing the lottery once a week. To me, the chance to win millions is worth a few dollars a month, even if things are tight. Paula

Dear Paula,

You've told me you're having money troubles, and at the same time, you're throwing money out the window every week? Honestly, the small amount you're talking about doesn't make a difference. Even if it's just two or three bucks a week, that action represents a lot of financially irresponsible behavior in your life.

I'm going to be very blunt with you. The lottery is a tax on the poor and people who can't do the math. Your chances of winning are bleak at best. Did you know the odds of winning the Powerball jackpot are about 1 in 292,000,000? There are plenty of other very unusual things that are much more likely to happen to you than winning the lottery. Your chances of making a hole-in-one on the golf course are about 1 in 12,500. Even your odds of having quadruplets are around 1 in 11 million.

When times are tough and you're strapped for cash, the last thing you need to do is spend what little you have on gimmicks. My advice is to focus on working hard, living on a tight budget that cuts out all unnecessary expenses, and saving every penny you can. Unlike the lottery, this is a plan that works every time. When you start living on a budget and get out of debt, it provides a little bit of breathing room in your life. You might even feel like you got a raise!

Don't let your finances—and your dreams—be hijacked by the lottery. —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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Priceless Memories

By Hannah Hensley
Erwin, Tennessee

When thinking about my life, there are certain moments that come to mind that I know are priceless memories. Some of the memories are of Christmas mornings and apple butter makings, but there is one winter morning that comes to mind. It wasn't a holiday, it wasn't a vacation and it wasn't an event, such as my birthday. It was just a not so typical day that happened a few winters ago.

The night before this morning we, my parents, siblings and I, decided to take a trip across the mountain to North Carolina, to visit Mamaw and Papaw. When we arrived that evening, we didn't find the table filled with Mamaw's delicious food, tasty goodies, and Blue Ridge dishes. We had brought pizza from town instead. Poor Mamaw was laid up on the couch, sick and in pain. We had come to visit, per our usual routine, but we had also come to care for Mamaw. There wasn't much we could do for her, but we wanted to be there for her and give Papaw his supper. We ate our pizza and I made oatmeal chocolate chip cookies (Papaw's favorite). We watched an old movie. As to which old movie we watched, that I cannot remember, but some of our favorites has always been, 'I Climb the Highest Mountain', 'A Man Called Peter', 'Meet Me in St. Louis', and I could go on and on.

When the movie was over and the children become sleepy, it was decided that it was time to make the trek back across the mountain, home. But, after some discussion and realizing Mamaw's current condition wasn't showing any improvement it was decided that I would stay behind and spend the night, just in case I could be of any help. We said our goodbyes and good-nights and the family returned home. I stayed behind, of which I was glad. Since it was so late when the others left, we went straight to bed. I took Dads' old room. The only heat in the room was a small ceramic heater, so I layered the bed with old hand-stitched quilts to stay warm.

I awoke early the next morning. I have always awakened early at Mamaw and Papaw's, even when I was a little girl. The excitement of being there and the worry of missing something fun or a distant train whistle always made sleeping difficult. The bedroom was cold, but I decided to embrace it and get dressed. I went and checked on Mamaw, but she was still sleeping soundly on the couch. However, I did find Papaw George wide awake. In fact, if I'm being honest, it was probably Papaw who had to waken me with the closing of his bedroom door and the sound of his footsteps in the hallway. The coffee was ready. I knew that because I could smell it down the hall. When checking on Mamaw, I found Papaw George kicked back in his recliner, doughnut in one hand and coffee in the other and a thick blanket wrapped over the top of him. He was watching the news. Just like he does every morning. Since Mamaw was sleeping on the couch across the room, I sat on the love seat, next to Papaw's chair.

"You want some coffee?" He said in a half-whisper. "That's fine, don't worry. I'll get it myself in a moment". But, before I could even get up, he was on his way to the kitchen to pour me a cup of stovetop, percolated coffee. We call it cowboy coffee, Papaw's specialty. Which, believe you me, there's nothing special about it. He returned to the living room and handed me my cup of black coffee in an old, chipped, state park souvenir mug. "There ya' go." "Thank you, sir."

He sat himself back down in his chair and flipped out the footrest. Totally disregarding the fact that Mamaw was asleep, he began talking without feeling the need to lower his voice. He told me about a boy he went to school with and he told me about the things he did that past week. I listened to details of how to properly paint the primer coat on a car. I learned about hub caps, wheel and tires. I heard about the guy down the road who had the nice Snapper lawnmower. He poked fun at the way Mamaw was sleeping and how she was snoring. Our laughter woke Mamaw and she arose from the couch looking like what one might say a zombie looks like, but she assured us she was doing better. We laughed, she laughed with us. Papaw walked over to hug her good morning. "How are you feeling baby doll?" he said. "Hm?" "How's my girl?" "I feel like myself, so I guess that's a good thing." Mamaw said and gave a hearty laugh. "I guess I'll get showered and dressed for the day."

It was just Papaw and me again. Sitting and sipping our now lukewarm coffee. We had paused from talking and had got caught up with whatever was being aired on the news that morning. "For heaven's sake! What day is it, Hannah?" "It's Sunday morning Papaw," I replied. And with that, the TV was turned off. "I don't know what's wrong with me. I feel so bad! I'm such a sinner. I should've done this first thing this morning. I should do it first thing each morning, but especially on a Sunday. Even more so this morning since we're not going to church." He reached over to the shelf beside his chair and took off his Bible. "I should have done this when I first got up. Instead, I got dressed and walked out to the garage for a minute to fiddle with my car. Then I took my medicine and when I take it I have to have something to eat, you know? So, I fixed my coffee and ate my doughnut while I watched the news. It's pitiful. My Bible should've come first thing. I feel so guilty, you know. Undeserving, you know?"

He began to read the Bible aloud to me. For the life of me, I can't remember what he read to me that morning, but I do remember him reading a good ten or fifteen minutes. I listened, impressed and pleased. When he had finished, he expressed what the passage meant to him.

"I don't deserve Him, ya know? I don't. Sometimes I think why He chose me? But, He did, and I had to have my coffee and doughnut before I thanked Him for this morning." I was stunned and impressed. He was so genuine and sincere. I was speechless. "Here," he said while handing me a hymnal. "Help me sing. What's that hymn that I like so much? We sing it in Church. You know everybody sings so well



George and Sharrol Hensley of Mitchell County.

at our Church. It's one of my favorite things, listening to everybody sing. Now, what was the name of that song?" "Amazing Love?" I asked. I couldn't remember the proper title. "Yes, that's the one! I love that one now you start it. You're the singer in the family. What's the page number?" I found the page in my book and helped him to find it in his. Then I began...

*"And can it be that I should gain
An int'rest in the Savior's blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain?
For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! how can it be
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?
Amazing love! how can it be
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?"*

Papaw paused and said "You know the girl who sits up front in Church? You know the one I'm talking about! She sings this song really good!" We continued with the second verse...

*"Tis mystery all! The Immortal dies!
Who can explore His strange design?
In vain the firstborn seraph tries
To sound the depths of love Divine!
'Tis mercy all! let earth adore,
Let angel minds inquire no more.*

*Amazing love! how can it be
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?"*

By the time we were ready to sing the last three verses, Mamaw joined us. "You ready to sing Baby doll?" Papaw said. "Yeah, I'll sing"

*"He left His Father's throne above,
So free, so infinite His grace;
Emptied Himself of all but love,
And bled for Adam's helpless race:
'Tis mercy all, immense and free;
For, O my God, it found out me.*

*Amazing love! how can it be
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?"*

*Long my imprisoned spirit lay
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray,
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.*

*Amazing love! how can it be
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?"*

*No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in Him, is mine!
Alive in Him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness Divine,
Bold, I approach the eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.*

*Amazing love! how can it be
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?"*

As the hymn ended Papaw joked and said "Um, that will conclude our services for the day. Please join us next Sunday. Same time, the same place. Come a praying, go a praying" He chuckled and Mamaw and I did too. "I love that song", he said. "Love it more than some of the old hymns I sang as a boy."

Mamaw had switched back and forth, singing melody and alto. Papaw had switched back and forth from melody to bass in the chorus. I played it safe and just lead us by singing a melody. Papaw sang the chorus one more time, only this time he sang the melody and I threw in a few of the bass notes.

There was a pause. My thoughts and eyes fixated on Papaw, who was flipping through the pages of the hymnal and Mamaw flipping through the pages of her Bible and combing her hair. The silence was broken when Papaw mumbled something under his breath. "What did you say Papaw?" I asked

"Amazing love. Such amazing love." He sighed and then he began humming some other old hymn and continued browsing through the hymn book. He eventually became lost in his own world and started singing to himself as if no one was around. Mamaw looked up from her Bible and winked at me and I smiled back. She joined Papaw in singing. Together they sang, first one verse and then a chorus, then a verse of another song and then the chorus. Hearing their voices singing those old hymns in the middle of the living room, I thought I was going to cry. Granted, and they will be the first to tell you, great singers, they're not, but at that moment on that winter morning, I thought I was witnessing the most beautiful picture that I could ever experience. The hymns and what Papaw had said running through my head, "Amazing love, such amazing love." Over and over it ran through my head and they've been running through my head ever since then.

Yes, Papaw, yes. Such amazing love He shows his chosen children. Such amazing love. Papaw and Mamaw, such amazing love you have shown me. One day I will tell my children and grandchildren of this love. This sweet, glorious, heavenly love. This amazing love.

-The hymn is called "And Can It Be That I Should Gain?" By Charles Wesley

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

Vance Patterson for Congress U. S. House of Representatives

A twenty-six-year resident of Western North Carolina, Vance Patterson announced his campaign for the U.S. House of Representatives 11th District of North Carolina on December 20th, 2019.

Vance is a father of four, married 45 years to his wife Mary Jo. Vance is a serial entrepreneur having started 21 companies. Two of those companies make industrial fans – he is An American Manufacturer.

In addition to his family and businesses, he and his wife started an Education Foundation called Foundation Forward dedicated to preserving American History and teaching civics, so people know how the government is meant to serve and protect We The People. Foundation Forward does this by building and gifting Charters of Freedom Settings to communities across the country. He and his wife have gifted 14 of these settings to communities in WNC, permanently displaying the Declaration of Independence, US Constitution, and Bill of Rights in a proper manner. Each setting is built to last 300 – 500 years.

Asking Vance about his stance on the issues he responds, "In Washington, I will work to finalize Healthcare Reform, begin Lowering the National Debt, Secure Our Borders, Reform Immigration, and Implement Term Limits.

In Congress I will be The Congressional Authority on Business Trump, explaining in committees why he is doing what he is doing, and what will happen for the benefit of all including the Democrats in the committees. This will help move Trump's programs through the Legislative Process.

Locally I will work on: Drug Abuse – Better Paying Jobs – Education – Security – Infrastructure

When asking Vance why he is running for Congress he responds, "I know what to do, I know how to do it, and it would be irresponsible of me not to step up."



Celebrating Recovery

Stress Management

By Christy Young
Mitchell County



It seems that in the world that we live in today, that everything is so fast-paced and intense that we find ourselves stressed and overwhelmed. But I don't think that is how God would have us live our lives. When we allow the pressure of this world to overcome us, we lose track of our purpose to follow Christ. John 14:27 says, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." God is telling us to not let our hearts be troubled, worried, stressed, or afraid. He comes to give us peace. We often find ourselves looking for a cure for stress. We will bury ourselves in work, family obligations, and become depressed and depleted of our self-worth. Stress often leads to health problems and creates conflict in our relationships causing us to become very unhappy and miserable people. We must come to a place in our lives that we are willing to let go and realize that if we want to live a peaceful life; that it only comes through God's peace and presence. Numbers 6:24-26 says, "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: The Lord make his face shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee: The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace." When we study God's word, meditate upon it, and plant it deep within our hearts, it changes the way we think and act. Our talk, attitude, and behavior change. Therefore, the things of this world (stress, conflict, obstacles, etc.) can't control us anymore. Being set free from the pressure of stress begins with submerging ourselves in God's word. That doesn't mean that things are not going to change and be uncomfortable at times in our lives, it means that we have the ability to seek God's face and have His help to cope and overcome. Trust that God can and will fix things in our life. Allow God to lead, and not the culture of this world. Through Christ we all have the ability to manage the stress our lives, don't let stress manage you. Put your trust in God and live in the peace and presence of your Savior!

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



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The Open Door

By Tim Tron
Burke County

Once more, my life has returned to the open door, once discovered nearly half a century ago.

It was unexpected, but a welcome visit from one of our department's professors. He had stopped by merely to say hello, a cordial inclusion if you will. Since starting my new position in life, many of my colleagues, with whom I serve, have had little time for fellowship with the end of the semester and then the Christmas break all occurring so quickly it seemed. Since we are still now in the stretch of time that precedes a new semester, there is finally time to learn about one another. There are no students, no final grades due, just a few staff members and faculty preparing for the coming days. The professor who had dropped in, who for now I will call Dr. Mo, seemed to be as curious about me as I was him. Our conversation traversed from pleasant-ries of the recent holidays to that of teaching, and life.

After I shared with him my recent application to Graduate School, we began to talk more in-depth about how classes in the Computer Science Department are structured. Before long, we were comparing various instructional methods, albeit his from a much higher plane of learning than what I had been accustomed to. It was about this point when he asked me a very profound question, one that seemed vaguely familiar. "How do you explain to a student that programming a small piece of code or project is important?"

The question, in fact, reminded me of something one of my former High School students might say. It could easily be considered the bane of thought that all High School Math teachers hated to hear, probably the most irritating question heard, "When am I ever going to use this?" We knew that the question originated at home because our students often told us that their parents were of the same mindset. So, the disdain for learning something that has apparently no useful value in life is not simply a secondary level education problem, from what I was hearing. It was something that permeates our culture no matter the level or institution.

Dr. Mo then asked, "How would you tell them it matters?"

The answer swirled around in my head amongst a hundred examples, all of which seemed to point to the obvious - sometimes the big picture is difficult to see when you are in the middle of the forest. Yes, the answer was there, but something else was speaking to me at the same time. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."

Suddenly, in my mind, that ancient door opened, and I stood up.

We had so badly wanted to go see what all the ruckus had been about. For a couple of days, machines and men had been working on the demolition of the now-deceased widow Mrs. Wolfe's home. Her husband, the late Dr. Wolfe, had died long before I was born, so we never knew much about who he was or how he came to be a Doctor. To us, his legacy was simply the sweet, old Mrs. Wolfe, who, too, was now gone forever. One by one, the elders of our little farming community of New Harmony, Indiana were disappearing, and with them a way of life.

Word was that the historical society had purchased her home and that they were going to knock the stately old house down and rebuild something in the style of the rest of the other historic homes in town. The historical society and the common townspeople always seemed to be at odds. The former, with their sophisticated overbearing attitude of wanting to create a "Shangri La," if you will, where people could come from far and wide to escape the stresses of life. Here in this Midwest utopia, they could learn of the Rappites, a failed social concept, and how they too merely meant to find a place where work and God could coningle. In the end, their demise became the inspiration for the more recent history seeking philanthropists' desires.

Meanwhile, the farmers of the area merely sought to feed their families. Slowly, we watched as our little agricultural town was gutted, the elitists eroding what once had been a thriving farming community. The destruction of Mrs. Wolfe's home was simply another casualty in the unspoken class war.

Just the summer or so before, Mrs. Wolfe had asked my grandma if any of her grandchildren might be able to cut her grass. My grandma had quietly pulled me aside one afternoon asked me if I could help her elderly neighbor. You see, to us grandkids, it was an honor to have grandma pull you aside to ask you to do anything for her. So, I was beside myself when I learned that grandma wanted me to help her dear elderly neighbor. It was a sunny summer day when I pulled the aged push mower across the pasture. We never had a lot of contact with Mrs. Wolfe, but what little we did, we always came away feeling blessed. That particular day was no different. After the last strip of grass was mowed, I shut down the mower and went back to pick up the can of gasoline near the front porch. Mrs. Wolfe had come to the door and motioned me to come over. I peevishly walked up to her as she leaned out the heavy wooden front door. "Come here now," she said, smiling sweetly. "You take this," she motioned waving the paper money at me.

"No, ma'am," I responded, "I didn't do it for that."

She wouldn't have any of my righteous posturing, and her eyebrows furrowed, "Now you come here and take this," she said, in a sterner voice. "You can take some of your cousins to town and get a treat at least."

She knew my weakness, doing for others, and with that, I apprehensively walked up and took the money. It shocked me to see the entire \$5.00 bill in my hand. It seemed like the most money I had ever seen at one time, and in those days, probably was. Shocked, I backed away, thanking her profusely as she closed the door, smiling broadly.

"You tell your grandmother, thank you for me," she said loudly through the glass of the door.

"Yes, ma'am," I quipped as I raced off to show grandma the newfound wealth. Grandma wasn't happy about the money, but she eventually softened to our pleading, and we made that little jaunt to the dime store in town later that day for a



sweet treat.

Now, just a couple years removed, our pleading convinced grandma to let us have our way once more, and we soon found ourselves exploring the piles of debris among what little was left of the former Wolfe estate.

Nothing much remained but save for piles of wood and one single door frame. As we found our way

into what had one time been the living room, the one from which Mrs. Wolfe had handed me that vast sum of money, my heart became sad. Here our proud neighbors had once lived, content, and stately in their home. They hadn't imparted their societal wishes upon us, but rather chose to live in harmony with us, accepting us for who we were, and likewise, us them.

Slowly, I walked up to the remaining door frame, with the door still intact. One of my cousins called from behind, "Be careful," as my tender, young hand reached for the doorknob. Slowly, I opened the barely standing door and from within what once was the coat closet, now sat a pile of rubble. We began to pick a few chards of wood and brick off the top, and much to my surprise, below the soot and dust, was a pile of brown, tweed cloth-covered books. We began to look through them, like archeologists in an Egyptian burial tomb, shaking our heads at the hieroglyphic shapes on the pages. The writing inside books was a mystery. There were some recognizable words, but most of the book was written in some alien language, complete with crazy symbols and letters we had never seen before. We each grabbed a book and raced back to our humble farmhouse to show grandma. There, we reconvened as was common, around the worn Formica covered kitchen table. We even turned on the overhead light and with studious awe and our best intellect, tried to decipher the ancient code.

We were as lost as a ball in high weeds.

Grandma was even at a loss for words. She simply said, "Maybe one of you someday can figure it out," and she left it at that. It was at that moment she had planted the seed, knowingly or not. Later that day, I would vow to my cousins that someday I was going to learn how to read that book, no matter how long in life it would take.

"You do that," my cousin Peggy replied sarcastically with her mischievous grin.

As I stood up from my chair, Dr. Mo watched as I walked over to the bookshelf. My weathered hand reached into the array of books and pulled out a single, tweed cloth-covered book titled, "Applied Mechanics."

"You see, Dr. Mo," I said to my guest as I slowly opened the book, "sometimes the answer takes a lifetime to learn."

There, written inside the front cover in his own hand, were the words, "property of John Wolfe." I then shared with the professor of finding the book as a child and how I had taken the vow to someday learn how to read the funny writings inside. Those questions as to, "Why would we ever need this," echoed in my mind as I spoke. Then, to show him the significance of the moment, I turned to the back of the book. There, carefully placed over 100 years earlier, Dr. Wolfe had placed something that was to encourage not only himself but a young neighbor farm boy many decades later; a manually typed page, neatly folded in half, containing his test and quiz scores from the class for which the book was intended. The faded, barely visible date read, 1916-1917.

Turning to my new friend, I continued, "When we can show someone the significance of something in context, how it fits into the big picture, we can then begin to appreciate the little steps that it takes to get there."

Dr. Mo smiled and nodded in confirmation.

I continued, "We may not be able to explain what we see at any given point in time. Sometimes, our experience is beyond what we can describe. But with time, God provides us the wisdom to achieve a new level of comprehension. Like the prophet Ezekiel trying to describe the visions of Angels that some say more describe that of alien spaceships, he too could only use a language of which he was capable of understanding."

I handed Dr. Mo the book so he could look at it more closely. He smiled and said, "This book is more than just a book. It has a singular significance beyond all other books like it because of this personalization."

"Yes," I nodded, "indeed it does."

And so, once more in life, I returned to that barely standing open door of the Wolfe's ancient home. Grasping the handle, I opened it wide, without fear, for God was with me. There were no cries from leery cousins to warn me of the dangers, only the voice of God beckoning me on. "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

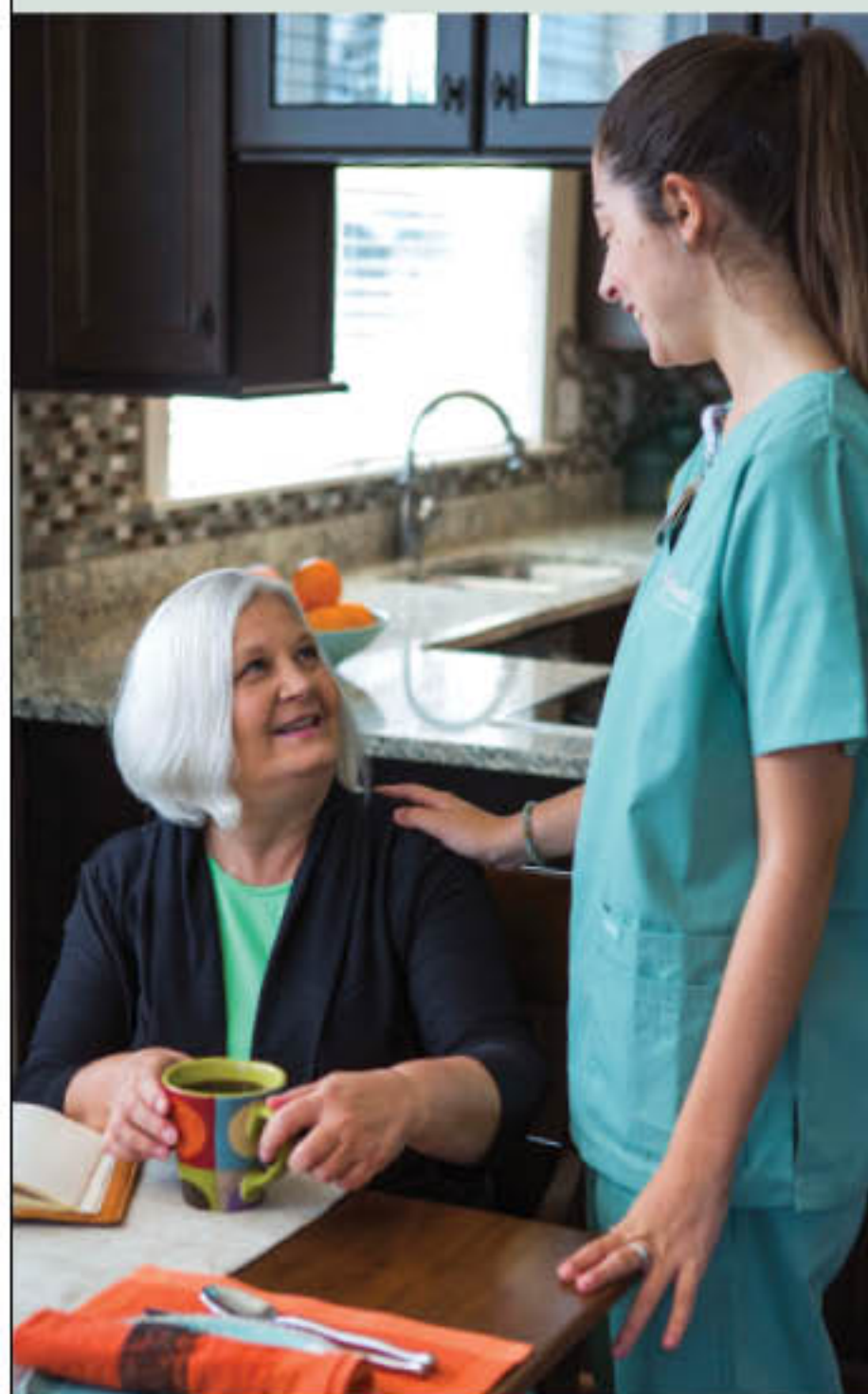
Step in with me, Dr. Mo, step on in and let the light shine within.

Thanks be to God.

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



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We use advanced electronic charting systems to track progress and treatments in real time, resulting in better care in your own home. To ensure the best possible care, we focus on educating both our patients and families on the personalized care pathway that is tailored to their needs.



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**Serving Avery, Mitchell, Yancey,
and surrounding counties.**

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