“Something to Think About”

Our Strong Tower

By Dennis Love
McDowell County

The Bible refers to our great God by many names. One of these names is found in Proverbs 18:10. It says, “The name of the LORD is a strong tower.”

It’s interesting to see how there are so many people who have names that match what they do in life. I have introduced myself to many people through the years, and when I tell them my name is Dennis Love, and that I’m a Pastor, they look at me and say, “Wow, what a great last name for a Pastor.”

And “Love” certainly is a great name for a Pastor, and I only hope that I can live up to my last name. I read about a dentist in Florida whose name is Dr. Toothman. I also read about a barber whose name is Dan Duff. And I also read about a man named Bill Crumble. He’s a professional home builder. Now, I’m not sure that I would want Bill Crumble to build my house, but that’s his name and I’m sure he’s good at building. On the other hand, I would welcome Dr. Toothman to look into my mouth and do my dental work. I’m not sure if I would allow Dan Duff to touch my head. I would need to pray about that one!

Well, the Lord’s name is a strong tower. Not a grass hut or a rustic cabin, but a strong tower. Isn’t that an awesome name for our great God? STRONG TOWER!

Did you know that you can run into that strong tower today and be born again? Did you know that you can run into that strong tower today and be energized in your spirit to live an abundant spirit filled life today? Did you know that you can run into that strong tower today and find rest for your weary soul? Did you know that you can run into that strong tower today and find rest for your weary soul? Did you find rest for your weary soul?

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.
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The Inspiring Word

Unlikely People that God Used (Mark)
By Terry Cleek
McDowell County

For the Inspiring Word, the month of March will bring a new series of articles titled “Unlikely People That God Used.” We’re going to learn from God’s Word there isn’t anyone in the Lord who will not use if they will come under His terms. My inspiration comes from the many people I meet who have awesome testimonies about how God rescued them from drugs, alcohol, dangers and even themselves. Yet, despite these awesome testimonies, many of them feel God has no place for them. Talking with them has made me realize there are a lot of born-again believers who, for whatever reason, believe God won’t use them because of their past. I want them and everyone reading this series to know that God’s Word is filled with men and women who were saved from devastating situations and moved forward to proclaim the gospel and lead many to Christ. This series will share the stories of many from God’s word and my prayer is that it will encourage you to be obedient to God’s call for your life and let Him call others through you.

Let’s begin with a familiar name, someone we all have heard of, John Mark! We’re introduced to John Mark in the Book of Acts. From chapter 12 where James the brother of the Apostle John has been executed by Herod and Peter has been put in jail until after Easter. Then Peter was to be executed also. The Bible tells us God moved and freed Peter. He went to a house where believers were meeting to pray. So, from Acts 12:12 in the KJV, we learn “And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John, whose surname was Mark: where many were gathered together praying.” Peter came to Mark’s house where God was worshipped and served daily. So, we know Peter was an influence on Mark through his mother, Mary.

We also know from Galatians 2:1 that Mark and Barnabas are cousins. This explains the relationship that placed Mark in the company of Barnabas and the Apostle Paul. However, things did not go well for Mark. He accompanied Barnabas and Paul on a missionary trip and, for unknown reasons, Mark abandoned the group and returned to Jerusalem. This did not sit well with Paul. Sometime later there was a second trip planned and Barnabas wanted to give Mark a second chance, but Paul said no. There was an argument, Paul and Barnabas parted ways. Barnabas took Mark and went one direction while Paul took Silas and went another direction. Mark had not only abandoned Paul and Barnabas, but he had also failed the Lord! That is the point of this story. I will venture to say none of us have gone through life and not failed the Lord!

Our lives before salvation were to a degree a failure, many of us after being saved either by choice or circumstance failed God. So, does that mean our ability to serve God is forever ruined? Let’s continue with Mark’s story and find out what happened to him.

We lose track of Mark for about ten years, then his name reappears in scripture. From Colossians 4:10-11 from the KJV we read “I urge you to God’s prisoner, saluteth you, and Marcus, sister’s son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments, if he come unto you, receive him;) (11) And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only are my fellow workers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me.” Paul refers to Mark (Marcus) as a fellow worker for the kingdom of God! Wow, what happened? Well, remember Peter. According to 1 Peter 2:13 while loyal his Peter refers to Mark as his son. Not by birth, but by faith. Just as Timothy was Paul’s son, Mark was Peter’s son in the faith. You see, others may have written Mark off as an unreliable servant of the Lord, but Peter knew what it was like to suffer the humiliation of abandoning Christ and having to recover a reputation from it. Simply put, Grace and Mercy was what happened to Mark. Mark became a strong ministry partner to Paul as we learn from 2 Timothy 4:9-11 KJV “Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me: (16) For Damas hath forbid me, saying, having sav’d this pres-
et world, and is departed unto Thessalonica: Crescens to Galatia, Tito unto Dalmatia. (II) Only Luke is with me. Take Mark and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry. Paul once again has been abandoned but this time he asks for help from none other than Mark. Our understanding is that help came. Mark was a stand-up soldier for Christ, having earned the respect of his peers. Mark went on to write one of the four gospels, believed by many scholars to be the experience of Peter scribed by Mark.

When we apply Mark’s testimony to our lives, we learn that failures are reversible and not only that they can be beneficial to the Lord’s work in and through our lives. If you have a Mark moment in your life don’t be hard on yourself. Come to the Lord, ask His forgiveness and find a godly, patient mentor to begin the process of maturing into a modern-day Mark.

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

Discussion Times:

February 17 at 9:30am
March 2 at 9:30am
March 16 at 9:30am

All meetings will be located at the Mitchell County Senior Center. If you cannot attend but are still interested, please call us directly at 828-682-9675.

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152 Ledger School Road
Bakersville, NC 28705


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Life Lessons - p. 9
Your Government - pp. 32-33

"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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261 Oak Ave.
Spruce Pine, NC 28777
Office – 828-765-6800
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3631 Altapass Hwy
Spruce Pine, NC
928-374-5900
dctapassbaptistchurch.org
www.altapassbaptistchurch.org
Dr. Marcus R. Benfield
Sunday School: 10:00am Worship: 11:00am
Sunday Evening: 7:00pm
Sunday Youth Night: 7:30pm
1st & 3rd Sunday Conferences for ages 6 - 11
2nd & 4th Sunday (Teen Discussion Group 13 - 18)
Wednesday Worship: 7:30pm
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Bear Creek Baptist Church
327 Bear Creek Road
Baker Valley, NC 28706
www.bearcreekbaptist.com
Reverend Bruce Cannon
Sunday School: 9:45 AM Worship: 10:45 AM
Discipleship: 6:00 PM Evening Worship: 6:45 PM
Wednesday Worship: 7:30 PM
"For God so loved the world, he gave his only Son..."

The Bridge Church of WNC
207 Pinebridge Avenue
Spruce Pine, NC 28777
www.bridgewnc.org
Pastors - Tom & Tammy Anglin
Sunday Service 10:30AM Wednesday Service 7:00PM
Church Office M-F 9:00AM-3:00PM
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Our passion is to reach the Body of Christ in this area in order to see the Fibr of God transform our community, state, nation and world. (See John 17:21)

Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church
2167 Jamestown Rd
Morganton, NC 28660
928-584-8212
Pastor Steve Beltz
Sabbath (Saturday) Bible Study - 9:30 am Sabbath Worship - 11:00 am
Vegetarian Buffet after church Wednesday Praise, Prayer & Proclaim - 7:00 pm
www.morgantonaod.org

Grassy Creek Baptist Church
793 Old NC 226 Hwy
Spruce Pine, NC 28777
grassycrewbdc.org
Pastor Ryan Bridgescott@五大lumtreechurch.org
Sunday School: 10:00am Morning Worship 11:00am
Sunday Evening: 6:30pm Wednesday:
J.A.M. (Jesus and Me) 6:30pm Mid-week worship 7:00pm
"That Mitchell County may know Christ"

Faith Fellowship Church
Champ Ray Rd.
Morganton, NC 28665
984-764-9959
www.fofgc.org
Pastor: David Gilliss
Sunday School - 10:00am Worship Service - 11:00am
Wednesday Bible Study - 7:00pm
"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord. And he delighteth in his way."
Psalm 37:3

Plumtree Presbyterian Church
427 Hwy 118
Morganton, NC 28664
928-765-8195
www.plumtreechurch.org
Pastor Ryan Bridgescott@五大lumtreechurch.org
Sunday School: 9:45 am Morning Worship 10:00am
Live Group Tuesday/Thursday evenings, 7:00 am
Fusion Youth Wednesdays, 6:30 pm
Holy Teachers 2nd Sunday 9:00 am
"John 15:16: That is my command, love one another..."

Great Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church
2076 Foothills Blvd W
Morganton, NC 28660
928-475-2040
Pastor Barry Mallory
Sabbath (Saturday) Bible Study: 10:00am Sabbath Worship: 11:00am
Vegetarian Buffet after church Wednesday Praise, Prayer & Proclaim - 7:00 pm
www.greathopeadventist.com

Pleasant Hill Baptist Church
2956 Enola Road
Morganton, NC 28665
928-437-4862
www.peasanthillbch.org
Senior Pastor
Dr. Jack Hodges
Sunday School: 9:30 am Sunday Worship: 10:30 am
Sunday Evening: 6:30 pm Wednesday Evening: 6:30 pm
"Love All, Reach All, Teach All, Send All"

Burkemont Baptist Church
4666 Burkemont Rd.
Morganton, NC 28665
984-437-2357
For more information, please visit
www.burkemontbaptist.org
Pastor: Dr. Luke A. Lane
8:30am - Early Worship 9:45am - Sunday School 11:00am - Worship
6:00pm - Evening Worship

Marion Seventh-day Adventist Church
189 Ward Dr.
Marion, NC 28752
(828) 298-4018
Pastor Tim Sheridan
Sabbath (Saturday) Bible Study: 5:15 am Sabbath Worship: 10:00 am
"Reaching the World with the Everlasting Gospel of Jesus Christ!"
www.marionnc.seventhday.org

West Burnsville Baptist Church
222 West Burnsville Church Rd.
Burnsville, NC 28714
(828) 682-3990
Pastor: Terry Long
Sunday School: 9:45 am Morning Service: 11:30 am
Evening Service: 6:00 pm Wednesday Service: 6:30 p.m.
Church values: Glorifying God through knowledge, growing, going, to build the church and reach the world.

First Baptist Church of Spruce Pine
120 Tappan Street
Spruce Pine, NC 28777
928-765-9411
www.sprucepinebaptist.com
www.sfbcsp.blogspot.com
Pastor: Doctor Branch
Weekly Branch Services: 10:00 am
"Knowing God, Serving God, Submitting to God!"

S Badin Branch Bachelor Church
3670 US 70 E
Morganton, NC 28660
928-475-2040
Pastor Barry Malooney
Sabbath (Saturday) Bible Study: 10:00am Sabbath Worship: 11:00am
Vegetarian Buffet after church Wednesday Praise, Prayer & Proclaim - 7:00 pm
www.greathopeadventist.com

Pine Branch Baptist Church
48 Church Road
Spruce Pine, NC 28777
Phone: (828) 765-9101
www.pinebranchbaptist.net
Reverend Bobby Joe Greene
Sunday School: 9:45-10:45am Worship Service: 11:00am
Sunday Evening: 6:30pm
A Bible-believing Fellowship Loving God and Loving People

Spruce Pine United Methodist Church
700 Wall Street
Spruce Pine, NC 28717
www.sprucepineumc.org
sprucepine@bellsouth.net
928-765-7444
Pastor Rick Whittington
Sunday School: 10:00am Worship Service: 11:00am
Weekly Bible Study: 6:00pm Wednesday Evening Prayer Meeting 7:00pm
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Newland Christian Church
2800 Mills Gap Road
Newland, NC 28657
Phone: (828) 265-1404
www.newlandchristianchurch.com
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A Grateful Girl

Hurry Up and Wait
By Patti Jensen
Mitchell County

"But God's not finished. He's waiting around to be gracious to you. He's gathering strength to show mercy to you. God takes the time to do everything right—everything. Those who wait around for him are the lucky ones." Isaiah 30:18 (MSG)

I am not a "be early" for everything person. But then my pet peeve is being late. I am more of an "on time" person. My friend Shirley loved to be early for everything. And by early, I mean she would be completely happy if we were an hour early. An hour! To me, that was a lot of hurry up and wait, but when I was with Shirley...we were early.

One November we were in Washington DC to visit the White House. First Lady Laura Bush had recognized a non-profit project we were working on in our hometowns and had included locally made Christmas ornaments from our project on the White House tree that year. We were so honored, and Shirley was beside herself. See, Shirley had taught high school US History for 30 years. She loved US History and politics. So being in Washington DC and being invited to the White House to meet the First Lady was thrilling.

On the day of the event, we were instructed to go to the gate at the East Entrance of the White House to be checked in for the event. We were up early that morning (of course) and went down to catch a cab to the East Entrance. As we jumped in the taxi and told the driver where we needed to go, he paused. He then said, "Ladies, I could drive you around the block and take your money, but the East Entrance to the White House is right across the street and down that sidewalk." Geez. How funny! We thanked the man for being so honest and kind and jumped out and crossed the street and down the sidewalk.

As we excitedly walked up to the guard at the gate, Shirley told them we were there to go to the White House to meet Laura Bush. He glanced at us and then studied a sheet of paper and a computer screen in the gatehouse. Then they asked us our names again. Then they studied the paper again before saying, "Ladies I don't see your names on the list."

What? Shirley was shocked and flustered. She quickly showed them what we were indeed on that list! He told us to wait as he made a call. In the meantime, Shirley was calling our US Representative's office to see what was going on. After a few long minutes, the guard politely said he had an answer. It appears that we were an hour early for the event and the guest list hadn't even been sent down to the gate yet. Ha! We were so excited to get to the White House and see what was waiting for us that we got there so early we couldn't even get in!

Ugh! I glanced at Shirley with my "see that's why we shouldn't be early" look, but then we just laughed. And we laughed about that story for years afterward!

We eventually made our way into the White House for the reveal of the Holiday decorations and reception. It was wonderful and so special. First Lady Laura Bush was so gracious.

That was just one of the many hurry up and wait moments in my friendship with Shirley. I think Shirley always wanted to be early because she didn't want to miss a thing.

Sometimes in our walk with God, there is some hurry up and wait. We can get so excited about a new idea or a new project or a goal that we go full speed ahead towards it. We jump in feet first. We want to check it off our list and get to the good stuff! We don't want to miss anything we think is coming to us. Our excitement can sometimes overtake our plan. And then God says, "not yet." He stops us and tells us to wait.

God doesn't make us wait to punish us or frustrate us, but more to shape us. He makes us wait sometimes to give our faith time to grow to the size that we will need to take on what He has in store for us. But waiting is hard. Especially when you believe you are ready for the next step.

And remember, God also waits for us. He has so much in store for us and He waits for us to trust Him with those things and with His timing. Waiting on God is a show of our faith and our commitment to say that we want what God has in store more than what we want WE want in our own timing. Are you able to wait on God today?

"The Lord is good to those who wait hopefully and unexpectedly for Him, to those who seek Him." Lamentations 3:28 (ASV)

I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD." — Psalms 27:13-14

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; things to do 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.
What Are My Options?
By Jim Huskins
McDowell County

Most Christians believe that we are—or should be—keeping the Ten Commandments. Few actually do. Regardless of how well we avoid coveting, adultery, lying, idol-making and so forth, no matter how honorably we treat our parents, most Christians consistently break the Fourth Commandment. Exodus 20:8 says: “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.”

God describes Himself as unchanging, yet most believe that He changed His mind about Sabbath. We believe that Sabbath “does not matter,” or that we can choose any day as “our” Sabbath, or that Sabbath was “just for the Jews.” Scripture says otherwise.

Sabbath is an integral part of creation. Genesis 2:1-3 tells us that when God finished creating the world in six days, He rested on the seventh day, blessed it, and made it holy. He ordained a day to celebrate the cessation of His creative activity. We are commanded to share His celebration by keeping our creation day one each week. God makes it clear at Sinai that Israel must keep His Sabbath forever because they are an example to all the world. On the seventh day each week, God’s people are to rest from their labor, bring their families and worship Him.

Sabbath is important to God. While He was giving instructions for building the Tabernacle and its furnishings, formulating holy incense and anointing oil, constructing the priests garments and vestments—some of the most important work in history—He also gave us Exodus 31:13. It says that, no matter how busy we are, and no matter how important our task, we must not fail to keep Sabbath.

Most English translations say something like “you shall” keep My Sabbath. The Hebrew says: “Above all, you must keep My Sabbath.” God’s perspective is that nothing is more important than keeping Sabbath. Why then, do we trivialize the fourth commandment?

When Jake and Elwood—The Blues Brothers—were given “A Mission from God,” they let nothing stand in their way. Not even little things like honesty and integrity and the safety of others. You and I do the same thing. When we perceive a “calling,” we charge ahead with little concern for God’s principles and commands. God told Moses that His people must put aside everything to keep Sabbath.

Most Christians dismiss Sabbath by saying that Sabbath is a perpetual covenant between God and Israel. They believe that the “Church” replaced Israel in God’s plan. Every time the New Testament uses the term Israel, it is referring to the blood descendants of Jacob. Those who follow Messiah are, through faith, grafted into Israel. Galatians 3:29 says that those of faith are the true sons of Abraham. By faith, we are joined to Israel’s covenants along with her blessings and obligations. That includes Sabbath.

God desires to impart His holiness to all the dimensions of our lives. He sanctified the spatial dimensions of height, width, and depth by giving us the Tabernacle a space set apart from all other spaces. A place where He could dwell in holiness.

But we also live in a fourth dimension: time. We cannot see the time; we only see its effects. Without exception, time causes decay. This decay, called entropy, is described by the Second Law of Thermodynamics. Time measures the rate of entropy. As a partial buffer against our decay, God sanctified the Sabbath and set it apart from all other blocks of time—it was Holy. A holy day for us to spend with our Holy Creator. It is the only day of the week God gave a name. Ironically, we named the other six days for pagan deities.

Exodus 31:13 tells us that we must keep Sabbath “above all.” It also tells us why: “That you may know that I, the LORD, sanctify you.” Keeping Sabbath clothes us in God’s holiness. This is no small task. We cannot be in God’s presence unless we are righteous according to His standards. We cannot attain righteousness on our own. By faith in Messiah, we are clothed in His righteousness. One of the reasons God gave us Sabbath is to prepare us to receive the righteousness that we do not deserve. When Jesus says that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath, one of the implications is that man does not bring holiness to the Sabbath. On the other hand, Sabbath was created to bring holiness to man.

Many Christians think Sabbath is unimportant. Exodus 31:14 says that anyone who profanes Sabbath shall be permanently separated from God. Verse 16 says that Sabbath will last forever. We learn from the prophets and the book of Revelation that Sabbath will be kept during the Millennium. Why would God cast aside this marvelous gift to us in the meantime?

The answer is that He did not. No verse of scripture states that God altered or moved or revoked the Fourth Commandment. That idea was forced on the Church by Rome in the fourth century. Constantine claimed that he converted to Christianity, but he remained a sun-god worshiper to his death. That’s why he commanded everyone to his religion to worship and rest on “the venerable day of the sun.”

What God says is that nothing is more important than keeping Sabbath. The false prophets of “replacement theology” say that Sabbath does not matter. God says otherwise. One day we will be called to give an account of which option we chose.

Obedient Heart Fellowship believes that the entire Bible is true and relevant. We accept salvation by grace through faith in Jesus, and we attempt to love and serve Him by keeping His commandments. See Revelation 1:12. We meet each Sabbath—Sabbath Day—in the fellowship hall of Chinchfield Baptist in Marion. 11:00 A.M. 828-460-7913

Jim & Beverly Huskins are members of Obedient Heart Fellowship.

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Experiencing pain and suffering in life is hard to deal with most of the time. But through our walk in Christian faith, we are to embrace real hope through the wisdom in God’s Word. If we allow Him, God will work through our suffering with us. All the answers we need surrounding our current situation and the consequences of disobedience, truths of God were not compiled into biblical text but were taught by Jesus who chose to disobey God. Adam and Eve had a perfect life by God’s design. Adam was the first human created by God in His own image and Eve the first woman. “And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed, to you, it shall be for meat” (Genesis 1:29).

In Genesis Chapter 2:1 “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” (Verse 7) - “And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there He put the man whom He had formed.” (Verse 8) - “And out of the ground the Lord God formed every living creature that is upon the earth.” (Verse 9).

In Chapter 3 the serpent enters the scene. The creature which lust itself to Satan. Satan, who, as the prince of this world system, is the real though the unseen ruler of the world, will tempt the human who is in the image of God. The woman is deceived, tempted by the serpent. Seeing that the tree was good for food, pleasing to the eye, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit and did eat. The man Adam transgressed deliberately and willingly did eat of the fruit of the tree, and he was cast out. And both the eyes were opened and their knowledge. The tragic consequence of this temptation and fall was nothing less than the universal sinfulness of all humankind. Satan’s success is threefold: 1. The temptation was justified by Satan’s introducing doubt and denial of God’s Word (See Genesis 3:1-5). 2. The fall brought consciousness of sin, of condemnation, and of the separation from God as indicated by the fact that Adam and Eve hid from the face of God. 3. Man’s nature became evil and hostile to God. This is a state of spiritual death (defect) in every human individual, one of the consequences of sin and God’s curse upon all mankind after Christ’s Crucifixion and Death upon yet another tree. The tree of life obtains as an everlast reason for the redemption is eternal in its application. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory: While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

We now have True Life because of God’s Truth and His indwelling Spirit in our lives. We have the assurance of better things to come. All our suffering and pain will cease when the new heaven and new earth are unveiled. Sin and its consequences will be no more. Think about it...sin started from a tree and the tree of life closed out of the garden and now that True Life, as stated above, is now made available to all mankind through Christ’s Crucifixion and Death upon yet another tree. This tree of life obtains as an everlast reason for the redemption is eternal in its application. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory: While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:4-18).
A Lesson Message
By Jody Griffin
Avery and Mitchell County

“And he said to them all, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow me.” (Luke 9:23, KJV)

A Lesson Message... From an Unexpected Source (Prison)

Learn... Can feel to “unreenting”, if spent... Just repeating... It's means... For reflection, to lead... One direction
The path of the Savior... Calls for change of behavior
Starts with admitting... And tempts us toward quitting
But the Truth, it compels... And the Promise it sells
Mean, Lent leads to LIFE... in the midst of the strife
That we find... When we make up our mind
To work as He worked... Talk as He talked
To live like He lived... Love like He loved.
To go where He went... Raised to Life up above.
Sacrifice came and Sacrifice went... So that those who believe, anyone percent
Will know these days... Will end in true Peace.
When all's said and done... It's the death of God's Son.
But because He is risen... We are ALL freed from prison.
Although tried and convicted... We are never asking.
From the grip of His Grace... So we trust and replace.
All that we once claimed... Cause it led to our shame.
So, for 46 long days and 40 long nights... We give up our plans, lay down our rights.
We turn from our sins, we freely confess... That without Hope from the Lord, we are truly hopeless.
Then perspectives are changed... and burdens are lifted.
We now see this time from new hearts that have shifted.
From the curse of the past... to a Love that will last.
Forever and ever for eternity... Love gave up His Life that ALL might be free.
All it takes is believe... and then you WILL receive Thank You, LORD!

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Life Lessons
By Doug Harrell
Mitchell County

If you are old enough you may remember the song by The Rolling Stones: Satisfaction:

I can’t get no, oh, no, no, no, hey, hey, hey!
That’s what I say.
I can’t get no satisfaction, I can’t get no satisfaction
‘Cause I try and I try and I try and I try
I can’t get no, I can’t get no

Most of us go through life struggling to get satisfaction. We look for ways to bring joy into our lives, ways to ease our hurt and pain, ways to ease ourspanning thoughts and fears. We tend to feel inadequate capabilities don’t measure up to the task before us, so we are afraid to get out of our comfort zones. Try as we might, we can’t get no satisfaction in our lives. Two things must come into focus if we are to overcome this longing for true satisfaction in our lives; belief and faith.

"Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainting in them. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses. And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation. Oh, that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderfull works to the children of men! For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness." Psalm 107:1-9 KJV

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. By faith the elders obtained a good report. Through faith, we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God: so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." Hebrews 11:1-3 KJV

We must have a sincere hope for a better today, a better tomorrow and a better life in general. If we have hope, a genuine desire with the expectation of fulfillment, and we build that hope upon His righteousness and promises, we will reach that goal of satisfaction. Nothing else in this old world will do it. So many times, we look for excitement and satisfaction in the things of this world. The excitement (supposed) of an affair with what we might think is brassier grass on the other side of the fence, the enhancement, (we think) of our personality when we have a few drinks. We think the big house and the fancy car might give it to us. That does not happen. The Lord wants us to be happy and have satisfaction, but we usually mess up big time when we take our eyes off the instructions and directions for the good life.

"Love the Lord, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." 1 John 2:15-18 KJV

The song “My Hope is Built on Nothing Less” says it this way:

“ar Jesus’ blood and righteousness
My hope is built on nothing less

Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness
I dare not trust the sweetest frame
But wholly lean on Jesus name
On Christ the solid rock I stand
All other ground is sinking sand
All other ground is sinking sand"

Build your hope on Jesus because all other things will give you no satisfaction, only by the blood of Jesus can we attain that hope and eternal satisfaction that comes from knowing and accepting Him as our only true path. He leads us toward our righteousness through his sacrifice that was given so that we could have the blessed assurance that all is well with our souls.

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.

A God-centered Perspective
By Dan Qurello
Barke County

In his book, The Knowledge of the Holy, author A.W. Tozer made this accurate observation: “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.” (The Knowledge of the Holy, 1948).

Our ideas of God are not merely theological ideas that are removed from reality; rather, they are the ideas that enable the right living. What we believe about God is foundational to our Christian life.

Psalm 139 brings us face to face with the reality of who God is and is arguably one of the greatest psalms with the book of Psalms. It is a psalm that emphasizes theology in practice and represents the journey of the psalmist who begins with reality and ends with a prayer. What he learned about God removed his sense of self-dependence and caused him to fully rely upon the God with whom he came face to face. The more we learn about God, the less dependent upon ourselves we will be.

Psalm 139 consists of four stanzas, each stanza consisting of six verses. I believe the structure of the psalm leads from the reality of God’s knowledge to a plea for God’s searching. When one considers the greatness of God, the natural response is to flee. David identifies the futility of fleeing and embraces the reality of God’s knowledge and plea for God to search him.

In 139:1-6, David emphasized God’s omnipresence and emphasizes the reality that God knows me. His knowledge is thorough, complete, and always accurate (139:1). He knows every detail (139:2), thought (139:2), activity (139:3), and every word (139:6), even the thoughts that form the words. As David concluded this stanza, he burst out, “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.” The extensive and perfect knowledge that God has of David is too wonderful for him. It is too high for David and is therefore unattainable and incomprehensible.

In the second stanza, David emphasizes God’s omnipresence (139:7-12). God is everywhere present equally and entirely. Therefore, I can be assured God is with me. As David began this section of Scripture, he asked the question, “Wither shall I go from thy spirit?” Having reasoned that there is nothing in our lives apart from the knowledge of God, David began to ponder the futility of escaping God’s presence. If he were to attempt to flee God’s presence, his effort would be futile because His presence is universal (139:7-8) and inescapable (139:9-10). David also identified the futility of hiding, for the darkness is light to God (139:11-12).

In Psalm 110:1-18, David emphasized God’s omnipotence, a term meaning God is all-powerful. David was clear. God designed me. Our design is severely planned (110:13-14), uniquely demeled (110:15-16), and infinitely vast (110:17-18). The sum of thought of God directed towards man is vast. He regards them as tumbling a great sum in verse 17 and a number unable to be determined in verse 18. In fact, if David were to attempt to counter these thoughts, they would exceed the grains of sand.

Finally, David emphasized God’s holiness in 139:18-24 where we learn God compels us. God’s response to the wickedness of man is emphasized in this passage as he considers it from God’s perspective (139:16-20) and man’s perspective (139:21-24). God will not tolerate wickedness, nor will He excuse those who disdain Him. Those striving to live holy lives align themselves with God’s values and welcome God’s searching for their lives. Rather than attempting to flee, embrace God’s evaluation and pray “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me.”

Pastor Dan Qurello is pastor Morganton Baptist Church. Check us out on our website www.morgantonbaptist.org or find us on Facebook and YouTube.
Nuclear Physicist for Creation!

By Jonathan Sarfati

Dr. Heinz Lyckenga was born in the province of Friesland in the Netherlands during the Nazi occupation. After the war, his family immigrated to Canada for better opportunities. He earned a Bachelor’s degree in Engineering Physics (1965) and a Ph.D. in experimental Nuclear Physics (1969) from McMaster University in Canada (at around the time of the Chernobyl disaster, which happened while he was a graduate student there). By this time, Heinz had already published 10 peer-reviewed papers in scientific journals, including Physical Review, probably the world’s most prestigious physics journal.

Dr. Lyckenga emphasizes the importance of God as Creator: “It means that He oversaw and above all, has absolute authority over us. And He copiously documents that Jesus and the New Testament authors affirmed Genesis as real history. He then worked for some decades in the telecommunications and computer software industries. In 1992, Dr. Lyckenga formed Open Systems Technology Associates (OSTA) to offer his technology management consulting services to various startups in the high technology industry.

In 2011 Heinz founded the Apologetics Forum of Snohomish County in Washington State, USA, to help equip believers in the defense of their Christian faith.

He regularly teaches and arranges seminars on topics related to the Bible and science and has presented at conferences around the world.

With such a long career in science, it is not surprising to learn that Dr. Lyckenga was already interested in science in high school. But even earlier than that, his favorite subject was mathematics. The basis for his later (awarded bachelor) career as an apostle goes back even further. He says he was blessed to be raised in a Christian family and that his childhood years were filled with Bible stories.

Unlike today, evolution wasn’t brought up at high school. Evolution clearly has not been taught as a science in our schools and universities. The professor directly challenged students who believed in the Bible, pointing out that the layers of sediment on the earth were the key to the history of the earth and that this was in conflict with the Bible.

However, this didn’t affect his general science career, for which evolution was irrelevant. He received his master’s degree in experimental nuclear physics. Evolution and the Christian faith.

Things had changed by the time he was old enough to attend public schools in the mid-1970s. "Audrey, our oldest daughter, came home from school one day and said: ‘Mommy, can I have a pet monkey?’ We said: ‘No!’ The professor directly challenged students who believed in the Bible, pointing out that the layers of sediment on the earth were the key to the history of the earth and that this was in conflict with the Bible.

However, this didn’t affect his general science career, for which evolution was irrelevant. He received his master’s degree in experimental nuclear physics. Evolution and the Christian faith.

Heinz was not confronted by the Bible between the evolution and the 600-year-old creation in the high school. The professor directly challenged students who believed in the Bible, pointing out that the layers of sediment on the earth were the key to the history of the earth and that this was in conflict with the Bible.

However, this didn’t affect his general science career, for which evolution was irrelevant. He received his master’s degree in experimental nuclear physics. Evolution and the Christian faith.

In his creation talks, Dr. Lyckenga emphasizes the importance of God as Creator: “It means that He oversaw and above all, has absolute authority over us. And He copiously documents that Jesus and the New Testament authors affirmed Genesis as real history. Another very important biblical teaching is that death is the result of Adam’s sin, as opposed to evolution’s teaching that the death of the first man was caused by natural processes.

After seeing the attempted indoctrination of Audrey, Heine and Gaida enrolled their children in a biologically sound Christian school until they were ready for university or their chosen career path. Later, Audrey saw the importance of the issue and gave her own children a Christian school education. Unfortunately, she died before the BBN was founded in 2013 but was instrumental in helping Heinz’s founding of the Apologetics Forum.

Evolution vs science

Dr. Lyckenga points out that Christians should have no fear of evolution on scientific grounds. Rather, evolution is the only natural explanation for life on earth. He also states that since evolution is a natural explanation, it is not scientific.

He notes that evolution is based on the assumption that all life on earth is descended from some ancient ancestor. However, this is not a scientific assumption. Evolution is not able to explain the vast number of species that exist today. He also states that evolution cannot explain the complexity of life.

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Spiritual Health

Why is my Brain Not Working?
By Miguel Cruz

Brain health is becoming a major issue in health care today. Alzheimer’s disease is now the 6th leading cause of death in the U.S. and the major issue regarding brain health today. Here are a few more facts regarding Alzheimer’s according to the Alzheimer’s Association:

Between 2000 & 2017 deaths from Alzheimer’s increased 145%
Currently, 5.8 million Americans are living with Alzheimer’s, and it is projected to rise to 14 million by 2050

Every 65 seconds, someone in the U.S. is diagnosed with it.

We all know someone with a little bit of dementia, and we just brush it off as they are getting old. The unfortunate fact is that where Alzheimer’s begins. Not to say that all dementia is in Alzheimer’s, without proper examination and testing, it is impossible to know who will and will not end up with it.

The key is catch it early and treat it early.

If you find yourself walking into a room and forgetting what you went in there for. Forgetting names of obvious objects, it’s right there on the tip of your tongue but you just can’t say it. Or you are losing things way too often. You may already be headed there. This should not be happening in your 40’s, 50’s or even the 60’s.

If you mention these things to your doctor, they are likely to just brush it off as “you are just getting older, it’s normal.” I would not walk but run out of that doctor’s office and find someone who is willing to listen to you and recommend a plan of action to reverse dementia, it is possible.

There is a phenomenon called “neuroplasticity” which is the term used for the brain’s ability to repair and heal itself. For this to happen there are a few things that you must know:

1. The brain must have the proper nutrients.
2. The brain must be exercised. Expand your thought process, watching TV makes you brain dead.
3. Testing is available. You must use a doctor properly trained in neuroplasticity, just throwing drugs at it will not work.

If you are interested in learning more, I recommend a book called, “Why isn’t My Brain Working” by Datis Khanneman. He spells out not only a good understanding of the subject but how you can start a treatment program on your own. I have used his recommendation to successfully reverse my own dementia which started in my 50’s. Everything I described above was happening to me which started me on a path to recovery and knowledge how to help others.

For more information, I may be reached at dmncruz@icloud.com

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Evangelism Explosion International

A Few Small Steps in Faith
By Rev. John Sorenson

Let’s face it. The Great Commission can sometimes feel overwhelming. How can we, as individual Christians, reach the world with the message of hope and salvation like Jesus commanded us to do?

When we look at the numbers, the task is great. Even with modern technology, almost two billion people have never had the chance to even hear the Good News of salvation because no one has ever told them. So, where do we even begin?

The reality is, we have never been chosen to completing the Great Commission than we are right now. Reaching the entire world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ is within our grasp – possibly within our own generation. Here’s why.

Ralph Winer, founder of the U.S. Center for World Mission found that in 100 A.D., there was one Christian for every 360 people on earth. In 1600, one Christian existed for every 21 people. Today there are only eight people for every practicing Christian. That ratio is lower than it has ever been in history. That excites me!

The point is, we are living in the greatest revival the world has ever seen. The Great Commission can be accomplished, but only if we are willing to share our faith. Think about it. If every Christian was equipped to share their faith, and they actually did it, every person on earth could have the opportunity to hear about the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ.

Not all of us are called to travel the world as a missionary, but we can share our faith right here at home, in our own communities – with our friends, co-workers, and the people we meet in our neighborhoods. Begin by taking a few small steps in faith and trust that God will lead you to someone who needs to know about Him.

Step 1: Pray for open doors. Often, we don’t see opportunities because we aren’t looking for them. Prayer opens our eyes to the needs around us.
Step 2: Start a Gospel conversation. Invite a friend to join you for coffee. Ask a co-worker how they are doing, physically and spiritually. Offer to pray or help someone in need. Then really listen.
Step 3: Share your God-story. Our personal testimony about what God has done can change lives. People might be able to argue with Scripture, but they can’t dispute what you personally have experienced.

Remember, Jesus commanded us to share the Gospel. We can’t force someone to accept it. But we can help to keep Jesus in the forefront of their minds and allow the Holy Spirit to work. All it takes is a few small steps of faith.

Rev. John B. Sorenson. D.D. is the President/CEO of Evangelism Explosion International, headquartered in Arden, NC. E.E. has been a leader in equipping Christians to share their faith for more than 30 years. For more free tips and resources, visit evangelismexplosion.org

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-H.O. Hirt, ERIE Founder
“No Regrets Family”
Child Slavery, Just How Bad Is It?
By Dean Honeycutt
Mitchell County

I would like to call your attention to Child sex trafficking because I fear we pay far too little attention to this huge problem. I was first made aware of the magnitude of “human slavery” at a “For King and country” concert in Charlotte. I believe at times we are so shocked at children sold for sex we want to put the issue away in a closet and shut the door and not open it because it is so horrifying. The only way we are going to stop this horrible sin is to bring it into the light by making it known and punishing severely those who sell children and young women.

I would like to share part of an article written by John Whitehead, January 28, 2020, entitled The Super Bowl’s Biggest Losers: The Boys and Girls Being Sold for Sex 20 Times a Day.

The following is a portion of Whitehead’s article.

“Children are being targeted and sold for sex in America every day.”—(John Ryan, National Center for Missing & Exploited Children) There can only be one winner emerging from this year’s Super Bowl LIV showdown between the San Francisco 49ers and the Kansas City Chiefs, but the biggest losers will be the hundreds of young girls and boys—some as young as 9 year olds—who will be bought and sold for sex during the course of the big game.

It’s common to refer to this evil practice, which has become the fastest growing business is organized crime and the second most lucrative commodity traded illegally after drugs and guns as child sex trafficking, but what we’re really talking about is rape. Adults purchase children for sex at least 2.5 million times a year in the United States.

It’s not just young girls who are vulnerable to these predators, either. According to a USA Today investigative report, “boys make up about 30% of children caught up in the U.S. sex industry (about 60% are female and less than 5% are transgender males and females).”

Consider this: every two minutes, a child is exploited in the sex industry. In Georgia alone, it is estimated that 7,200 men (half of them in their 30s) seek to purchase sex with adolescent girls each month, averaging roughly 200 a day. On average, a child might be raped by 2,000 men during a five-year period.

It is estimated that at least 100,000 children—girls and boys—are bought and sold for sex in the U.S every year, with as many as 300,000 children in danger of being trafficked each year. Some of these children are forced or abducted, others are runaway, and still, others are sold into the system by relatives and acquaintances.

Child rape has become Big Business in America. This is an industry that revolves around cheap sex on the fly, with young girls and women who are sold to men each day for $25 a piece, while their handlers make $150,000 to $200,000 per child each year.

This is not a problem found only in big cities.

It’s happening everywhere, right under our noses, in suburbs, cities, and towns across the nation. Debbie, a straight-A student who belonged to a close-knit Air Force family living in Phoenix, Ariz., is an example of this trading of flesh. Debbie was 15 when she was snatched from her driveway by an acquaintance-friend. Forced into a car, Debbie was bound and taken to an unknown location, held at gunpoint and raped by multiple men. She was then crammed into a small dog kennel and forced to eat dog biscuits. Debbie’s captors advertised her services on Craigslist. Those who responded were often married with children, and the money that Debbie “earned” for sex was given to her kidnappers. The gang raped many times. While search parties were sent out for Debbie, she was held captive, police finally found Debbie smeared in a drawer under a bed. Her harrowing ordeal lasted for 40 days.

While Debbie was fortunate enough to be rescued, others are not so lucky. According to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, nearly 800,000 children go missing every year (roughly 2,185 children a day). With a growing demand for sexual slavery and an endless supply of girls and women who can be targeted for abduction, this is not a problem that’s going away anytime soon. For those trafficked, it’s a nightmare from beginning to end. Those being sold for sex have an average life expectancy of seven years, and those years are a living nightmare of endless rape, forced drugging, humiliation, degradation, torture, disease, pregnancies, abortions, miscarriages, torture, rape, and pain. It is also the most constant fear of being killed or, worse, having those you love hurt or killed.

Peter Landesman paints the full horrors of life for those victims of the sex trade in his New York Times article “The Girls Next Door.” “Andrea told me that she and the other children she was held with were frequently beaten to keep them off balance and obedient. Sometimes they were videotaped while being forced to have sex with adults or one another. Often, she said, she was asked to play roles: the restaurant patron or the obedient daughter. Her cell of sex traffickers offered three age ranges of sex partners: to age 6, 5 to 12, and 12 to 18—sex as well as what she called a “danger zone.” “In the danger zone, they can hit you or do anything they want to,” she explained. “Though sex always hurt when you are little, so it’s always violent. Everything was much more painful once you were placed in the danger zone.

Again, this is just a portion of the article. I wanted to share it with you because it is powerful and informative. Be vigilant if you see something suspicious or say something. Keep your eyes on your children and keep up with who they relate to on social media.

You may read the entire commentary at The Rutherford Institute Facebook post January 28, 2020. You can also read the original article in the John White article section located at https://www.rutherford.org/.

Faster Dean Honeycutt shepherds Snow Hill Baptist Church in Bakersville, NC. He may be reached at 828-683-0112, snowhillbaptist@gmail.com or visit their website at www.snowhillbaptist.com.
**Fighting for Truth**

By Chris Ratliff

Mitchell County

You and I as Christians, are living in dangerous and troubling times. The Apostle Paul certainly wrote truth when he told Timothy, "This know also that in the last days pernicious times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, headstrong, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof, from such turn away." (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

Just in the last couple of decades since I’ve been in ministry as a pastor, we can look around us and see these scriptures along with many others being fulfilled right in front of us. These rapid changes in our nation, to many people, even Christians, seem to go unnoticed or they seem oblivious to the way culture has shifted. Many even seem ok with it! Sadly, there has been such a drastic shift in the many churches to liberal beliefs, that many cannot tell the church from the world. Christians, including pastors and preachers, have been constantly pressured to conform to new norms that the world around us has been pushing. Folks want to claim heaves while living for hell! The preaching of holy and righteous living often is a thing of the past and if one does, they are labeled as hateful and mean spirited. The truths of scripture has been compromised and watered down to the point that when someone preaches it is labeled as hate. When people have been conditioned by weak theology for so long, the truth becomes offensive because they aren’t used to hearing it!

Over the years in ministry, there have been many occasions when I’ve been asked for counsel by individuals. Often questions will be asked, and I do my best to give Biblical answers. You just wouldn’t believe how sometimes the truth is met with anger and rejection. I’ve concluded that people are looking for the Bible to somehow condone sinful behavior instead of searching for truth to stand on and help them through their situations. And it’s not just from counseling sessions. Preachers and Pastors, including myself, are confronted by people who have been “offended” by Biblical sermons that have been preached. The anger is directed toward the messenger, but the truth is they are angry about being told the truth.

Herein lies the problem. People have been taught to doubt the authority of Scripture. Paul told Timothy that “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” 2 Timothy 3:16-17. Read this next statement very carefully: If we come to the point where Scripture is no longer the standard by which we measure our faith and practice, then anything goes. When the Bible is no longer how we learn what we are supposed to believe and how we are to strive to live, then we have no foundation on which to stand. Instead, man will be blown about by every false doctrine and teaching that comes along. I’m not surprised by how the unbelieving world lives, but I am heartbroken by those who claim to be believers in Christ choose to live.

Paul charged Timothy to preach the Word, meaning the Scriptures. There was coming a time when man would not want sound doctrine but would raise up teachers who would teach them what they wanted to hear. They would turn away from the truth and turn to fables (2 Tim 4:1-5). This is being played out right before our eyes, Christians. There are men purposely teaching false messages to appease the masses who are more than happy to hear them. Man has always struggled with striving to conform to God’s word. Now man has simply quit trying, making up his own truth and raising up false teachers who are more than glad to accommodate them.

Again, I’m not talking about those who are unbelievers, I’m talking about those who claim to be born again, who name the name of Jesus and intentionally reject the authority of Scriptures. The Bible never defines marriage in any other way than between a man and a woman. Yet here we are arguing over same-sex marriage. According to Scripture, God has always recognized life in a mother’s womb, but we have Christians defending abortion. The fact of the matter is abortion kills babies! Sex outside of marriage is from the start, but for the most part, the modern church just shrugs it off and goes angry with preachers who teach sex is for the covenant of marriage. Lying is wrong, but we are often afraid to call someone out on it. When many Christians are confronted with behaviors in their life that are wrong, they will scream, “Don’t judge me!” The simple facts are that we don’t want anyone, even if it’s Biblical, to tell them the truth.

Folks listen, we’ve got a hard road ahead of us in this world. The Bible says that it will only get worse. However, we must never give up on standing for truth according to the Bible. You and I are not responsible for whether people will receive the truth. Our responsibility is to make the truth of Christ known, to make His teachings known. While doing this these will be rejection, persecution, and often we will be hated for it. But someone has to decide which is more important, pleasing God or pleasing man. I for one would rather preach the word of God and suffer the consequences of man than to preach the word of man and suffer the consequences of God. Help me my fellow Christians to fight for the truth!

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

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“Culture-blind” — or Cowardly?
By Shawna Thomas
Angleton, Texas

In Washington Irving’s delightful The Sketch Book of
Geoffrey Crayon, the author journals about his attendance
at a venerable English country church: “The congregation
was composed of the neighboring people of neat, who sat
in pews sumptuously lined and cushioned, furnished with
richly gilded prayer-books, and decorated with their arms
upon the pew doors; of the villagers and peasantry, who filled the back seats
and a small gallery beside the organ; and of the poor of the parish, who were ranged
on benches in the aisles.” (The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, “The Country

One is immediately struck by the incongruity of the church seating arrange-
ment: the wealthly enjoying lavishly decorated pews, but the poor unceremoni-
ously inhabiting the back seats and benches on the sides. It is such a flagrant
violation of the command of James 2: “My brethren, do not hold your faith
in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism. For if
a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and fine clothes, and
you pay special attention... and say, ‘You sit here in a good place,’ and you do
say to the poor man, ‘You stand there; or sit down by my footstool,’ have you
not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives?’
(James 2:1-4)

Surely anyone attending that church who possessed both a Bible and con-
science could have discerned that this scenario was wrong — couldn’t they?
There are at least two explanations for this kind of blatant aberration:

1. They may have been “culture-blind.” Believers in any setting can find it dif-
ficult to “escape” the cultural presuppositions they are nurtured in, and to detect
corruptions between their culture and scripture. After all, those things seem to
them to be “normal;” they were brought up that way. This is one of the reasons
why C.S. Lewis recommended reading books and sermons from other ages, and
why Leslie Newbiggin encouraged Christian interaction with cultures in other
parts of the world — these members of other times and places are not bound by
our cultural limitations, and they can help correct our “culture-blindness” with
the light of God’s truth.

2. But a second explanation exists. There is the distinct possibility that the wrong
was indeed noticed even by some of those inhabiting that culture — but that those
who detected it were not courageous enough to speak up about it.

Irving’s account ought to cause Christians today to examine our own practices:
what blatant compromises with scripture do we tolerate in our churches week af-
ter week, to which we ourselves are just as “culture-blind” as the ancient English
were to theirs? And are there those of which we ARE indeed aware — or perhaps
some of them were — but we are just too cowardly to speak up against them?

Shawna 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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Clint's Chronicles on the Funny Farm

The Rest of The Story

By: Farmer Doug

I cannot help but belly laugh when I read these episodes of Clint on the farm and remember back to the day it took place. That watering task is still working for me, and it has been replaced by a 4-strand barbed wire fence that has a gate where Clint decided to become an electrical wire clutcher. I remember my disbelief when I looked back, and he was standing there shaking like a leaf holding the wire with this weird look on his face. I knew that it would not kill him but thought he had lost his ever-loving mind! His story tells all and is totally funny. Enjoy the read and don’t hold me to electric fences!

Clint’s Chronicles on the Funny Farm

By Clint Pollard

Many of you have written, emailed or called about this column. It seems that you find delight in my musings, misadventures and near-misses with danger. Also, some have questioned my veracity—that would be TRUTH telling regarding these tales. A couple things you should know. The Lord undoubtedly protects 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:

Pride Comes Before Electrocuton!

It was another warm and DRY day at Harrell Hill Farms. I understand, now, why farmers are obsessed with the weather. I was asking God to open the heavens and pour moisture on our parched farmland. Hay ain’t growing, matters are withering, tarps patch looks like a forest fire aftermath… the soil is gorging for water. Bubbling creeks, tarps and free flowing streams which had cascaded only weeks before now have slowed to a mere trickle.

This day my friend Doug Harrell has dug me all over the mountainous terrain, spraying some kind of dystantly weed killer on the fence line. He’s leased out to me on the tractor in the presence of other farmers so he drives, dragging me and 10,000 feet of yellow hose in his wake. I am trudging through the valley, pulling 5 miles of hose pipe, spraying the modern day noxious weed on a glistening sheet of pig weed. By the way, one day I will ask the Lord how He saved pig weed…it’s ugly, it cloaks edible plants, and has the same size of shoeshine nails—that just ain’t right!

Anyway, I’m cautiously running behind the tractor trying to avoid falling into a gopher hole in the ground. For I know there is an underground monster wanting to drag me to the center of the farm’s core and devour my limbs! Having drained our load of herbicide it’s time to repair the watering holes for the cows. I guess they are called watering holes, although they are more like watering tanks. They really aren’t tanks either, they are really cement domes which are full of water and lie out of the earth and fill with water from where it converges. We mean there is no water on the garden, no water in the creeks, and here I am looking at a round concrete kitty-doo full of life saving water… go figure. Man, so much to learn on this farm!

Anyway, A.D. Harrell – “Daddy D” to his family – has told Doug we need to upset these fountains, payers, watering holes… whatever in the heck they are. Seems mud and debris are interfering with the flow. So off we go to do whatever a farmer does to upset the cow spring!

Well, there’s an electric fence around the pastures to keep the bovines in and others out. Weeks ago, I was shown where to connect and disconnect the power making arroyo safe. If you can, the power comes out of a little out-building, sort of an ancient haunted shed type structure beside Daddy D’s home. My first foray to the shed I fully expected a two-headed snake, a gigantic spider or at least a swarm of bees to assault my personality. Although I do recall the spider webs appearing like a one-Marilyn fiberglass factory. Thankfully not a single beetle approached me, and Doug told me always to remember to disconnect the power before touching the wire. Duh! What kind of moron does he think I am?

As we neared the cow watering wagon I thought I saw Doug take the wire in his hands, ready his whip over the fence. You need to know that Doug and Daddy D are my heroes, in many regards, but I especially long to be a farmer like them. And, Doug and I have long had a competitive “thing” between us, whether playing golf, picking beans or eating cake. One always hopes to outperform the other.

Back to the fence.

Following in Doug’s footsteps, I grabbed hold of the barbed wire, with both hands, preparing to carefully lift my right leg over BAM… BANG… 45$@!… lightning raced through my fingertips, tingled through my wrists—continuing up my neck and head, splinting down into my back and belly, eating through my core. Heck I don’t know – it’s not a constant shock, it’s a SLOW electrocution technique. I felt like an electric eel, did the hoboy pokay, wriggling and dancing to the rhythm of pulsing electricity. Nearby Doug had “that look”, as if he was suspended in time and space, unsure he was seeing what he was seeing.

As I came to, I’m clinging to this fence for dear life, smoke emanating from inside my wets gloves (Okay, not exactly pouring out but so it seemed). Yet I thought, “If Doug Harrell can hold this wire I CAN TOO. I will not give up.” And I did… and I did… and I did. My hair standing on end... each appendage covered in goose bumps as body hair rose... the heavens... smoke coming from my ears... I was convulsing into the passage of interminable electricity. I wore a hunted look, a
The Blessing of Blessing
By Carol Cline
Burke County

The letter written by the Apostle Paul to the church in Ephesus contains some of the most powerful promises concerning our identity as children of God. This letter was most likely circulated among the various churches in Asia Minor, including Laodicea. Identity theft is one of the greatest tools used by the devil to render believers useless in the kingdom of God. This letter from Paul was written as a revelation of the abundant blessings lavished by a gracious Father upon His children as practical instructions for living out our calling to the glory of God. We have an incredible destiny and destiny! We are loved with an everlasting love. Let's dive into the first few verses of this letter. In Ephesians 1:1-2, Paul calls himself an ambassador of Christ Jesus. Ambassador means one who is sent. Paul was personally commissioned by Jesus for Jesus' purposes. My favorite phrase is by the will of God. How could it be God's will to call someone like Paul? He was a former persecutor of Christians; a Phan- see who thought himself holier than he. He stood up by and watched the stoning of Stephen, basically holding the blood of Stephen on his hands. But the passion Paul had in persecuting the church was a gift from God that Satan had stolen. God took it back. God will use us in spite of how much we have blown it in the past. It takes one word of surrender and one step of repentance for God to pick us up and turn us around. He will pull us out of the mire clay and set our feet upon a rock. (Psalm 40) He will rewrite our story for others to see and so we can fulfill God’s intended destiny for our lives. He holds the master script, but He will not force us to accept His will. Our challenge is to say “yes” to everything God has for us. God leaves that up to us; He gives us a free will. Paul said “yes” and God took those gifts and turned the world upside down. As Paul greets the recipients of this letter, he proclaims two very important blessings: peace and grace. The Greek word for peace is ‘charis’ and it isaeus favor and the goodwill of God and Christ toward us. The Greek word for peace is ‘eirne’ and it means one, quietness, rest, the peace of mind that is a result of reconciliation with God. Without faith, it is impossible to please God, therefore, to experience the grace and peace of God we must be full of faith. We can rest assured that this is God’s intended destiny for every one of His children. The deeper we tread into Ephesians 1:3-4, the clearer our intended destiny shines. Paul actually becomes a worship leader in these verses. He begins to speak upon the amazing blessings that we enjoy as faithful followers of Jesus and the blessings bestowed upon us by our Father. I don’t think he can sit still as he writes or dictates this letter. I can see him getting more excited with every phrase. He blesses God and so should we because He loves us. He blesses us with a blessing. That seems like an odd phrase. He blesses us in Christ with every spiritual blessing. We will use the phrase in ‘Caris’ over and over throughout this letter because there are no blessings outside of Christ. Therefore, there are no blessings without a relationship with Jesus. Every blessing is hidden in Him. Those of us who have bowed our knees in surrender to His Lordship are now hidden in Christ with God. We are called to abide in Jesus and to allow His word to dwell in us. We are to hang on to His every word. Let’s go back to verse 3. We are blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. The Greek word here for spiritual means ‘impaired by the Holy Spirit’, so it is supernatural. The word for blessing here is ‘eulogia’. A eulogy is kind words spoken over someone. It also means fine speaking; elegy of language, benefits, commendation. Here is something exciting to think about: because we are in Christ, only supernatural spiritual words of elegy and commendation are spoken of us in the heavenly places. Romans 8:33 reminds us that if God is for us, who can be against us? Our God is speaking kind words about us, His children. God is for us. Corrie Ten Boom said: “God is voting for us all the time. The devil is voting against us all the time. The way we vote carries the election.” God is always speaking blessing over His children. Satan is always speaking curses over God’s children.

We must make a choice to believe the truth over the lies of the enemy. Why would the Father refuse to listen to or speak negative comments about His beloved children? The truth can be summed up in just a few words. God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless and He is not interested in hearing any other report. He calls those things that are not as though they are!” (Romans 4:17)

How can sinful creatures such as we attain the status of children of God, holy and blameless? The answer to this question is also in these verses: God loved us and predestined us for adoption as His children through Christ, according to the purpose of His will.

2 Corinthians 5:21 also tells us that “He (Christ) Who knew no sin became sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” As born again believers, we stand before God wrapped in the righteousness of Jesus and as far as God is concerned we are holy and blameless.

We are blessed, chosen, adopted and redeemed. Redemption equals freedom. The blood of Jesus paid the ransom so that we could be released for the adoption price. The price was without equal. There was not enough money in the world to secure our release, but the blood of Jesus was sufficient payment. That blood bought our freedom and totally forgave us of every sin, past, present, and future. We are cleansed and our sins are completely removed.

Again, we are forgiven because of the riches of God’s grace, which He lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight. This word ‘lavish’ means to shower generous quantities upon someone. It would almost seem foolish and shortsighted to lavish such wonderful eternal blessings upon people like us; dust. After all, we keep making the same mistakes; we keep doing the wrong things over and over, and we fail to honor our Father as He deserves. Yet, God lavishes the riches of His grace upon us in all His wisdom and might, realizing beforehand that we will fail at times to live up to our potential.

We were chosen before the foundation of the world to be hidden in Christ. God has an eternal viewpoint. In His omniscience, before the world began, we were already redeemed and sanctified and delivered into the kingdom of God for all of eternity. These spiritual blessings that we experience are the revelation of the mystery of God’s will. It’s interesting to note that a revelation is a sudden understanding of a previous mystery. One minute you are blind to the truth but the next minute your eyes are open to truth. When a person receives Jesus as Savior and the Holy Spirit comes into their life, the eternal light of the glory of God opens their eyes to the truth in an instant. Suddenly, by the revelation of the Spirit, we get it! The mystery of God’s will is Christ in us, the hope of glory. The blessings are no longer temporal, they cannot be removed. Once we are in Christ, all these things and more are ours. He has died and risen to provide us with everything pertaining to life and godliness. It’s within us, not without. Our blessings are spiritual and therefore eternal.

One of the last blessings mentioned in these verses is the promise of our inheritance, an inheritance which we already possess. Our salvation is our inheritance, yet we still have not received it in its fullness. Jesus didn’t leave His disciples, nor us, as orphans and once He ascended back to heaven, the Father sent His greatest gift and blessing to His children; the Holy Spirit. Once we believe in Jesus, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit. The word ‘seal’ means ‘to stamp with a private mark for security’.

We are stamped and we are sealed. He is not leaving and no other spirit is coming in. Although the enemy can still attack a Spirit-filled believer’s soul (mind, will, and emotions) and physical body, he cannot touch the spirit which has been sealed by the Holy Spirit. He knows that we belong to the God of the Universe. This seal is also airtight and keeps our spirits fresh; it cannot spoil or decay. We are forever young!

Therefore, we need to secure for all eternity. The Holy Spirit is the guarantee of our inheritance and is always with us to witness to our spirit concerning the truth of our relationship with God the Father through Jesus the Son. He reminds us that we are heirs of God-children with Christ-and that we possess every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. This gift has one purpose, that God might receive the praise and glory due to His name for all of eternity!

We are blessed, chosen, blameless, holy, adopted, redeemed, forgiven and sealed. Nothing on earth can ever compare!

Carol Cline is a follower of Jesus Christ who loves to teach the word of God. Her desire is to see every believer growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord.

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Hebrews 11
By Harriett Turner
Mitchell County

What Christian does not know of the Hebrews 11 Faith Chapter? And what Christian isn’t constantly reminded in current sermons, especially by television evangelists... of the Victories of the heroes of faith told in the Faith chapter in verses 1-35. And they tell us that these victories are to be ours through our faith if we have enough faith.

But how many sermons also mention that maybe we are going to be among those heroes of faith in the last verse of the chapter verses 36-38? “And 89 others were warned, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better recompense. Still, others had trial of mocking and scourging, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goat skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.” Hebrews 11:36-38. They kept their faith and were rewarded in the next life... in eternity with our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ our crucified Savior!

Which group are we going to be in? I personally don’t know which group I am to be in. But I do know a few things God has revealed to me through these years. And I have found that fellow Christians usually and understandably don’t want to hear about those things:

When I lived on a high mountain road in my home in Monroe, NC I had a dream one night, that was a little over 30 years ago. I dreamed that enemy troops were fast advancing up the mountain towards my house and I had time to collect some basic necessities and rush out. I was able to escape out through the midst of the upcoming soldier’s tension. Of course, I pondered the meaning of this dream and what to do about it.

Not long after I heard a report that during a Christian Conference in Ridgcrest, NC, at the Ridgcrest Baptist Conference Center that the speaker Barbara Ann Chase, a spirit-filled Christian mum from Louisiana, said as she was praying the saw enemy troops passing from Ridgecrest over the mountains into Monroe. Later I read that a Swannanoa, NC minister had a dream of visions of enemy troops passing by Swannanoa and headed to Black Mountain.

My mother owned several homes in Monroe, Black Mountain, and Swannanoa. I didn’t see that I could move from Monroe. She had also purchased a vacation house up here in Mitchell County. NC on Deer Park Lake in the very high mountains, not far from Mt. Mitchell, the highest mountain peak East of the Mississippi River. And, in the not too distant future, our main house in Monroe, that we lived in burned totally to the ground with all the furnishings and collections of Christian books, musical instruments, etc. From the insurance money, we purchased a large stone house on quite a few acres on a mountainside in Mitchell County and relocated there.

Since then a Montreat college professor, William Froeliches has published a book called One Second After, the story of the after-effects of an electromagnetic pulse (EMP) attack on the United States. One Second After tells of an EMP attack taking down the electrical grid of the country and the enemy troops filing into Monroe and surrounding areas. He mentioned many of the roads and areas where my parents owned and sold houses they owned. We still owned some after moving to Mitchell County.

I have heard that there is a group of “Preppers” here in Mitchell County, who have even had Professor Froncetic here to speak at their meetings. But we haven’t tried to find out who they are. I do know that the Bakker of the former PTL Club and Community, who is now in the Ozarks with a Christian Community has also had some friends as Preppers as his guest and interviewed him on TV. Lately, Pat Roberts and the 700 Club TV Program has expressed very strong disappointment that our government has not been willing to spend the funds to protect us against an EMP enemy attack.

Recently I was sharing all this with a group of people, who are willing to build their homes and buildings with mountains and other things. We don’t want to stand in that area I mentioned above were those things seen. I just said it was because we all lived in that area. It doesn’t mean it won’t progress higher up into our area here where Prepper Groups are prepping.

I still don’t know which group of Christians told in the faith chapter I will be. But I do know that I am living in a home on the edge of the cliff overlooking the vast mountain areas and part of the land that I own goes partly down the mountain.

The other night the Lord gave me a dream of caves, one cave after another. I believe He is revealing that the time has come to find some of our caves and enlarge them and make others as preparation for what is coming. I feel a bit like I may be that group of faithful Christians who wandered into the mountains and caves rather than those who rashly escaped the mountains of God. Only time will tell, and only God knows best. I feel I should share this information with others as the prophets have long warned that war, famine and accompanying difficulties are coming to the USA and that our whole country will be affected. We can try to be prepared as God leads us.

Harriett Turner lives in Spruce Pine. She graduated from Tulane University School of Social Work.

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An Insect That Is Used as a Plague?

By Christy Lowman
Ranke County

This month I thought we would look at an insect that is talked about in the Bible. It is mentioned many times and was used to destroy crops, and as a plague. They were also occasionally useful in the Bible, like the time that John lived in the wilderness and survived by eating them and honey. Do you know what this insect is?

If you guessed locusts, you are correct. Locusts appear many times in the Bible. God used them as a plague to the Egyptians when Pharaoh would not let the Israelites go. The Bible tells of a swarm of them to devour every green thing in Egypt leaving absolutely no crop for the Egyptians to eat. Not only that, when the locusts were finished eating all the plants in Egypt, the Lord sent a west wind and sent them out to the Red Sea. Meaning, there were no locusts left for the Egyptians to eat or for maybe deadborns. People died and still did not eat locusts. They are usually un-touched, tasted, boiled, or dried. They are very rich in protein.

Locusts are mentioned again in the book of Revelations, where they are commanded to harm but not kill the people who are not the Lord’s people. The Lord’s people will have the seal of the Lord on their heads. This period is what is called the end of time, and the locusts are commanded to not harm anyone from this time.

Locusts are herbivorous, invertebrates, and are very similar to grasshoppers. The main difference in the two is that locusts can change their behavior, which is normal for grasshoppers, into a hook mobile swarm, destroying and consuming every green plant that is in its path. Grasshoppers are not able to change their behavior. Locusts have small pleated wings that move from side to side, so they can become mobile when plants run out. They usually live around five months and their life has three stages: egg, hopper, and adult. They grow as long as 3 inches. The female desert locust can lay eggs up to 3 times her short life with as many as 158 eggs each time. This is during the time when she is not swarming, during swarming episodes. The female will lay fewer eggs, a maximum of 90 each time. Heavy rains will cause the eggs to hatch.

A desert locust swarm consists of 40 to 80 million locusts. They cover vast distances. Forty million locusts can eat the same amount of food in one day as 250,000 people. In one day, a swarm the size of New York City eats as much as all the people in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York as well.

When desert locusts swarm, their threat is listed as number 1 of the world’s problems. Their swarming episodes cause famine, starvation, along with new agricultural damage to crops and plants. Many countries are affected every day by desert locusts.

We should be aware of these insects and take necessary steps to control their growth and spread. The Bible mentions locusts several times, and it is important to learn about them so that we can be prepared for any future encounters.

WeC RaM Radio/Glory 1130

Saving Just One

By Phillis Greene
Wayne County

I came across a story that I felt would be something that hopefully will inspire someone today. The author is unknown.

After a few of the usual Sunday evening hymns, the church’s pastor slowly stood up, walked over to the pulpit and, before he gave his sermon for the evening, briefly introduced a guest minister who was in the service that evening. In the introduction, the pastor told a confirmation that the guest minister was one of his deacons and ministering friends and that he wanted him to have a few moments to greet the church and share whatever he felt would be appropriate for the service.

“At that time, an elderly man stepped up to the pulpit and began to speak. "A father, his son, and a friend of his son were sailing off the Pacific Coast,” he began, “when a fast-approaching storm blocked any attempt to get back to shore. The waves were so high that, even though the father was an experienced sailor, he could not keep the boat upright, and the three were swept into the ocean as the boat capsized.”

“The old man hesitated for a moment, making eye contact with two teenagers who were, for the first time since the service began, looking somewhat interested in the story. The aged minister continued with his story, ‘Grabbing a rescue line, the father had to make the most excruciating decision of his life, to which boy he would throw the other end of the line. He had two sons to save. The decision was made. The father threw the line to his younger son. By the time the father had pulled the friend back to the capsized boat, his son had disappeared beneath the raging waves into the black of night. His body was never recovered.”

“By this time, the two teenagers were sitting up straight in the pew, anxiously waiting for the next words to come out of the old minister’s mouth. ‘The father,’ he continued, ‘knew his older son would die. He knew he was destined for eternal life with Jesus, and he could not bear the thought of his son’s friend stepping into an eternity without Jesus. Therefore, he sacrificed his older son to save his son’s friend. How great is the love of God that He could do the same for us! Our heavenly Father sacrificed His only begotten Son that we could be saved. I urge you to accept His offer to rescue you and take hold of the salvation.”

With that, the old man turned and set back down in his chair as silence filled the room. The pastor again walked slowly to the pulpit and delivered a brief sermon with an invitation at the end. However, no one responded to the appeal. Within minutes after the service, the two teenagers were on the road. ‘That was a nice story,” politably said one of the boys, “but I don’t think it was very realistic for a father to give up his only son’s life in hopes that the other boy would become a Christian.’

‘Well, you’ve got a point there,” the old man replied, glancing down at his worn Bible. ‘Sorrow began to overtake the old man’s smiling face as he once again looked up at the boys and said, “It’s not very realistic, is it? But I’m here today to tell you that I understand more than most the pain God must have felt to give up His only Son. For you see, I’m the man who lost his son to the ocean that day, and my son’s friend that I chose to save. This story has flored me more than once in life because it shows us the purpose that God may have for someone, even when we don’t know, and essentially the old man had to make the same choice that God did. God looked down and realized that he could only save one, and in man, He had to sacrifice his own son to do that. He knew that Jesus’ blood would save us, but for that to happen, he had to let Him go.

‘If we are faced with the same situation ... What would you choose? Would you be willing to sacrifice one to save another? Share Christ today. Love with the love of God.”

Phillis Greene is the Station Manager/Program Director for WECAm Radio Glory 1130.

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March 2020 - Blue Ridge Christian News
Ringo Is Turning 79!
By Steve Biez
Berk County

Ringo Starr is going to be 79 years old this year! The Beatles had a hit song called Yesterday. It was written by Paul McCartney in 1965. The words go like this: yesterday, all my troubles seemed so far away. Oh, I believe in yesterday. Suddenly, I am not half the man I used to be. There's a shadow hanging over me, oh yesterday came suddenly. Indeed, for Ringo, the Beatles and the rest of us, suddenly, is a good description of what time does.

In 1963, just a few years before McCartney of the Beatles penned Yesterday, Peter Paul and Mary sang a song that spent five weeks at number one. It was called: Where Have All The Flowers Gone? Yet, another song that speaks about the subject of time.

No, I'm not stuck in the 60s. But the sentiments of the suddenness and the bewilderment of time still rings true. We almost shatter wondering about the time and our planet. We may question, what can we expect when it comes to time?

On Friday evening, March 6, I will begin a series that I am calling, Prophecies of Hope in the Morganton Seventh-day Adventist church.

You may have questions about time. Did you know that the Bible has predicted the course of history with 100% accuracy? Many people looked for the future with fear and uncertainty. Not only has the Bible predicted the course of history with perfect accuracy, the Bible tells us what is coming next. The book of Daniel and Revelation will dispel your fears and give you a foundation for how you can prepare for upcoming events.

So many times, I hear that the book of Revelation is a closed book and that it cannot be understood. Well, that is not the case, then its title. The Revelation of Jesus Christ must be the clearest trick I have ever heard. Instead of a closed book, it is a very revealing book that we can read and understand.

A major portion of the Bible involves prophecy. God knows the future like the back of his hand, and we would be foolish to not take advantage of the revealing future that the Godhead has given us in the Holy Word.

I hope you are not ignoring the Biblical prophecy. God's prophecy is a sure word that can keep us from being overly concerned about time. The Bible tells us the future. I encourage all of us to depend on scripture not CNN News to understand the future of planet earth.

Also, if you would like to attend the Prophecies of Hope series, I want to invite you to come and see. Opening night is Friday evening, March 6th at 7:00. It will be held at the Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Auditorium, located at 2187 Jamestown Rd in Morganton. The meetings will continue that weekend from Friday, March 6th through Monday, March 9th each evening beginning at 7:00.

The Times They Are A-Changing, Bob Dylan sang it in 1964. Maybe I am stuck in the 60s, but mostly I am stuck in the study of prophecy that we find in God's word. I hope you are also stuck in biblical prophecy.

Steve Biez, Pastor, Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church.
Tim’s Treasures

Spirits in the Sky
By Tim Trim
Bunce County

It’s not until we go out into the “Real” world, get jobs, and start careers that we actually apply that theory. That application becomes the tools of whatever industry we pursue, whether for the rest of our lives. However, God has allowed me to return to the place from whence I began so long ago. As I listened to the very well-measured preachers describe the course layout, I found my mind jumping from the theory he was describing to the applications I had used in my nearly two decades of working in the industry. From that life of experience, from the applying of theory, I once more made the jump back to the present and was able to interpret his descriptions, but far from the conventional line of thought to which he was using to instruct.

For those of you who have learned or are trying to learn a foreign language, you can relate. You at first must think of the foreign word’s meaning in your mother tongue and then speak the foreign word. Slowly, as you become more proficient in your language, you begin to understand more and more and do not have to think of the foreign word any more. For this reason, I know that the foreign word has finally become one of your own, so longer foreign. So too is the word of God. Like many who arelost and haven’t come to know or accept Christ into their lives, the words in the Bible are only that, words. But Jesus told his followers that they would not be alone; he would send a Comforter. He also said that he would never leave us or forsake us. That Comforter, that being with whom he spoke, was to be the Holy Spirit.

Through the Holy Spirit, we are made aware, “And he that died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.” Therefore, with this knowledge we know we must after the flesh, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we no more. Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled all things unto himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation. It is in Christ that God is reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses up unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead be reconciled to God.

From whence we came, is to which we shall return. For once we have walked in the way, we are saved anew, and from there, we can speak to those who have yet to find the way, the truth, and the light. From our experience in the application of this word, we have become wiser, and with this wisdom, we are then able to help those who are lost. “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.” From theory, as some may say, to become one with the Father through the power of the Holy Spirit, we are changed. Walking in Christ, we re so longer living in theory, but rather, in the application of what is meant to be, where Jesus and Mercy meet us. We are not left to seek. We are not left to seek with all your heart.

And you all are a heartbreak away from eternity. Live each day as if it were the most precious gift. You never know when it will be your turn.

Thanks be to God.

Timothy W. Trim 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 youth. He now serves with the Catawba Valley Bible Baptist Church in Lincolnton. He is the author of a new Christian series, “Children of the Light,” with the first book being “Brackens 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 trimonlive.com
What We Believe

By Brian Barrier
Barco County

Here are some of the essential elements of our faith at the Blue Ridge Christian News:

God

God is the Creator and Ruler of the universe. He has existed eternally in three persons and chooses to manifest Himself in these three ways: as God the Father, as God the Son, and as God the Holy Spirit. These three are co-equal and are one God.

(1 John 1:1; 2:23-26; 3:22; John 8:55; Romans 8:15; 3:16, 3:21, 3:26)

Jesus

Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, who is fully God and fully human in His incarnation. He lived a sinless human life and offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all humanity by dying on a cross. He rose from the dead after three days to demonstrate His power over sin and death. He ascended to heaven and will return again to reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.


The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the very Spirit of God, fully divine, manifested in the life of every believer from the moment of salvation. He is equal with the Father and the Son as God. He is present in the world to make man aware of their need for Jesus Christ to save them. The Holy Spirit provides power to live for Christ, understanding the will and guidance of God in doing what is right. The Christian seeks to live under His daily control.

(2 Corinthians 3:17; John 16:13-14; 14:15-17; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 2:12; 3:16; Ephesians 3:13; Galatians 5:25; Ephesians 5:18)

The Bible

The Bible is the divinely inspired, authoritative, infallible, living and active Word of God to all men. It was written by human authors under supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is the ultimate source of truth for Christian beliefs and living. In it, we find a foundation for a righteous relationship with God and God’s creation, and a blueprint for personal, emotional, and spiritual growth.

(2 Timothy 3:15-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Psalm 110:105-106; 16:12; Proverbs 36:5)

Humanity

Humanity is designed and made by God in His image. We have been created with the design of being rational, moral, ethical, and physical beings and have been equipped by God for both relationships with Him and with one another. Both male and female are gifted by the Creator with characteristics which equip them for the purpose of which they have been created: relationship, dominance, and responsibility. Although God designed us to have fellowship with Him, we became alienated from God through disobedience. As a result, all human beings are born with a sinful nature and choose to sin against God. We are incapable of regaining a right relationship with God through our own efforts.

(Genesis 1:26-28, Psalm 8:2-6; Isaiah 3:26; 59:1-2; Romans 1:20, 5:22; Colossians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 5:17)

Eternity & Eternal Security

Our soul, the essence of our being, was created by God to exist forever. That forever is spent in one of two places: eternally present in union with God because of His forgiveness and salvation or eternally separated from God because of sin and unbelief. At the moment of our physical body dies, those who are saved are immediately taken to heaven. Those who have rejected God’s gift of salvation will be separated from God forever. Those who do not have faith in God are given eternal life through Jesus Christ, and He is always in the presence and power of God. Salvation is maintained by the grace of God, and not by the self-effort of the Christian. It is the grace and eternal power of God that gives this security.

(John 17:11; 1:17; 10:10; 1 John 5:23; Romans 8:38-39; Revelation 20:13, 2 Timothy 1:12; Hebrews 7:25; 10:19-23; 1 Peter 1:2-3)

Salvation

Salvation is the gift of redemption and reconciliation to Himself and is offered freely to all who accept, by faith alone, Jesus Christ as Gods only son and Lord and Savior. We can never make up for our sin with good works, self-improvement or good works. It is only by trusting in Jesus Christ as God's gift of forgiveness that we can be saved from sin's penalty. Eternal life begins the moment you receive Jesus Christ into your life by faith.

( Romans 5:1, 5:23; Ephesians 2:8-9; John 1:12; 1:14; Titus 3:5; Galatians 3:26)

Rabies, Murder, and Reconciliation

By Tracy Jessup

"You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not murder;’ but I say to you, that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment. So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift."—Matthew 5:21, 22-24

Author and Doctor David Swain tells the story of a man who was a dog that was discovered to have rabies had bitten. Though the man was rushed to the hospital, medical science could do nothing to help the man, and his doctor faced the difficult task of telling him his condition was terminal.

"We'll do all we can to make you comfortable," the doctor said, "but it is a fact that you have rabies and your affairs in order." Immediately the man picked up a pencil and began writing vigorously on a sheet of paper.

"I'm glad to see you are working on your will," the doctor told him.

"This isn't to sell," Doc, the man replied. "This is a list of things I'm going to take before I die!" (How to Live According to Jesus p. 34).

In today's passage, Jesus begins to ask a series of questions on the Mount that address second-hand interpretations of law and its implications. Jesus presents us with a contract, each beginning with this formula: "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago..." (Mt. 21:27, 31, 33, 34, 41). The contrast is not between the Law given through Moses and the teachings of Jesus. Jesus already has reminded us that he has not come to destroy the Law or the Prophets, but to fulfill them (cf. 5:17). What we have here is a contrast between the true interpretation of the Law given by Jesus and the false interpretation given by the Pharisees. It is an explanation of how the righteousness of one who follows Christ exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees (cf. 2:40).

These scribes and Pharisees seemed to be attempting to restrict the application of the sixth commandment to the act of murder alone. By refraining from this act, they considered themselves to have kept the commandment. However, Jesus disagreed and maintained that the protection against murder included one's thoughts and words as well as one's actions. In other words, uncontrolled angry thoughts and insulting words are forms of violence and destruction.

"No, not only should we avoid uncontrolled angry thoughts and insulting words, but we should also avoid thoughts and words that put others down, because they too are forms of violence and destruction. (Matthew 5:22-24). John Stott writes, "We want to avoid committing murder in God's sight, and we must take every possible step to live in peace and love with all men." (The Message of the Sermon on the Mount, p. 85).

Prayer: Lord, help us not to harm others by words, deeds, or thoughts. And when we do, may we take the initiative to mend the relationship.

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

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Prison Ministry

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
By Timothy Eller
Burke County

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is real! This is one of the most pervasive mental health issues within our country. I was a firefighter and EMT for 11 years. These were some of the greatest years of my life. It was my passion and what I loved doing from a small child. When I was a kid, I would cross the road to the Charlotte Fire Station 13 to look at the fire trucks. My dad would take me to eat my Happy Meal and play on an old truck that was on a friend’s car lot. From several critical incidents, I developed PTSD. But I was not willing to admit or acknowledge that this affected me. More Firefighters and EMS Members die from suicide than job-related injuries. Often because of the love for the job and dedication of the professionals they are reluctant to ask for help. My wonderful wife advised for me to get help. I took her advice and was willing to acknowledge the situation and take steps to change. I am now a therapist, firefighter, first responder, or police officer and you are having trouble sleeping, feel depressed, or overly anxious, advocate for yourself and get help. You owe it to yourself not to bear the burden alone. You don’t have to suffer alone.

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

Pleasant Hill Baptist Church

Habits of the Heart: A Study of the Spiritual Disciplines “Fasting”
By Dr. Jack R. Hodge Jr.
Burke County

For followers of Jesus Christ to grow into the likeness of Christ, our journey requires a commitment to grow spiritually and practice spiritual disciplines. For the last several months, I have invited you to look at two internal disciplines, meditation and prayer. The spiritual discipline of meditation calls us to enter into the living presence of God for ourselves. And prayer is that moment and place where we find ourselves face to face with God, connecting with Him on a deep, intimate level. Look now as we enter a third internal habit of the heart: fasting. Yet even now, declares the LORD, “Return to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, weeping, and mourning” (Isa. 55:6).

It would be accurate to say that fasting is a biblical discipline that has become a much less practiced practice in modern evangelical movements. In a land of plenty, food and gourmet restaurants rule the landscape, food is plentiful and accessible, and we live in a culture that values eating well. Unfortunately, obesity has become a major health issue. Clearly, we as a culture, are missing something very important about keeping our bodies fit and healthy. Could it be that God, in His infinite wisdom and His deep care for us, is trying to give us some valuable insights into taking care of this body (which is a gift)? Could it be that there is an ongoing need to purge our bodies of the constant toxins of chemicals, drugs, and food carcinogens (e.g., gluten, diacetyl, and genetically modified ingredients, etc.), which have become toxic to our bodies? Since biblical times, the spiritual discipline of fasting has been practiced, and the scriptures have much to say about it. And it will make us wonder how the fasting in the Old Testament is different from fasting in the New Testament.

This time, however, it was the Spirit of God that led Jesus to an extraordinary experience which we know as the “fast.” Knowing that Satan would confront Jesus in the wilderness, the Spirit of God wanted Jesus to be ready for the temptation. The question arises: If God knew that Jesus would battle the “deceiver” in the wilderness, then why would God require that Jesus submit Himself to the absence from normalcy, knowing full well that Jesus would be hungry, weak, and vulnerable? The answer is, of course, that this was to demonstrate that our power over Satan does not come from our own strength, wisdom, power, or might—neither solely from the power of the presence of the Holy Spirit and His authority alone. Satan tempted Jesus to eat, saying, “If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.” Clearly, the temptation was aimed at Jesus’ vulnerability and indicated that His fasting was from food, not water. Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘Mannah shall not live by bread alone’” (Deut. 8:3).

Although the duration of Jesus’ fast was for 40 days, there doesn’t seem to be indicated exactly, our prescribed period for fasting. This “prescription” certainly does not suggest nor require that a fast must last for 40 days. The real significance of Jesus’ fast was that the Lord responded to the Spirit of God and obediently made an intentional choice to abstain for the purpose of spiritual preparation. Jesus obediently fasted to reason, not to eat. How often do we seek the “fasting” in our lives and the disciplines of the word, and we find that we are all equipped to handle the onslaught of the attack? Perhaps, the reason is that we have failed to respond to the prompting of the Holy Spirit to ready ourselves for the attack. How do we do that? By entering a Holy Spirit-driven season (time) of fasting. We humbly and sincerely agree to abstain from any and all denominations so that we may bear the weight of the disciplines and renounce all which will not align with the valleys of temptation, confusion, remorselessness, attacks or offensive intrusions into our spiritual, emotional, psychological, and/or physical lives.

William Home (The Practice of Fasting in Church History: The Bible). A brief annotated timeline of fasting in Christian history begins with Jesus. On Feb. 21, 2010, I was invited to speak at a gathering that featured a discussion on fasting. I was interested in the historical use of fasting as a spiritual practice and the role of fasting in the lives of early Christians. The discussion focused on the spiritual significance of fasting and its relationship to the practice of asceticism. The discussion highlighted the centrality of fasting in the spiritual life of early Christians. The discussion also explored the role of fasting in the lives of modern Christians. The discussion concluded with a reflection on the importance of fasting in the spiritual life of modern Christians.

Fasting, as a spiritual discipline, is never commanded in the Word of God. Rather, the believer is free to follow his conscience and the prompting of the Holy Spirit. Fasting must start on God. It must be God-united and God-inspired. Our motive must be to change and ready ourselves to live for God’s glory alone—for nothing can be allowed to stand in the way of His glory and honor. When the Holy Spirit of God calls one to fast, one is being led into a deeper spiritual experience that seeks to bring about all that prepares us. As we seek to be transformed into the image of Jesus Christ, we humbly offer all up that is in us—and we declare to the Lord, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxious thoughts. And see if there be any wayward way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way.” (Ps. 139:23–24).
Hope 4 Mitchell County

By Brian Barrier
Mitchell County

Often, people are looking for someone or something to give them hope. If they can’t find it in a person or thing, many will begin to have a feeling of hopelessness. We can see the very real effects of that in our communities today. People turn to abusive relationships, drugs, alcohol, and many other destructive behaviors looking for hope.

If you Google the word hope, the first definition you get is “a feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen.” My study Bible gives this definition, “confident trust with the expectation of fulfillment.” I think everyone reading this has experienced hope and many have even felt hopelessness at some point in their life.

Does the Bible have anything to say about hope? Of course, it does! In fact, deference or translation of the word hope appears at least 130 times in the Bible! Most often, hope is synonymous with salvation and its many blessings, past, present and future as found in God’s Word. So, the real question is, how do we, who have our hope in salvation through Jesus, lead others to Him?

There is a local non-profit organization in Mitchell County called Hope 4 Mitchell County that is leading the way in doing just that! According to one of the founders, Dr. Rocky Branch, Hope 4 Mitchell County is a non-profit organization that seeks to serve the needs of children, families, and individuals in Mitchell County. It’s non-denominational. The faith-based approach seeks to impact this area through outreach projects, community events, free counseling and various other projects.

The organization was founded by Dr. Rocky and his bride of 39 years, Janice Branch. Both grew up here and wanted to give back to the community in a positive way. Dr. Branch is also the Senior Pastor at Spruce Pine First Baptist Church. Rocky said that 100% of the funds raised are used to help others by preaching and evangelism.

The idea was born at the age of only 15 Rocky found himself in a bad time and bad situation in his life and reached out to a local pastor by phone at 1:00 A.M. That pastor told Rocky that it was late, and he was too tired to talk to him at the time. He suggested Rocky call back in the morning. Just a few years later, Rocky surrendered his life to Jesus Christ and knew that people should have access to someone to talk to any time, day or night. Hope 4 Mitchell County currently has three main programs to reach the community. They operate a 24-hour substance abuse hotline and crisis hotline. The telephone number is (828) 520-1010. Dr. Branch said they have as many as 20 trained counselors if needed. He personally staffs the line most of the time if he is available.

Another program inside the organization is called Hope 4 Mitchell County Martial Arts Academy. To encourage and reach new members and those who may be struggling in their life, Rocky only charges $1 per lesson. His intent is not to have people leave other academies or teachers, but to encourage the underprivileged or those needing spiritual help to come join them. Through the discipline of martial arts and teaching of God’s Word, the Bible, Rocky has been able to reach many in the community.

The last and largest program in Hope 4 Mitchell County is the annual Fastest Egg hunt. Dr. Branch said that 3,000 to 10,000 eggs are hidden at the local Riceview Park and serve an estimated 500 kids from Mitchell and surrounding counties during this event.

After speaking about an hour talking with Rocky about Hope 4 Mitchell County, one thing is completely clear; he is passionate about bringing the community together, sharing and teaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ and working with other churches and organizations to make that happen. “We are the body of Christ,” said Dr. Branch when referencing the Christian community. He went on to say, “We should be working together and not worrying about what church people attend.”

As Rocky and I were talking, I couldn’t help but think about what my own pastor has been teaching about reaching and loving those in need with the Gospel. This is exactly what Rocky is doing in Mitchell and surrounding counties. Jesus said in John 13:34-35, “I give you a new command. Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you must also love one another. By this, all people will know that you are My disciples if you have a love for one another.”

To learn more about Hope 4 Mitchell County the non-crisis number is (828) 765-9411. They are located at 125 Tappan Street in Spruce Pine, NC. You can also visit https://hope4mitchellcounty.blogspot.com/ or find them on Facebook at https://www.facebook.com/hope4mitchellcounty for more information. You can also catch Pastor Rocky most every morning on Facebook at https://www.facebook.com/rockybranch9 where he records short video devotionals that are inspirational and challenging.

Brian Barrier is a life-long resident of Burke County, U.S. Army Veteran, a member of Pleasant Hill Baptist Church and Publisher of the Blue Ridge Christian News.
Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them. Isaiah 42:9

The Cross
By Allen Buchanan
Mitchell County

Often, I spend minutes to hours thinking about the life of Jesus on earth and how I long to see Him and my family already there in Heaven. We all know how much starts rushing in Christmas and Easter for secular gain. Man can try but he cannot change my thoughts and actions concerning the true meaning of these holy days.

With Easter on the horizon, I’m focusing on the cross and the pain Jesus endured. I have yet to meet anyone who hasn’t experienced pain. Everyone has different types or degrees of pain. Accidents or disease are to blame. Tests ordered by your doctor to determine what is causing bad pain may be painful itself. I have deep aches and require oxygen around the clock. Once a year I get a blood gas test. Aside from passing kidney stones or having neuropathy, stabbing pain, it is quick and extremely painful. The nurse draws blood from the back of my wrist for an arterial blood gas test or a blood gas analysis. It measures oxygen, carbon dioxide levels, blood pH levels, and lung function. Now that I’ve got you thinking about your daily pains when is the last time you thought of the pain our Lord Jesus Christ experienced in your behalf?

Although I have heard all my life that Jesus was nailed to the cross, I could not find scripture stating exactly that. The proof is found in John 20:25-29.

“...The other disciples, therefore, said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”

After researching how criminals were held responsible in biblical times, I understood how the cross was the most dreadful of all because of the shame, the pain and how shocking it was to endure or watch. Before nailing Jesus to the cross, He was beaten with cords and pieces of bones. Some of you may recall your parents disciplining you with a switch or belt and thinking it to be the worse pain ever. Imagine suffering even more severely with cords and bones digging into your body with each strike. Then as the bone is pulled away, blood rushes from you leaving open flesh. While Jesus’ mind and body were dealing with pain, He had to carry His own cross to the place of a skull called Golgotha. On His way, the cross became too much for Him so Simon the Cyrenian was chosen to bear it.

Jesus, my Lord, and Savior was nailed to the upright piece by nailing His feet to it. The crosswise piece held His hands with nails (or spikes) on each side. Once again, I think of the blood gas test and neuropathy pain I have associated with my nerves. The nails hammered into the center of just one hand would be more than I could take. Are you aware of how often we use our feet and hands? Imagine how many nerves are in each one. Then remember that only one serve would be too much. Wasn’t the nailing to the cross enough torture? No matter how awful your pain is, think about Jesus, His bearing and then the crucifixion He endured. Remember, He died for everyone’s sin, then He arose! Hallelujah! He Lives!

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

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One of the most fantastic things about the stories I tell is that they are real. Real stories and real people. My heritage and my people. Though far from perfect, it's still wonderful, because sometimes by God's grace, imperfect people who are sinners on this earth, can be orchestrated to make a beautiful picture. It's my beautiful picture. It's mine, not just because I was born into this family, it's mine because it was given to me. It's a gift given to me by my parents, grandparents, great grandparents, etc. It's a gift given to my mom and my aunt and all the in-laws in my extended family; it's their gift, too. A gift of stories, histories, and love. It doesn't belong only to the blood-related grandchildren; it belongs to the adopted into the family. Though adopted into the family, they're so loved and cherished they too have been given our stories and heritage to make their own. Not only were we given the gift of story and heritage, but the gift of an atmosphere full of honor, love, devotion, belonging and Appalachian and Blue Ridge Mountain traditions. We were also given, maybe, more importantly, a home. A home, a place to find comfort, joy, and happiness. A place where we can even bring our sorrows and woes. A place of feasting and rejoicing and a place to mourn together. A place where we are taught about our past and to plan our future. A place of understanding love. A home that's not our own shode, but a home that's yours and given as a gift. Full of hospitality and love. No matter how much, no matter how little. No matter how clean, no matter how dirty. I love to write about our feasts at Manaw and Papaw's table, but not every meal is biscuits and gravy or fried chicken. Sometimes it's takeout or leftovers. Sometimes it's soup beans or vegetable soup. Sometimes it's grilled cheese sandwiches and instant potato soup. It's not always the food, but it's the fact that we were here and was shared, sacrifices made, we sat together, bade our heads and prayed to the One who made it all possible. Most of the time our visits are last minute but we know that their home is open to us. Most Sundays come after long and week days and often they become filled with naps and TV. But couches and beds are here, and blankets and pillows are for those sleeping on the floor. In that home, we've been given stories, love, and hospitality. A second home. A place of rest. A place to escape from the mundane. A place where you are understood but more than that, there is a sincere desire to understand you and your life. A place to talk about the truths of life and all things. Where we talk of biblical truth and daily news. A place to learn of our past and our fathers and mothers before us. Their hardships, their victories, their songs, and their stories. How they preserved the food they grew. How they lived through wars and the great depression and came out of it victorious. As the things my dear Papaw Clarence and Mamaw Atlas gave me. Mamaw and Papaw give it to me. Mom and Dad continue to give it to me. But with such a gift comes a certain amount of responsibility. A responsibility of respect, love, and loyalty to another. You treat people how you want to be treated. You show hospitality. You give and make sacrifices for each other. You respect your elders, no matter how old, no matter how forgetful. And receive it, this gift, with the trust that you will take this story and hand it down to the next generation. I have been given the gifts of grandparents attending church with me, never-ending hospitality, good food, biblical truths, genuine interest, an honorable heritage, taught the love of God, shown respect, taught honor, taught real joy, many a laugh, encouragement and praise, truthful criticism, a family, the benefits of hard work, the love of mountains, the appreciation of dirt and the gift of home. All I had to do was accept the gift given to me and understand the importance of it. And the glorious thing is it's not just mine, it's been given to Christ (daughters-in-law) and Raddie (adopted) and all those who entered this family through marriage or adoption. By no means is my family perfect and neither is our story and heritage. How could it be? We are sinners in a fallen world. We're lazy and loud. We embarrass one another constantly. We've self-centered and selfish. With our laughter comes joking and kidding and with that can come into consideration of the person the joke is on. Bitterness can be carried around for long periods of time. Pride can overcome us. But there is confession and forgiveness, and with our love for each other and our love for God, most often we're able to get on with life. To go on with the celebrations and feasting. To go on with the things that have a lasting impact on our lives and the lives of our loved ones. So, tell your story. Show hospitality. Listen to Mamaw and Papaw. Drink your coffee slow. And more importantly, love God.
NC Baptist Aging

Aging Well Conferences
Coming Soon!

By Carol Layton

First Baptist Church Swannanoa and First Baptist Church Murphy are each hosting Aging Well Conferences to be held this spring. The events are free but require registration.

The Swannanoa conference will be held March 20 and the Murphy conference will be held April 1. Both events are held 9:30 am – 12:30 pm and include lunch.

North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry (NCBAM) will provide programming for the conferences. In “Home Invasion Prevention,” Angie Gregg, far west regional director for NCBAM, will share strategies for having peace of mind at home with proper planning and prevention. A Rita Davie, west regional director for NCBAM, will share information about NCBAM’s newest outreach, “One Hope.” This outreach brings awareness to the epidemic of social isolation and loneliness and provides strategies for churches to offer a spiritual response.

For more information, contact Aia Davie at 828.450.1334.

Carlo Layton is the Director of Communications and Administration for NCBAM at Baptist Children’s Home of North Carolina.

Redeemed Free Will Baptist Church

The Oil Kept Flowing

By Patricia Jackson
McDowell County

157th and 2 Kings contain many faith-building stories of miracles in the life of Elijah and Elisha. One of my favorites is the Widow’s Pot of Oil. The first verse of 2 Kings, Chapter 4 tells us about a desperate woman “Now there CREED a certain woman”. Her husband had died, and the creditor demanded payment – her two sons to be behead. She had a debt she could not pay and nowhere to turn to for help. Her problem seemed overwhelming, but it was just God’s opportunity in disguise. There are numerous instances where God responded to a cry for help, including King David’s cry in Psalm 41:1 “Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble”. Just like David, she knew the one to call.

She had only a small pot of oil, so little money, and probably only little food. Elijah told her to borrow vessels from all her neighbors and borrow not a few. In other words, get as many vessels as they will give or loan you. The number of vessels she would acquire was in direct relation to her faith. If her faith in the words of Elijah was small, she would borrow only a few. But she had faith in the prophet’s words and returned with many vessels. (Matthew 2:29 — “According to your faith, be it unto you”). We can only wonder how her unsympathetic neighbors reacted to her request for empty vessels. Perhaps they laughed at the vessel thinking she had lost her mind or maybe loaned them just to see what would happen next. I like to think that God moved on these neighbors to loan her all the empty vessels they had.

Elisha told her to go inside with her son, while he remained outside. In any mind’s eye, I could see neighbors outside on their porch watching or in the narrow street, curious about what she would do with all the empty vessels. Surely, they mocked a h at each other. But inside the house, a miracle was happening! The oil kept flowing out of the little vessel. They filled one large vessel, then another and another, until all the vessels were full.

She and her son came out and gave Elisha the news, “There is not a vessel more”. He instructed her to still the oil, pay off the creditor and live off the rest.

When the day ended, the mother and son had their financial needs met. More importantly, the neighbors also knew about the great miracle from God’s Prophet Elisha and the mighty God of Israel he served.

Patricia Jackson is the Assistant Teacher for the Ladies Class at Redeemed Free Will Baptist Church, Glencool, NC. She is a grant writer for non-profit, a published author and retired Nursing Home Administrator. She lives in Rutherford County with her husband. Contact information: email address: mjc2ge@bellsouth.net.

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The Great American Divide and Our Loss of National Identity
By Rev. Mark Czech

A few months ago, I was reading from my signed copy of W. A. Swanberg’s biography, “First Blood: The Story of Fort Sumter.” It’s a marvelous account of events that led up to the firing on Fort Sumter, the act that represented the North-South quarrel and led to the greatest war America has ever known — the Civil War. In the book, Swanberg describes what was taking place in South Carolina just before the terrible War Between the States ensued.

As a nation without exception, the state senators and representatives were in favor of secession, the main points at issue being how and under what circumstances that they had ample provocation to quit the Union, few had any doubts. The victory of Lincoln on the anti-slavery Republican platform, while not decisive in itself, was regarded as the last straw in a thirty-year succession of wrongs against the South. It could give them reasons galore to justify secession. Through the door of the Union. The slavery question, the tariff, the fight for territories, the endless fugitive slave quarrels — altogether about all that underly the trouble. But probably Mary Boykin Chesnut, the pretty and matronly wife of Senator James Chesnut, struck more at the heart of the matter. ‘We are divorced’, she said, ‘because we have hated each other so.

For some time now, various news articles have been claiming that Americans are just as divided as they were before the Civil War and query as to whether we’re headed for another one. God forbid.

Last year, C. Brady Thompson, a professor at Clemson University and an opinion contributor for USA Today, aptly wrote about America’s current great divide.

Thompson said:

‘There was a time, not long ago, when most Americans were proud to be Americans, and they liked each other. Sadly, that is no longer the case.

‘People are so polarized in 2019 that we might now speak of the “Divided States of America” or the “United States of Hatred.”

‘Americans are irrevocably divided over Donald Trump, impeachment, capitalism, socialism, democracy, pronouns, abortion, marriage, immigration, climate change, reparations, Brett Kavanaugh, the Covington kids, free speech, drag queen reading hour, political correctness, and many other topics.

‘All of our cultural institutions — the schools, Boy Scouts, NFL, Oscars, soap operas, late-night television, Broadway, stand-up comedy — have become polarized and weaponized. We can’t even come together, even the flag and the national anthem.

‘It is not an exaggeration to suggest that liberals and conservative Americans hate each other…Where is all this leading us? This much is certain. To paraphrase Abraham Lincoln, a nation that hates itself cannot stand.’

If anyone reflects on the matter deeply and has any semblance of patriotism, the current situation will precipitate tears. And, of course, there have been any display more manifest and representative of the palpable hatred between our countrymen than when President Trump refused to shake Speaker Pelosi’s hand and the Speaker tore apart his State of the Union speech in front of the entire country.

Thompson said he believes the answer needed to bridge the divide is a return to what he called “Americanism.” Americanism, said Thompson, is the philosophy that despite our vast and varied differences, we agree that all men and women should be “equally free, morally sovereign and self-governing.”

Yet as high-sounding and noble that sentiment might be, it won’t be enough to cause Americans to come together again.

Perhaps Yoram Hazony, in a Time Magazine article titled, “How Americans Lost Their National Identity,” is closer to the truth and implies what must be done.

Hazony, who is an Israeli philosopher and political theorist, argues that Americans were possessed with an innate understanding of how they thought our people was the result of a single worldview that had been a product of the U.S. and bolstered by the Constitution. He says that the “original” American state, while internally diverse, nonetheless, largely shared the English language, Protestant religion and the common law, and had fought Britain together. The nation reflected in these characteristics was so strong that Americans were gradually able to adapt other “other” into Catholic, Jews and — with time — the non-Americans who had lived through the evils of enslavement and segregation.

Hazony adds that Americans eventually sought to “counterbalance increasing diversity with a carefully protected common cultural inheritance. New territories were admitted as American states only once they had an English-speaking majority and adopted the common law. The eradication of slavery in the South and polygamy among the Mormons was likewise the result of a common cultural inheritance, descended from English Puritanism, which Americans insisted on maintaining even at the price of coercion.”

Hazony further contends it was only after America’s commitment to these principles begins to fade, which was fashioned out of a biblically rooted American nationalism (not the racist white nationalism), did dangerous and destructive revolutionary new theories fill the vacuum. Hazony concludes, “As Americans have stopped reading the Bible, they have also lost an intuitive sense of what a ‘nation’ is, and of what must be done to maintain it.”

Thus, the correct diagnosis of the division our nation now so painfully endures and the remedy to effectively treat it.

There is, unfortunately, no point of reference larger than us by which we define ourselves or hold ourselves together anymore. So consequently, we have become factions of competing value systems, each fighting against the other, most failing under the categories of political Right or political Left, to determine which will ultimately prevail.

But we should have no illusions as to the outcome. Our national ship will sink in this storm — unless it stops; it’s drifting — unless it’s turned away from the rocks of personal and public practical atheism — unless it is once again anchored to the conventional teaching of the Old and New Testaments.

It wasn’t Abraham Lincoln who said it first, but Jesus Christ: “Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand” (Matthew 12:22–23).

A revival of Christian orthodoxy and adherence to its tenets is the only way to regain our national identity and stop the harm.

Reverend Dr. Mark Czech is Executive Director of the NC Christian Action League. You can contact him at mark.czech@christianactionleague.org or 919-378-9665.

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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 for a weekend, mini-week, or full week at one of these locations: Camp Caleb, Red Sprites, Shelby, Mando Vista, Canewell, or Truett Baptist Camp. For more information contact Dolice Noa at dnoa@ncbaptist.org. Website: http://baptistonmission.org/camps/dekids.pdf

Outbound 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 Outbound Program is calling for volunteers in Avery, Mitchell, and Yancey Counties. Volunteer outboarders, also known as Community Advisory Committee’s (CACC) serve as advocates for residents living in nursing homes and assisted living facilities.

CACC 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 outbounders or to request an application, call Steve John at (828) 261-5434 Ext 125 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, we study 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 12th - May 2023.

Men’s Bible Study - Men's Group @ First Presbyterian Church, Spruce Pine 10am-11:30 am Mitchell County
Women’s Evening group meet @ Grassie Creek Baptist Church, Spruce Pine 5:45 pm-7:15 pm Mitchell County

Men’s Bible Study @ Higgens Methodist Church, Burnsville 6:00p-7:30 pm - Yancey County Contact: Nancy Ball (828) 557-1195 (Day Women) - Angie Woody (828) 667-3380 (Evening Women)

The Billy Graham Library - Book Signing: Ruth Graham, MARCH 14, 2020 - 2:00 PM - 5:00 PM
Ruth Graham—daughter of Billy Graham—will be visiting the Billy Graham Library on March 14 to sign copies of her newest book, Forgive My Father, Forgive Myself. Founder and President of Ruth Graham & Friends, Ruth seeks to minister God’s grace and comfort to those who are hurting and feel alone and to equip those who desire to help those who are hurting. In her most vulnerable writing yet, Ruth Graham reveals how a visit to Raleigh Poison inspired her to release the unredeeming lurking in her own heart toward others, herself, and even her heavenly Father.

Look for tickets in Ruth’s Attic bookstore, or you may bring your own. For more information, please call 704-401-3200 or email libraryevents@bgusa.org. This is a free event, open to the public with no registration required.

Avery County

Avery County Events
March 1: High Country Junior Race Series Championships at Sugar Mountain Resort, 7:30 am
Beginning March 2: March Madness at Sugar Mountain Resort
March 7: The Collective performs live at Sugar Mountain Resort 4:00 - 6:00 pm
March 8: Richard T. Trundy Memorial Sugar Cup Competition at Sugar Mountain Resort
March 15: Sugar Bear’s Birthday Celebration at Sugar Mountain Resort
March 21: Closing Day at Beech Mountain Resort
March 28: Builders’ Showcase at The Lodges at Eagles Nest
March 31: End of Season Celebration at Sugar Mountain Resort, 3:30 pm - 5:30 pm

Celebrate Recovery: at Heston 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 in-depth Bible Class for women.

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

Burke County

Burke County Chamber - 20th Annual ACC Chili Cook-Off - The ACC Chili Cook-Off will take place Friday, March 13, 2020 from 11:00 am to 1:30 pm at the Morganton Community House (120 North King Street). A RAGAN PRICED $7.00 ticket buy all-you-can-eat...

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 Association Bible Drill is scheduled for March 15th, at Wilkes Grove @ 3 pm. If your church plans to participate in this wonderful ministry, please let us know by calling our CRDA office.

11th Annual Boys’ BBQ & Rally – Tuesday, March 21, 2020, 6:00 – 9:30 PM at Mount Home Baptist Church, $6 per person. Guest Speaker: Buckey Kennedy. Door Prize drawing! Grand Prize full size ride. RSVP by calling CRBA at 828-417-6317.

Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church - 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 Rutherford County who enjoy baking to participate in our pie baking contest. The entry fee for one pie is $10. You can find more information on the pie baking contest at http://tasteoflocalfood.com/pie-bakeoff/bakeoffregistration.aspx.

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 1. Free admission, but seating is limited so please plan to arrive at your seat by calling Stan at 828-134-0084. Great Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church, 2907 US Hwy 70 E, Morganton (Drexel, across from Footlights 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 @degivingheartthriftshop. The Giving Heart Thrift Shop is a ministry of the Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Prophecies Of Hope presented by Pastor Steve Biets. The Bible has predicted the coming of the Messiah. Think what it would be like to live in those times. Join us as we explore History and Bible Prophecy! Admission is completely FREE and there will be FREE Childcare for ages 1-17 years old. We will also have FREE Study Guides each evening along with FREE Bibles and other Giveaways! Location: Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church, 2187 Jamestown Road, Morganton, NC 28655. The seminars will take place the following evenings: Friday, Saturday and Sunday, March 6-8 at 7:30 pm; March 9, Monday at 7:00 pm; and Thursday and Friday, March 12 and 13 at 7:00 pm.

Valdese Events
Concerts at The Rock presents: Carolina Blue - March 7, 2020, 7:30 pm - 10 pm. Tickets $20 in advance & $25 at the door.

Mid 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: 828-679-3139.

McDowell County

Crago Mill United Methodist Church - Crago Mill United Methodist Church is Marien 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 828-960-9277, 828-442-8098 or 828-823-8700.

New Community Outreach Benefits McDowell Families: With Children Teens for Career B.E.A.R. Closet (Call Community Outreach Close) - 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 from 4:30 to 9:00 p.m. and the 3rd and 4th Wednesdays 9:00 to 1:00 a.m. For more information or if you are interested in volunteering or volunteering opportunities call 828-833-4790 or email TeensForCrisisBEARcloset@ymail.com.

Organizing for the Home Garden, Tue, Mar 3, 6:30 PM - Converting Memorial YMCA

The Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Association of McDowell County will have their monthly program meeting on Organic Gardening for the Home Garden on Tuesday, March 3, 2020 at 6:30 pm at the Converting Memorial YMCA, 348 Grace Coopering Drive, Marion. Craig Mennery, Area Specialized Agent, 828-679-3139.

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Commercial Vegetables and Fruits, with North Carolina Cooperative Extension will be presenting. Craig has a vast experience of over 25 years in the field. The Organic Gardener prefers to use organic methods and materials to grow vegetables, fruits, and even turf. Learn how to use the least amount of synthetic chemicals and pesticides that may be detrimental to your health and the environment.

Join us as we learn an organic approach to fertilization and pest control practices. The program is FREE and open to the public. Read more at: https://ncdocs.ces.ncsu.edu/2020/02/organic-gardening-for-the-home-garden/

McDowell County Senior Games Early Bird Registration - Friday, March 6th 2020 at 10:30 am. McDowell County Senior Center, 100 Spaniel Rd, Marion North Carolina 28752, Marion, United States

Come enjoy a nice breakfast with us and get your registration done for this year’s McDowell County Senior Games. Breakfast is from 8:30am to 9:30am and Early Bird registration is $10. Registration closes Thursday, March 5th, 2020 at 5:00pm. Registration deadline for our local games is April 6th. If you’re not interested in sports that’s ok too. We have the Silver Arts program in which we welcome local artists, crafters, woodworkers, etc. We also welcome writers, singers, dancers and performers. On the second Monday of each month through October. In this first meeting just have to be 50 or older. We look forward to seeing you there! If you have any questions leave a message or call Brenda at 828-639-0821.

Pioneer Day - Pioneer Day. April 25, 2020 Mountain Gateway Museum 24 Water Street, Old Fort, NC 28762 (828) 688-9259 www.mgmcnc.org Annual celebration of mountain heritage. The one day festival features mountain music in the amphitheater, craft demonstrations such as weaving, blacksmithing, and pottery turning. “Hit or Miss” engine display and vendors selling and displaying their wares.

Mitchell County

Beard Creek Baptist Church – Associational Bible Drills, Saturday, March 21, 2020, Children & Youth Drills, Registration: 9:30am; Drills: 10:00am; If you have questions, please contact Fletcher Bonaventure, 766-0593, our associational Bible Drill Director. Leaders, you will be able to register your participants online for the State Convention at abcspots.com. Go to ministries at the bottom of page and click on Bible Drills. Please do this before you come to the associational drills.

Burnsville Spring Fest - Saturday, Mar 14, 2020 from 9:30am to 2:00pm; Burnsville Spring Fest is here! Celebrate the arrival of Spring by shopping a wide variet of unique items such as paintings, quilted sheep, teddy bears, wooden bowls, stained glass, painted signs, glass ornaments, beehive candles, baked goods and much more!

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

Mayland Small Business Center 28701 Business Breakfast: 2026 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 Burnsville-Town of Burnsville, 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 held the second Tuesday of each month through October. 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 to make plans to attend.

Build Optimize YOUR Facebook Business Page (1 Hour) A Facebook business page is a great tool to interact with existing and new customers. This workshop will cover Facebook account set-up, best practices, the latest updates to Facebook for business, and optimization tips to build sales.
3/3, T, 1:30-3:30 pm. Fee Waived Instructor: Jones Mitchell 828-786-1295 Build, Optimize and link YOUR Instagram Business Page (2 Hours) Instagram is a great way to showcase your product or service to potential customers. This workshop will cover Instagram account set-up, best practices, latest updates to Instagram for business, optimization, and show how to use Instagram to post to Facebook.
3/5, TH, 1:30-3:30 pm. Fee Waived Instructor: Jones Mitchell 828-786-1295 Art Market Taysteyl (2 Hours) NEW! If you are a local artist build a personalized marketing plan that works with your schedule and computer skill level. This class will help artists assess their current marketing and learn the best sites, tools, and tactics for their niche.
3/11, W, 1:30-7:30 pm. Fee Waived Instructor: Demi Dickson TRA Spruce Pine Gallery 28701 Business Breakfast (1.5 Hours) Localized small business information and networking geared towards Bakersville and surrounding communities. Free light breakfast!
3/12, TH, 8:00-9:30 a.m. Fee Waived Instructor: TBD Mitchell County Administration Building, Bakersville, 828.786.1295 Yearly Rainbow Morning Breakfast (1.5 Hours) Small business and entrepreneurship topics with a Vance County focus. Networking and free light breakfast!
3/17, T, 9:00-9:30 a.m. Fee Waived Instructor: Brianna Robinson Burnsville Town Center, 828.786.1295 CVAs for Artists (2 Hours) Design effective posts, ads, flyers, and much more using a free website called Canva! Seminar will focus on ways that artists can use Canva to market their art. Instructor will help artists create a log, demonstrate best practices, and develop a canvas for their own personal Canva.
3/25, W, 5:30-7:30 p.m. Fee Waived Instructor: Jones TRA Spruce Pine Gallery 828.786.1295

Mayland Community College Foundation - Mayland Plant Swap and Shop - Saturday, April 2th, 10:00 - 2:00 pm. Pine Bridge Parking Lot, Spruce Pine. Come check out the great supply of spring plants. From beautiful hanging baskets, to herbs, to veggie starts. Plants grown in the MCC greenhouses and from local nurseries will be for sale. Several farmer’s market vendors will also have booths. MCC will be giving away 4 packs of heirloom seeds for the full list of vendors and more info visit www.mayland.edu/foundation/foundations-events-plant-swap/

Mitchell County Chamber – Spruce Pine Main Street Clean-Up – Saturday, April 4 – Downtown Spruce Pine, Time: 9:00 – 10:00 – Please join SPMS for our annual spring clean-up. Activities may include trimming, weeding, sweeping, planting and picking up trash. Please wear old clothes and bring your rakes, shovels, gloves, and gardening tools. Trash bag provided. Hot dogs and drinks will be available to all volunteers who participate. Please meet at Central Park at 9:00 to be placed on a team (for safety reasons, we ask that all volunteers be at least 12 years of age). Rain date April 18th. To sign up call 828-765-0085 or email smgps@downtownspruceline.com. (head count requested please)

Mitchell County Cooperative Extension – Upcoming Pesticide Classes: Schedule – The classes will be held at the NC Cooperative Extension Mitchell County Center, 13 South Mitchell Avenue, Bakersville, NC. Category (V) Classes March 24, 2020 2:00-4:00 pm, April 7, 2020 2:00-4:00 pm. To retain your private pesticide license, you must attend a 2-hr category (V). You will also need to attend a 2-hour category (C) for a total of 4 hours. Call 828-883-4811 to register for these classes.

2020 Livestock Kick-Off Meeting – Heifer and Heifer Development, Mitchell County, Thursday, March 5, 2020 at 6:30 p.m. at Mitchell Senior Center. 132 Ledger School Road, Bakersville, NC. Dr. Deidre Harmon, Extension Livestock Specialist, NCSU Cooperative Extension, Waynesville, NC will be presenting on the importance of heifer and heifer development along with ways to do so on your farm. All producers, along with their family members are welcome! Full Meal Provided! Please RSVP by calling 828-683-4611. For more information contact Mitchell Cooperative Extension Center at 828-685-4811.

Neighbours Feeding Neighbors - 1153 Road, Spruce Pine, NC. 28777 (Roch House is Freedom Baptist Church parking lot) OUR MISSION is to reach out to those who have food insecurity with love and respect and serving those in need without judgement.

MARCH EVENTS
2nd. Food Box Pickup at the ministry from 12:00 to 1:00 pm
9th: Open Market at the ministry from 12:00 to 5:00 pm
14th: Community Meal from 4:00 to 6:00. Location to be determined.
21st: Open Market at the ministry from 12:00 to 5:00 pm
26th: Community Meal from 4:00 to 6:00. Location to be determined.
30th: Food Box Pickup at the ministry from 12:00 to 5:00 pm

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 239-248-2130 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 828-785-4613 or call 828-467-1433. The 2020 Service 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
Voted Best Breakfast & Salad Bar in Morganton

I-40 at Exit 105

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Morganton, NC
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In Like a Lion, Out Like a Lamb
By Bruce Cannon
Mitchell County

“In like a lion, out like a lamb,” goes the proverbial expression. Everyone hopes for much-improving weather as we go through the month of March. And, while I also hope that to be true, that expression reminds me of two of the names of our God. He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the Lamb of God.

Both names are equally precious to us. The name, “Lion,” speaks of His royal character. The name, “Lamb,” speaks of His being the Savior of the world. Both names are used in Revelation 5:5:6: “And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof: and I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.”

When I think of my lion my mind conjures up an image of a male African lion. This animal is over 400 pounds and 4 feet tall at the shoulder. It is equipped with enormous fangs and incredibly powerful necks, front limbs and claws that allow it to hunt, on average, the largest prey of any land animal. It is referred to as the “king of the jungle” and has no natural enemies.

What a perfect description of our God! Powerful, no enemies can stand before Him! He is our champion, our shield, our hiding place, our mighty fortress, our cleft in the rock, our hiding place. Under His wings and in His shadow we can abide. The picture of a mother hen and her chicks is also used in the Scriptures to speak of His protection. He can turn away all the fiery darts of the wicked one. He can heal all our diseases. He can save our souls, no matter what we have done, and declare us righteous before His presence.

As the Lamb of God, He is tender, kind, compassionate and loving. He was willing to go to the Cross for us. He shed His blood to wash away all our sins. Isaiah wrote in 53:5:7: “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearer are dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.” He had all authority and all power; yet He chose not to use it. He allowed Himself, who knew no sin, to die for those who had no hope...me and you!

What precious names are these: Lion and Lamb! Two names which bring great hope and peace to our hearts because we know that we need both. We need a Lion to fight our battles and win them because we can’t on our own. We need a Lamb to be our sacrifice for sin so the righteous demands of God can be met for us to be able to go to Heaven.

In like a lion, out like a lamb. March, thank you for your blusteriness and calm that you remind us of our God. Lord, thank you for being our Lion and our Lamb! We praise You for Your protecting power, your shielding help on our behalf. We also praise You for being our sacrifice. We couldn’t save ourselves, but you so wonderfully and graciously provided the payment for us. Thank you! In Jesus’ great Name, Amen!

Rev. Bruce Cannon currently serves as the Senior Pastor of Bear Creek Baptist Church in Bakeville. 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 RAINBOW IS A SIGN
By John McCoury
Roean Mountain, Tennessee

Whenever I catch sight of a rainbow, I like to point it out and say to any people nearby, “God put that there. Sometimes that catches them off guard. Sometimes they even appear a little jumpy. They look around as though God is going to appear. Then I say, “That the rainbow is the sign of a promise. According to Genesis 9:13, God will never again flood the earth.” I have found that to be a great way to start a conversation about Christ. We read in Genesis 9:13-17: “A covenant is a binding agreement between two parties that establishes them in a mutually committed relationship. Consequences for breaking the terms of the covenant are spelled ahead of time. Throughout the Old Testament God covenants with a group of people through an individual representative...here Noah, and later Abraham, Moses, and David. In this instance, God vows to Noah and the rest of creation that He will never again destroy the earth with a flood; that the seasons will come and go as long as the earth remains; and that a rainbow will be the sign of His promises. The token was a beautiful sight to Noah, and it is a beautiful display to behold even to this day. It is the token of the rainbow. The rainbow came because there had been a storm. Every rainbow has a cloud as its background. The rainbow is brightest when the clouds are the darkest, but we must always realize that the rainbow can be revealed only when there is a break in the clouds. That rainbow says that the sun has been shining even though there are clouds.

The rainbow is the symbol of God’s everlasting love. Read Isaiah 44:5-22. sorrow is the dark background on which God paints His tokens of love. His grace will come to take the tears and storm clouds of our lives and turn them into arches of triumph and jewels of glorious lustre. We do not know when the storm clouds will come, but we can always be sure that God will give a rainbow. “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Corinthians 4:17). The rainbow on earth is only a half-circle; but when we get to Heaven, it will be a complete circle. Revelation 4:6:8 states that John saw a “rainbow round about the throne in right be like unto an emerald”. The rainbow will be a complete circle and it will be only green, the color representing praise and worship. On earth, the bow is bent toward Heaven, not toward earth. It points up to tell us God’s wrath was removed at Calvary. God made the rainbow a covenant sign. To help His people remember His covenants, God gave them visible signs. His covenant with Abraham was sealed with the sign of circumcision (17:11; Rom. 4:9-12) and the Mosaic covenant at Sinai with the sign of the weekly Sabbath (Ex. 31:16,17). God’s covenant with Noah and the animal creation was sealed with the sign of the rainbow. Whenever people saw the rainbow, they would remember God’s promise that no future storm would ever become a worldwide flood that would destroy humanity. The rainbow isn’t only for us to see, for the Lord said “I will look on it” (Gen. 9:16). God certainly doesn’t forget His covenants with His people, but this is just another way of assuring us that we don’t need to be afraid. When we look at the rainbow, we know that our Father is also looking at the rainbow, and therefore it becomes a bridge that brings us together.

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

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On February 18th, a North Carolina Court of Appeals three-judge panel issued an injunction against the state’s law requiring voter ID in North Carolina elections. It is troubling that three judges—all registered Democrats—decided to disregard and override the will of millions of North Carolina voters who voted to amend their own constitution and approve the voter ID amendment in the 2018 general election.

Voters’ approval of the voter ID amendment led to the passage of Senate Bill 24—Implementation of Voter ID Cost Amendment. Following Senate and House overrides of Gov. Cooper’s veto, the bill became law on December 19, 2018. Session Law 2018-44 provides a wide array of acceptable forms of photo identification for voting identification, including student IDs, drivers’ licenses, passports, military and veterans’ IDs, voter and state employee cards, and Native American tribal cards. Additionally, the bill requires county boards of elections to issue free voter photo ID cards to registered voters upon request.

Unfortunately, the liberal elite, which includes this three-judge panel, has no interest in protecting the integrity of the ballot box nor allowing the will of North Carolinians to be carried out. Thirty-four other states have laws that require voter ID. North Carolina is the only state in the Southeast without a voter ID requirement. This is unacceptable, as is a three-judge Democratic panel overturning the vote of over 55% of North Carolina voters. Keep this in mind when you vote for judges at the ballot box, and when you vote for our President who appoints federal judges.

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

Army Corps of Engineers Invests More Than $336 Million in North Carolina

Long-awaited funding to study river basins and complete storm damage reduction projects throughout Eastern North Carolina. Each storm that hits North Carolina takes a toll on our beaches and river basins. After the historic damage inflicted by recent hurricanes, it’s clear that it’s not enough to simply rebuild. We have to rebuild in a way that applies the lessons of the past to mitigate future risks.

This week, the Army Corps of Engineers recognized this and announced an allocation of more than $321 million for storm damage reduction projects throughout Eastern North Carolina. The Corps also announced it will invest $15 million to study flood prevention around North Carolina’s river basins and beaches. Specifically, this funding provides:

- $237 million to Surf City/North Topsail Beach, N.C. to construct natural barriers and dunes along nearly 10 miles of oceanfront.
- $44.5 million to Carteret County (Bogue Banks), N.C. to build a consistent natural barrier along 72.7 miles of shoreline and adds dunes along 3.9 miles.
- $39.6 million to Princeville, N.C. to better manage flood risks from the Tar River by increasing the elevations of N.C. Highway 33 and U.S. Highway 64 and installing additional levees.

Easter Egg Hunt & Activities:

Co-Sponsored by Morganton Parks & Recreation and Summit Community Church

Starting at 10am

- Egg Spoon Relay
- Corn Hole Toss
- Egg Hop Relay
- Facc Painting
- Storytelling
- Fresh Popcorn/Concessions

Starting Time For Egg Hunt Will Be Promptly At 11am

Candy and plastic eggs will be scattered in 4 respective age groups:
- 2 yrs & under / 3-4 yrs / 5-7 yrs / 8-10 yrs / 3 Grand Prize Eggs will be hidden in each age division.
The teacher turnover rate for the state of North Carolina has hit a four-year low, according to recent data published by the Department of Public Instruction. The report is based upon the most recent survey of teachers by the department. Entitled "State of the Teaching Profession", the report says that 7.5% of teachers left the profession in the 2018-19 school year, compared to 9% in the 2015-16 school year, 8.7% in the 2016-17 school year, and 8.1% in the 2017-18 school year. This is after legislators raised educator salaries at a 26% rate over five years — the highest in the country. Average teacher pay in N.C. is now $54,000 — 2nd highest in the Southeast. The legislature has said it wants to get to the top of Southeast teacher pay. Two additional raises, one for this year and another for next year are currently being proposed by Governor Cooper’s vetoes.

Governor Cooper also vetoed the previous two-year budget. However, veto was overridden by Republicans in the legislature, resulting in an average 5.9% raise for teachers over the two years. For this year, the legislature’s budget, but for the Cooper veto, would have provided an average 3.9% raise for teachers. In an effort to get a budget approved, NC Senate Republicans offered a 4.9% raise plus a $1,000 bonus. Unfortunately, that effort that would have resulted in two more years of teacher raises was rejected by Democrats. Governor Cooper’s veto not only applied to teacher pay raises but to other education funding as well. Thus, his veto of the most recent budget not only blocked the promised raises for teachers but also reduced total funding by $630 million in new funding for K-12 education, including $30 million more for classroom teacher salaries. Also, the Cooper veto prevents $4.4 billion from being made available to schools districts over the next two years to help with new repairs and repairs across the state. It is unfortunate that teachers do not have the raises and funding support included in the vetoed budget. I am definitely of the opinion that continuing our consecutive increased teacher raises will help raise overall levels of satisfaction with the teaching profession, especially given the increased challenges that our teachers face in their classrooms. The additional pay can only provide more encouragement to educators to choose teaching as a career. Despite the Cooper veto on previous vetoes, I am pleased to see the statistics released by the Department of Public Instruction on improved turnover. Hopefully, we will see a major setback as a result of the current budget veto.

NC Senate District 46

As we are just over a month before the 2020 “short session” convenes, I would like to give a brief preview of what may be topics of discussion. Mostly, I expect discussions to center on recent court decisions and unfinished business. The “short session” is usually the time when we review our 2-year budget to see if the second budget year needs to be adjusted to address changing or pressing needs. Since the General Assembly has already passed about 96% of what was in the original budget vetoed by Governor Cooper, I don’t anticipate much adjustment. In fact, the continuation budget and the mini budgets that were passed in 2019, and which are currently in place, include about 94% of what the Governor’s budget had requested. Another piece of unfinished business that may get discussed in May is the topic of criminal justice reform. I receive many emails regarding the 2nd Chance Act and the 1st Step Act that have not yet passed both chambers. I expect those bills to be revisited in May.

Legislators have recently passed resolutions in support of the Second Amendment. One bill I liked last year that I will attempt to get passed in 2020 is a bill that will allow churches of worship to provide their own security by allowing their members who are concealed carry license holders to enter during church services. As you know, there have been several terrible instances across the country where armed madmen have come into a church during Sunday services and killed a number of worshippers. The bill would allow the church to choose who is armed. The bill would also be similarly handled by churches of other faiths. A majority of churches in this state do not have a church security co-located on their campus. However, churches with churches with schools are unable to legally protect themselves. As a result, both students in church-related schools, and worshippers at churches that have a school, are vulnerable. In light of recent attacks on churches, I believe SB 90 and variations like HB1110 ARE much needed and should have wide public support.

Unfortunately, another topic we will need to discuss in May is the photo voter ID. In February, a 3-judge panel of the NC Court of Appeals placed an injunction on the law requiring a photo ID for voting, so it is now quite possible that no NC voter will be required to show a photo ID in the November election. Interestingly, neither of the 3 judges who imposed the injunction received even close to the number of votes as the voter ID constitutional amendment. Stay tuned for more developments on this topic.

There are also “local” funding items that are important to our district that is currently vetoed by Governor Cooper. First, the funding for school construction and the funds to get the NC School of Science and Math-Morganton opened; and the billions for school construction and renovations. There may be money available now for the NCSSM in funds controlled by UNC and the Governor. In February, I released the following statement about the chance to delay opening the new NCSSM:

"In addition to blocking critical funding for N.C. School of Science and Math’s Morganton campus, Governor Cooper has also blocked funding for public school construction, teacher pay raises, and in-home care for children with disabilities. The victim of his ill-advised Medicaid expansion- or nothing ultramans are piling up, and students and teachers all across the state are suffering the consequences. Governor Cooper seems more focused on fighting Republicans than governing this state, and new uncnc high school students in my community and across western North Carolina are having their educational opportunities vetoed."

Governor Cooper has also objected to using cash on hand to pay for school construction. The state has about $2.5 billion sitting in an account, and the budget that Governor Cooper vetoed would use much of that cash to pay for new schools.

Instead, Governor Cooper has proposed borrowing billions for school construction, a plan which the state’s nonprofits Fiscal Research Division says would require the taxpayers to pay about $2.4 billion in interest over the next 30 years. May the Lord bless you and your family. If you live in Burke, Avery or Caldwell Counties and need assistance with a state agency, do not hesitate to contact me at warren.daniell@ncleg.net.

Bits ‘n Pieces

continued from page 29

local food and their consumption. That's way 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 can help other 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 kitchen or 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

Fed-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 Fed-A-Child they can be directed to Bill & Nancy Watkins at 828-675-5387.

Mars Hill Farmers and Artisans Market — Saturday, Mar 14, 2020 from 9:00am to 12:00pm

Mars Hill College, 50 College Street, Mars Hill, NC 28754 828-712-4225

Mars Hill: Season: Spring and Summer March – October, 2020 Saturdays, 9am – 12pm

Shoal Creek Baptist Church - Shoal Creek Baptist Church, Burnsville, NC; Sunday March 8, 2020, Worship and Praise service with Bethel Colony of Mercy and Raymond Mearns, 6:00 PM

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First Baptist Church of Marshall

Humor
By Buddy Freeman
Madison County

"LAUGHTER IS HEALTHY FOR YOU"

A man and his wife attended a dinner party at the home of their friends. Near the end of the meal, the wife reprimanded her husband. She said, "That’s the third time you have gone for dessert. The hostess must think you are an absolute pig." The husband replied, "I don’t think so. I’ve been telling her it’s for you."

A new bride had cooked her first meal for her husband. She said, "My mother taught me to cook and I can cook two things well – apple pie and meatloaf." The husband took a bite of his supper and asked, "And which one is this?"

A lawyer asked a defendant, "Do you wish to challenge any of the jury members?" The defendant said, "Well, I think I could take the little guy on the end."

A man walked into a bank to rob it and he gave the teller a note that said, "This is a stickup. Give me all your money." The teller passed a note back to him that said, "Fix your syntax. We are taking your picture."

An inmate wrote his wife a letter. It said, "Don’t plant the potatoes – that’s where I buried the money." He later received a letter from his wife that said, "Honey, they dug up the entire backyard." He wrote back, "Now you can plant the potatoes."

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

Notes From The Shire

The Shire Community
By Nancy Malik
Avery County

Avery County is exceptional in its four seasons, high altitude, lovely mountains and now we met into ‘Spring’! Winter was great, complete with snow off and on, and now Spring is almost here!

On the Glory 1130am radio program, Adventures in Creation, "community" is the theme for the month of March. Each day highlights parts of Avery County that help it "tick" as a community, together. Schools, churches, law enforcement, health and race, government agencies, businesses (including two notable ski areas in it) all set it apart in its uniqueness as a community.

For my husband and I, as God led us on a journey to find a "special place", it was the community of churches that touched our hearts. We thought there were 100 churches and we tried to pray for each one on sight. But someone who works for the county said there are 133! That is impressive for a county that is smaller in population. They are small, large and many in between in size. But all have an impact on the Body of Christ in the High Country.

It is evident, especially to newcomers, like we were three years ago, that there is a large population of believing Christians here. Even people who don’t attend church have knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Avery County has a community within the churches, the believers.

There are many ministries within the individual churches that serve the community and foreign missions around the world! Supporting missionaries is common here. Jail and prison ministries reach out to needy souls, as do addiction agencies, food, housing, and medical outreachs as well.

Two years ago, at Singing on the Mountain, local favorite Tommy Bumston, sent out a plea to Avery County. He told the Body of Christ to come out of their church buildings and become the body of Christ together. I was a new widow at that time. But he spoke both my husband’s and my heart in Avery County and the United States, as well.

May the community of churches of Avery County and the rest of our country come together and serve others as well as each other, for our Lord!

Nancy Malik has lived 3 years in Avery County. She is a member of Beaver 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.

Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness; let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I, the LORD, have created it.

Isaiah 45:8

Yancey Senior Center's Health & Wellness Fair
Friday, March 20th
8:30-11:30

- Free Health Screenings
- Opportunity to talk with healthcare professionals
- Wellness Information
- Refreshments
- Goodie Bags
- Door Prizes

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Five Ways to Experience Lent
By Kenny Lammi

I grew up thinking the four major days of the church year were Christmas, Easter, Mother’s Day and Father’s Day. They were certainly the days that seemed to receive the most excitement and attention.

Since my childhood, however, I have been exposed to and studied many different traditions of worship, and I find that we often miss out on some wonderful worship experiences when we eliminate many of the significant days from the traditional church calendar.

Feb. 26 is Ash Wednesday this year. This marks the beginning of the season of Lent which is a 40-day period focused on prayer and preparation to celebrate Easter. Lent culminates with Holy Week, beginning the Sunday before Easter and leading up to Easter Sunday.

The Sunday before Easter is Palm Sunday, or Passion Sunday, and celebrates Jesus’ triumphant entry into Jerusalem. The Thursday before Easter is Maundy Thursday or Holy Thursday and remembers the Last Supper. Good Friday is the day that we commemorate Christ’s death on the cross. Finally, Easter Sunday is a great day of celebrating the resurrection.

We often miss out on some wonderful worship experiences when we eliminate many of the significant days from the traditional church calendar.

Lent has traditionally been marked by penitential prayer, fasting, and giving. Some churches today still observe a rigid schedule of fasting on certain days during Lent, which is often accompanied by giving up meat, sweets or other types of food.

Oftentimes, I give up something during Lent. And what I have discovered is that every time I crave the item I have given up, I think about the reason I am giving it up and focus on the suffering and death of Jesus. It is amazing how much this helps me focus and prepare for Easter.

In my opinion, Easter is an even greater celebration when we truly experience Lent. Yet for many who have never been exposed to the “real” church calendar, the idea may seem somewhat foreign.

Here are some ways to help you experience Lent. If this is your first year experiencing Lent, prayerfully consider just one or two things. Some ideas may give you thoughts to consider for next year.

• Do a Bible reading plan with a friend.
• Do a family devotional each day.
• Fast from something in order to focus on prayer and seeking God.
• Give sacrificially to those in need – thought, money, time, energy or gifts.
• Drive in silence. Spend your morning and evening in prayer.

Kenny Lammi, senior consultant for worship and music for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina.

**SEARCH**
(Sustaining Essential and Rural Community Healthcare)

**SEARCH** Community Meeting March 10

By Susan Larson, Co-leader

**SEARCH** (Sustaining Essential and Rural Community Healthcare) will hold an early spring meeting to which all are welcome on Tuesday, March 10, at 3:30 p.m. at the Trinity Episcopal Church, 15 Hanlock Avenue, Spruce Pine. The evening will begin with dinner, a potluck at which the main dish and dessert will be provided. Others are encouraged to bring a dish to share.

In recent weeks there have been meetings throughout Western North Carolina with the Independent Monitor hired to ensure that the agreement between the Mission Hospital System and HCA is honored. In seven locations, people have shared many concerns and some praise about the effects of the transition on hospital care throughout the Mission Hospitals. At the **SEARCH** meeting, there will be a follow-up discussion of possible responses to what people revealed in the sessions.

In addition, there will be a special guest speaker, Sheila Black, Director of Mitchell County Transportation. Taking the lead to apply for a major grant, Sheila was successful in securing funding that will purchase software to allow three counties, Avery, Mitchell, and Yancey, to coordinate their work. She will talk about the grant as well as the services offered by Mitchell County Transportation.

Anyone wishing to attend the meeting should send an email to **SEARCH**@ncba.org with same, phone number, and number attending by March 6.

Susan Larson is co-leader of **SEARCH**. She resides in Mitchell County with her husband, retired physician Dr. David Larson.
**Dave Says**

**Tighten up!**

Dear Dave,

I'm beginning to think we got in over our heads with our house. My wife and I make about $125,000 a year combined, but we've never been able to put anything aside for an emergency fund. Our mortgage payment is 35 percent of our take-home pay each month. We have two young children, so we eat out a lot, but we have no debt other than our house. Do you think we should refinance our home? Jeff

Dear Jeff,

You two are making good money, and you're debt-free except for your house. You can't tighten up your budget enough to save up an emergency fund? Stay out of restaurants, dude! There's no law stating you must eat out a lot just because there are kids in the house. I mean, you've got no emergency fund. That's a pretty basic thing. You guys need to get on a written, detailed plan, and start hitting your goals. I'm talking about a strict, monthly budget. Now, I'll admit your mortgage payment isn't exactly what I would've signed you up for. Your house payments, or rent, should be no more than 25 percent of your monthly take-home pay. But your house payment isn't what's holding you back two. What's holding you back is the fact that you haven't been willing to tighten up the finances in other areas of your life to offset hitting off more than you could chew in terms of a home.

No, I wouldn't refinance. You're fairly close when the mortgage payments are concerned, so I think you can make it through this by looking at ways to increase your income and selling stuff you don't need to build an emergency fund. You two have been smarter than some, but you're really going to have to buckle down and rearrange your priorities to make this happen!

—Dave

**Cash-out my Roth IRA?**

Dear Dave,

I have around $15,000 in a Roth IRA. I just recently started studying your advice, and I was wondering if it would be a good idea to cash it out and put the money toward debt. Sarah

Dear Sarah,

I think people to stop investing temporarily while they attack their debt. So, I wouldn't add anything to it at this point, but the worst thing you could do is cash it out if you do, taxes and penalties will steal a huge chunk of that cash. The only time I take money out of a retirement account to pay off debt is to avoid bankruptcy or foreclosure.

Start working the Baby Steps from the beginning. Baby Step 1 is saving up $1,000 for a starter emergency fund. Baby Step 2 is paying off all debts from smallest to largest, except for your house, using the debt snowball method. This will free up a lot of money! Then you're ready for Baby Step 3, which is increasing your emergency fund to a fully loaded emergency fund of three to six months of expenses.

Now you're ready for Baby Step 4, which is 15 percent of your income going into retirement!

—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.

**New Dimensions Charter School**

**By looking at the calendar, spring is almost here but we have had some days that make us wonder. We all know that late March and early April can bring some snow and bad weather to our community. This year’s winter has been very kind to us as we have currently missed only two school days because of inclement weather.**

**Our calendar committee and school board have worked very hard to develop the school calendar for 2020-2021. The recommended calendar was adopted by our school board during their February meeting. The 2020-2021 calendar is very similar to this year’s calendar. The students at New Dimensions will head back to school on Tuesday, September 1, and the scheduled last day for students is Friday, May 28. Our calendar allows for a two-week Christmas break and a one-day break at Easter. With the calendar flexibility allowed charter schools, we can increase the amount of time per day and reduce the number of school days per year.**

There are several exciting events planned for our New Dimensions family this Spring. Here are just a few of them:

- **Monday, March 2 – Middle School ASU Math Night – Middle School Auditorium 6-6 p.m.**
- **Thursday, March 5 – KS-5 Enrolment Open House Reading Around the World – 5:30 p.m.**
- **Sunday, March 8 – Daylight Savings Time Begins**
- **Tuesday, March 10 – Spring Pictures**
- **Thursday, March 12 – YMCA Family Fun Night – New Dimensions – 5 p.m.**
- **Monday, March 23 – Apps with Admin – Middle School Auditorium – 4 p.m.**
- **Friday, April 10 to Friday, April 17 – Easter Break for New Dimensions**

Even though we are not finished with this school year yet, we are already planning our summer programs. If state funds are available, our goal is to provide our students who need a little extra help and support, the opportunity to get back into the swing of things during the summer months through a reading camp. The Read to Achieve legislation requires additional support for students in third grade who are not proficient in reading. Students who fail to meet this requirement will have the opportunity to attend our reading camp. We will have an excellent staff in place and based on our previous summer camps it has been a very rewarding experience for our students. Our goal is for this to be accepting enrollment packets for prospective students.

Applications for the upcoming year are posted on our website and will be available at the school. Education Night: Reading Around the World, (including a tour of New Dimensions) will be held on Thursday, March 5 from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. If this date is not convenient, the staff of New Dimensions will be more than happy to provide individual tours. Just give us a call (202-437-5753) or email us at dbulseron@ndschool.org to schedule a tour.

We have lots going on this spring, and we certainly appreciate the support of everyone in the New Dimensions family who works collectively to meet the needs of each of the children that we serve. Thank you for making New Dimensions such a special and wonderful place for all of us.

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

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Beyond the Walls

Freedom’s Home Plan
By Marlene Houk
McDowell County

“What is Your Home Plan?” the case manager asked as he filed out the dismissal papers. Steve hesitated, his hands fumbling in his pockets. He wondered what a home plan would be like if he could almost smell the broken bridges from broken family ties. When the officer released him, he would still be claimed to his old ways.

Four years earlier, he had been arrested after a twenty-day drinking binge that included crime. He turned himself in and was placed outside a secure facility. He had reached the bottom. An alcoholic for forty years as well as practicing other addictions, he reflects about the times before his arrest, “I didn’t care who I hurt to get these things.” Now, he often wonders how he arrived home safely due to his alcoholic blackout and thedrag and lie in his car.

Two and a half weeks after his incarceration, Steve had walked into the prison chapel and asked the Lord to forgive him. He says, “I didn’t want jailhouse religion. I wanted to be a child of God, and God delivered.” Steve had entered prison at age 37. At age 61, he was released. “Prison is no place for an old man,” he declares. Although he had no outside money or anything given to him, not even deodorant, his trust in God kept him focused on the Lord and away from sin.

After signing his papers and being released, he met his probation officer in the parking lot. He was driven to Freedom Ministries, a Christ-based pre-and-post-release program located in Marion, NC, and Steve’s outside life began. The ministry arranged for shelter in one of their transition houses and allowed him to rest for a few days. They asked for a year of his life and together, they formed a plan for his life. Freedom Life would provide transportation for work, to appointments, and grocery shopping. During the year, Steve would participate in counseling and group meetings. He gladly chose Bible study also because he realized that the Lord was the Master of his plan.

As part of his plan, he began working with Marion Taylor and Uphoodey, and it catapulted his ability to recover. There, Rick and Amy, the owners, listened to his problems, included him in devotions every morning, and supported him in reaching his goals with Freedom Life. Steve says, “I knew they were there for me, and we became like family.”

Following the grace and kindness that his mentors modeled, Steve now 22 months later, gives back. He participates in the same meetings at Freedom Life, but now he’s able to listen with understanding to other’s stories. “We are a brotherhood and we’re concerned when one misses, we say, ‘and we reach out to them.’ We allow the horses to work to lead, and we follow Proverbs’ wisdom that iron sharpens iron. (Proverbs 27:17) For example, a typical focus of abducted men is that they do the same thing but expect different results. Steve recognizes this in the group meetings and helps them see that they need to change from within.

Now, after completing his plan with Freedom Life, Steve volunteers by transporting clients for the doctor appointments, motor vehicle appointments, DAs, to obtain clothes, garbage and jobs interviews. He is a transition house manager in the very house where God built a new foundation in his life. “Without Freedom Life’s involvement, I would probably have gone back to prison,” he summarizes. Then, with a chuckle, he says, “I have been given the opportunity to work here for 20 cents an hour. I volunteer once a month for Freedom Life. I’m the only one who took a cut in pay outside the prison walls.”

Steve describes his family at Freedom by saying, “We are not just a counselor and client but brother and brother. We are not simply acquaintances but have relationships.”

“Freedom Life changed my life,” was asked. He offers his answer with a smile, “Back then, my focus was self-centered and harmful. Now, I want to encourage and help others, and God lets me! I appreciate the way that Freedom allowed the Holy Spirit to lead me. Belonging to a good church and my understanding of myself is different than the endless cycle of addiction and feelings of worthlessness.” He explains, “I am sorry of the things I’ve done. But through God’s incredible love I have learned to receive forgiveness and I am no longer ashamed of who I am in Christ. Bonding with true friends, committing to a mutual plan with Freedom Life, and the Holy Spirit’s guidance has helped him. He has arrived at a new home, not just on the outside, but inside, on the inside. He adds, “I pray that the ones I’ve hurt will be able to forgive me. I pray that the pain I’ve caused them will no longer be a hindrance in their own heart’s ability to know God’s great and healing love. I am also working through my forgiveness of others as well.”

Now, Steve Thomas is safe in himself and in the pit of addiction. “Your answer is not in a bottle, pill, or needle. Soak counsel and the kingdom of God. You can’t recover alone.” Steve asks to the community to pray for the broken and volunteer in any way, even donating an old but usable vehicle that a client may be allowed to use so he or she works toward recovery.

Steve’s home plan now is found in Isaiah 61:1 which says, “The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me: because the LORD has anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.” The Lord has opened the gate of heaven.

Steve Thomas within the blocks of Marion, NC as well as within the institution. Today, he loves serving the Lord through helping to pull others out of the same pit from which he has been pulled.

Freedom Life Ministries, a nonprofit corporation, helps current and former offenders embrace the freedom of real and lasting change through the transforming power of Jesus Christ. Located in Marion, North Carolina. Contact information: Phone (828) 559-2224. Info@freedomlifeministries.org. Ms. Houk is a board member and volunteer with Freedom Life Ministries.

Marlene Houk is a regular contributor to Blue Ridge Christian News. Her passion is to delve deeply into the truths of the Bible and to discuss those in Bible studies called Back Porch Praise 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

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An Alternative to the ROTH IRA
By Steve Gaito
McDowell County

With the passage of the Secure Act in December, many in the financial planning world have been reconsidering how to plan for retirement. The truth is that retirement planning changed with the 2018 Trump tax brackets. This change created an opportunity to pay lower taxes now and recognize where retirement assets should be kept. To illustrate this situation, would you prefer to pay lower taxes now to avoid higher taxes in the future. Or would you rather pay a lower rate on the qualified assets you have saved today to minimize the impact of a tax increase in the future? The answer to both of these questions is yes. It is time to think of the total tax burden you have in retirement accounts. You do not own all of your IRA or 401(k) plans. You are business partners with the IRS. Personally, I don’t believe they are a great partner. This is because the IRS controls the rules. This is where the Secure Act comes into play. The Secure Act changed how people are allowed to take distributions from inherited IRAs. Before the Secure Act, you could spread the distribution out over the non-spousal beneficiaries’ life. This was known as the stretch provision for the IRA. It was a great strategy. With the passing of the Secure Act now these distributions must be taken in a 10-year period. So, the bottom line is that the government wants your money sooner. Given this situation, many people are considering converting qualified (IRA) plans to Roth IRAs. This makes sense as it pays the tax at the lower rate, eliminates the taxes on the inherited Roth IRA and there is no need to spread out the money over the 10 years since there is no tax consequence. You do have to consider the brackets when implementing this conversion. Run these calculations every day.

There is however an alternative to the Roth IRA that frequently flies under the radar. It is an insurance product known as Indexed Universal Life. Used properly it can provide tax-free income, growth without loss and a death benefit that can pass to the next generation tax-free. This product is not for everyone as qualifying will depend on a person’s health and need for either income or death benefit. These products can also provide for tax-free money should there be a need for either critical or chronic care. These are all great benefits that you do not get with a Roth IRA. For me, the best reason to use this product is that it can provide tax diversification. Most are aware of the need for investment diversification, but tax diversification is equally important. I cannot sell you with any amount of certainty what will happen with taxes, but what I can tell you is that tax-free is better than taxable. Given our current taxes and the likelihood that they will increase when the Trump tax law sunsets or goes away in 2020 that it makes sense to diversify the parts of your retirement plan that is subject to taxes. In most cases, I recommend that using an Indexed Universal Life product for between 25-33 percent of your retirement assets. This way you have the flexibility to choose where to make your income withdrawals from to create the most tax-efficient plan.

I know this may sound complicated, but you worked very hard for what you have saved. In retirement, you get very few opportunities to save on the taxes you pay and right now there is a great opportunity to see what you can do to improve your situation. Call my office today to see how we can help. (828) 559-6299 or send me an email at steve@retirement.com

Steve 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.

Retirement Resource Management

For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so shall the Lord God cause righteousness to spring forth before all the nations. Isaiah 51:11

Join us on Saturday, March 7th for Pie Bake Off Event in Morganton
Saturday, March 7, 2020 - 12:30 PM
Collett Street Recreation Center - Social Hall
300 Collett St.
Morganton, NC 28655
*If you are a baker interested in competing in the pie baking contest, register.
http://www.tasteforlocalfood.com/pie-bakeoff/
The Pie Bake Off event will feature:
• Slices of pies to bake
• Silent Auction - Bid on great items and get great bargains
• Great Door Prizes

Food Pantry (All attendees are asked to bring a bag of food that will be donated to Burke United Christian Ministries for family needs in Burke County)

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If bad weather occurs we will stay in the church

www.brcnews.com
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Pedaling Into God’s Presence
By Ken and Jan Metrop
Avery County

Exercise! It’s necessary for everyone to keep our joints moving, blood flowing, and energy levels rising for our overall wellness plan to care for body, mind, and spirit.

With that said, I didn’t have much of an excuse for letting it lapse as it had. Oh, there were reasons, but neither did I figure some way around the obstacles of that season of life. Instead, I’d walk when the weather permitted, but the weather was less than cooperative.

A couple of months ago, I got started again. I had been bemoaning the fact that the bike I had saved so long to purchase and had used religiously in Florida, remained hanging on a hook in the garage. Admittedly, I need surfaces to lie on the way I am comfortable.

That meant attaching a rack to our car, putting our bikes on it, driving to a flat path, unloading...you get the picture. And though rides outdoors can’t be beat, they’re few and far between.

So, I wandered out loud, “Is there some way to make my bike stationary in the basement so that I could ride?”

I really didn’t know what I was asking for. So, when my husband told me about bike trainers that can do just that, I got excited.

Long story short, we purchased one online and Ken had it together in no time. Now I have a route that keeps me moving and doesn’t depend on the weather. Between my bike, Bow Fries and Gazelle...along with stretching...seems that habit has begun helping me feel good again. And there’s a bonus. As I exercise in my quiet place with praise music in the background, I pedal right into God’s presence.

Our mind and spirit need spiritual food.

Romans 12: 2 NLT says, “Don’t be conformed to the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing, and perfect will.”

Aren’t your choices affected in light of prayer? Has your energy for service taken a back seat to personal pursuits? Perhaps your spiritual “yours” are getting a little slack from lack of use. Is it time to get back in the race?

Throw off the obstacles. Reconnect with God. Meet him in a quiet place at a specific time. Pedaling into his presence will rejuvenate your love and faith.

DELICATE STRENGTH

With legs that appear to delicate, couldn’t hold up a fee, the butterfly energetically clings to the nourishing blossom...proving there’s strength where none appears to be.

Aha! And we must do the same. Attach ourselves to our life-giving Lord. Who infuses us with His strength... Delighting in His promises and standing on His Word.

“...by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature...”

2 Peter 1: 4

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And find us on Facebook

Em Sotnick is 4-H Program Assistant for the NC Cooperative ExtensionMitchell County Center, you may contact her at em.sotnick@ncsu.edu.

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New Airline Promises To Be Nice To Customers: The Enduring Power Of Kindness
By Jim Denison

As someone who flies a lot, one attribute I seldom ascribe to the air travel industry is “niceness.”

Airline service personnel must deal with unpredictable weather, equipment problems, and overstressed passengers all through the day. Conversely, when we call for help with damaged luggage or deal with gate personnel, we have learned to expect long delays and escalating frustration followed by snarky service.

Enter David Needen, the founder of JetSizzle, Wester, Morris Air, Amil, and Open SIslamic.

His new airline, to be called Breeze Airways, expects to begin service sometime later this year. It will feature low costs, low prices, and more comfortable travel experience with expanded legroom for passengers. It will fly from and to “secondary” cities that don’t traditionally have direct service to each other.

And it will offer one other element Needen thinks will be a significant competitive advantage: Its employees will be nice to their customers.

The Forbes article notes: “It stands as an indicator of this nation’s current airline industry that someone now is ready to compete—and win—at least partially on making old-fashioned, positive human connection between employees and customers the featured aspect of their operation. We’ll see, over time, whether it will work.”

“It’s all rather refreshing that someone not only recognizes the glaring problem with service quality in the US airline industry today but is aiming to do something about it.”

The enduring power of kindness

David Needen knows something Christians will do well to remember when we treat others with the grace we have received: Our kindness draws them to our Lord.

Maya Angelou famously observed, “People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”

In our secularized, chaotic, divisive culture, one of the most distinctive features of the Christian faith should be the kindness with which we treat others.

But we should note that such kindness is a “fruit of the Spirit” (Galatians 5:22), the result of the Holy Spirit’s work in and through our lives. The only way to sustain kindness in turbulent times is to live in submission to his power and purpose.

The more we stay in touch with the Spirit, the more he will manifest himself through us.

When was the last time someone treated you with kindness? You will likely remember the experience long after you forget its context.

Who will remember your kindness today?

Jim Denison Ph.D. speaks on cultural and contemporary issues. His daily column is distributed to more than 113,000 subscribers in 298 countries. See more on the website www.denisonforum.org. Copyrighted and printed by permission from Denison Forum.

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And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. Mark 4:27

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A Quilt of Valor

By Terry Willis
Mitchell County

A Quilt of Valor—to comfort and heal when touched by war was presented to Terry L. Willis, a Purple Heart recipient of the Vietnam War, on December 26th, 2010. Presenting the quilt was Sandra Kay Scott Eiler, who pieced and quilted the quilt. Sandra is a member of Daughters of the American Revolution of Burnsville, North Carolina. Sandra has quilted several other quilts for wartime veterans she is acquainted with.
Terry says, “I am very grateful for the time and effort she has put into this endeavor and thankful that she has become a recipient of this honor.” Terry lives in the Newdale Community.
One Golden Rule for a Happy Marriage
By Joyce Meyer

I think most people would agree that a good marriage isn’t just going to “happen.” It requires some give and take. And more than anything, the key to having a great relationship is a commitment to do things God’s way.

For example, one way I’ve discovered I can improve my marriage is by having an attitude of giving, rather than getting. Our natural inclination is to focus on ourselves—what we want and how we can be happy. But Acts 20:33 says, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (NIV).

If you enter marriage with the mindset that your spouse should make you happy all the time, you’re setting yourself up for disaster. However, if you instead focus on choosing to be a blessing to your spouse—if you set your mind on thinking about what you can do for them—then you’ll not only strengthen your marriage, but you will also become truly happy.

I admit I used to be an incredibly selfish person. To be honest, I just plain wanted my way, and I got upset when I didn’t get it. In fact, I can still remember many mornings when I would lie in bed, thinking about how I was going to get Dave to do what I wanted him to do. I was wrapped up in myself, thinking all about what I wanted and what others could do for me.

Well, one morning, as I was formulating my plan for how I was going to get everyone to do what I wanted them to do that day, the Holy Spirit interrupted my thoughts and spoke something to my heart that I’ll never forget. He said, “Joyce, sometimes you remind me of a toy robot that someone winds up every morning. Then, you would wake up, you walk around all day long, saying, ‘What about me? What about me? What about me?’”

That really got my attention! I realized then how selfish I was and began seeking God’s help to change. As I started making progress, little by little, he showed me practical ways to be a blessing to my husband, Dave, rather than expecting him to always do something for me.

For example, a great place to start is learning your spouse’s likes and dislikes. I discovered what Dave really values during quality time together. So even though I’m more of a multi-tasker, it’s important for me to give him my undivided attention when he wants to sit and talk about something.

Liesewise, Dave has made an effort to learn what I like. Many times, he will clean up the kitchen in the evening just because he knows how much it blesses me. It may seem like a little thing, but it goes a long way toward sustaining a healthy relationship.

Remember Acts 20:33: “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” For many years I could quote this scripture, but I obviously didn’t believe it because I spent my time trying to be blessed rather than being a blessing. But God showed me that we don’t even know what “happy” is until we forget about ourselves, start focusing on others, and become generous givers in every way.

I remember a few years ago when I planned a birthday party for Dave. I spent an entire day running errands, making plans, and spending myself with how I could make it a great event. By the time his birthday arrived, I was absolutely filled with joy and couldn’t wait to see his reaction.

I actually think I enjoyed his birthday more than he did! Why? Because I got my mind off myself and focused on being a blessing to someone else.

The truth is we can never out-give God. Even if you feel right now like you’re doing all the giving and your spouse is doing all the taking, rest assured that God will always take care of you and bless your obedience to His Word.

Galatians 6:7 says, “Do not be deceived. God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.” I love this! When we decide to be givers and spend our time focusing on how we can be good to others, God says He will find ways to bless and name as well.

I want to encourage you to begin taking a few minutes each morning to “set” your mind in the direction of giving instead of getting. Purposefully think of something you can do for your spouse that will be a blessing.

As you choose to spend time making their life better, you’ll begin experiencing more happiness yourself—and truly have a marriage you both enjoy.

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: Overload; How to Unplug. Unwind and Unleash Yourself from the Pressure of Stress (English). She hosts the Enjoying Everyday Life radio and TV programs, which air on hundreds of stations worldwide. For more information, visit www.joycemeyer.org.

The Lack of Resources
By Alice Horton

Ruby Payne, a poverty scholar, defines poverty as “the lack of resources”. Resources, being considered as ranging from money to people. I’ve been thinking about this concept for years now and how the lack of emotional, relational, physical and spiritual resources leaves so many of us impoverished... as much as our brothers and sisters that we see every day at Burke United Christian Ministries. Understanding this concept, I ask you... do you not find yourselves impoverished in some area in your life?

This leads me to John 5:1-8 when the man is by the pool... waiting for years for healing and finally, God asks the man... Do you want to get well? Why does God ask this question? There are all kinds of reasons, but from my point of view today, I interpret that God’s question is... do you want to change? Are you willing to do something different? Are you willing to make the changes in your life in order to see the changes you would like it to make happen?

These are questions we must ask the clients who come seeking services repeatedly at Burke United Christian Ministries. Do you want to get well? Often this leads to anger and frustration, but then, if the response is yes, we must then say...pick up your mat and move on. (Johns 5:7-9)

Sadly, just like the man at the pool, making these baby steps toward healing cannot be done alone and at times our clients will fail. They need encouragement and coaching. So often we hear a Burke United Christian Ministries, “these people need to just get a job,” etc. but when is it that we just need help getting to the pool... the pool strengthens us (the opportunity comes) but we can’t get in with out help and when we miss the chance because we couldn’t do it alone or need to be taught... then we must wait for the bubbly to happen again and the next wait line for services, the next funding to be available for power bills, housing etc.

So, the 21st Century question is... what does it mean to be well? Does it mean healthcare access, food, clothes, a job? What hasn’t changed over all of these years is the need for Jesus Christ, “Who is the same yesterday and today.” Says “yes” to Jesus opens us to the opportunity for change. So, I challenge you, how do we help our brothers/sisters to pick up their mats and move forward.

Burke United Christian Ministries (BUCM) has served Burke County for fifty years through offering people nutritious meals at our Soup Kitchen, counseling neighbors in times of crisis, and providing families with food clothing and financial assistance as well as providing educational opportunities to enhance our client’s quality of life and ultimately leading them to become contributing members of society.

To learn more about Burke United Christian Ministries or to find out how you can get involved, please visit www.bucm.net or call 828-413-0075.

Alice Horton is the Executive Director of Burke United Christian Ministries. She is a graduate of Appalachian State University and has worked in the nonprofit field for the last 10 years. If you are interested in learning more about Burke United Christian Ministries or volunteering, Please call us at 828-413-0075.

Sudoku

Solution on page 14

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WAMY Community Action, Inc.

WAMY Announces Avery, Mitchell, and Yancey County Community Housing Coalitions
By April Beck
Avery, Mitchell and Yancey County

It is the mission of WAMY Community Action to partner with communities and families to provide the disadvantaged the tools and support they need to become self-sufficient. Out of the worst of any community, the mission is to help people and support their efforts to improve their lives. To make this critical issue, WAMY Community Action, with great support from the AMY Wellness Foundation, is establishing Community Housing coalitions in Avery, Mitchell, and Yancey counties.

The Coalition’s aim is to bring together agencies, churches, civic, and volunteer organizations to combine ideas and resources in order to improve the quality of housing for low-income populations and bridge the gaps in social service needs.

The Coalition will work to streamline and coordinate the delivery of services to make households safe and more efficient while improving or maintaining the health of the family. Melissa Soxt, Executive Director of WAMY states, “It is our belief that by coming together, we can serve the community more efficiently and effectively—saving everyone time and money and making the process easier.”

The Coalition has provided housing repair as a voluntary service for many years, but has made this service more accessible to all who need it.

WAMY has hired April Beck as the Community Housing Coordinator to begin pulling together Coalition members to develop specific service delivery strategies. April has been a resident of Western North Carolina for 11 years. She friends Social Work in college and has dedicated most of her career to serving adults with intellectual disabilities.

“Having grown up in an urban area, I never understood what the word ‘community’ truly meant. However, since moving here, I have been overwhelmed by the way folks come together to support one another,” says Beck. The Coalition is still accepting new members.

We are looking for partners who can provide comprehensive services, in rural communities, many whose needs are unique, often and uneasy. Many living in these conditions are those most vulnerable, such as elderly, the disabled and the very young.”

If you are interested in participating in this meaningful discussion, please contact April Beck at (828) 405-405 or at april@wamycommunityaction.org.

Coalition meetings are scheduled as follows:

Mitchell—Thursday, Feb. 20 at 7 PM, United Methodist Church, Fellowship Hall, 1106 NC-226, Spruce Pine

Yancey—Monday, Feb. 24 at 7 PM, Ye Olde Country Store, 75 Main Street, Burnsville

Avery—Tuesday, Feb. 25 at 7 PM, WADH office, 725 Cranberry St, Newland

April Beck is the Community Housing Coordinator for WAMY Community Action, Inc.

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Billy Graham Chaplains Available to Oregon Community After Severe Flooding
By Lizzy Long

The Billy Graham Rapid Response Team (RRT) is in Pendleton, Oregon, along with Samaritan's Purse after severe flooding. Heavy rainfall and melting snow resulted in rushing floodwaters that caused one fatality and some residents to evacuate by helicopter. Hundreds of homes flooded as a large portion of the area went underwater.

Located in the northeastern part of the state, the historic farming and ranch town has faced flooding for more than a century, but the recent crisis was said to be the worst in decades. The geography of the Umatilla River running through Pendleton—along with steep hills surrounding it—makes the beautiful countryside a natural spot for flooding.

“Our hearts go out to people who have lost so much, and especially the families who are mourning the loss of life,” said Josh Holland, assistant director of the RRT.

A team of approximately six Christian-trained chaplains is ministering in the area. They’re offering emotional and spiritual care to those who have lost homes, possessions, animals and jobs through the flood. In addition, the team’s Mobile Ministry Center (MMC), a vehicle that serves as a safe haven for communications, is available for locals to visit.

Just two years ago, Franklin Graham spoke in three cities in Oregon for his Decision America Pacific Northwest Tour, a series of one-day evangelistic events across California, Oregon, and Washington.

“Our prayers and thoughts are with the community, and we are blessed to be able to provide assistance to listen and pray with those whose lives have been changed as a result of this flooding,” Holland said.

Do you have peace with God during hardships? Allow Him to be in your life today.

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Celebrating Recovery

Why Should I Worry?
By Christy Young
Mitchell County

Worry, one of my biggest GIANTS! The definition of worry is feeling uneasy or troubled. I spend many restless nights with thoughts racing through my mind wondering, “what if.” I constantly second guess myself, making it difficult to make decisions without doubting my choices. I have a hard time being at peace with the uncertainty that life throws at me. Being in a state of worry distracts my thoughts and disallows me to focus on the gifts of the present day. Worry is a lack of faith in my part. When we worry, we only torment ourselves, doing the devil’s job for him! Too often I feel as if I can figure out my own problems without seeking God’s guidance. Leaving me empty and unable to bring about a suitable solution.

Matthew 6:34 says, “Therefore don’t worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough troubles of its own.” One of my favorite songs is “Why Should I Worry”. The lyrics are as follow: “out on the water, the storms raging high, the waters around them, they were troubled that night. Fear filled their hearts, they felt they would die but they failed to remember that the Master was near. Then He spoke the words and the winds all stood still. You see even the water, they obeyed His will. Now He calmed their storms just like He will mine if I just remember, He lives deep inside. So why should I worry? Why should I fear? When the very same Jesus, He is always so near.” Only God knows our future. I must trust to overcome. Jeremiah 29:11 says “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.” My experience proves that I serve a good, good God. He has great plans for my life, although sometimes I don’t always see His path in front of me. I must have the faith that He will never lead me astray. He promises to calm my storms and give me peace if I will allow Him to. As the song says, I must call on Him until the storm passes by. I am learning that I must take it to the Father first rather than trying to figure it all out on my own. 1 Peter 5:6-7 says, “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time. Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you.” So, the cure for worry is humbling ourselves before God, casting our cares upon Him, and trusting Him. Let go and Let God! Let our prayer be, Lord please help me to remember that you will gladly take my burdens, love me, and calm my soul. Lord help me to receive your perfect peace, serenity, and presence. With a God who loves me enough to send His only son to die for me, “Why should I worry?”

Christy Young is the blessed wife of Chris Young and proud mother of Hunter andHolden. 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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HE’S THE ONE
By Joy Baldwin
Madison County

He’s the one who made the rainbow
He’s the one who lights the sky
No other god can stand up to Him
He’s my comforter at night.

He keeps me while I’m sleeping
He wakes me in the morn
He hears my praise in good times
My cry in time of storms.

He provides my every need
The angels I don’t see
He assigns to them a job
While He’s protecting me.

He’s the one I write about
The one on whom I call
Creator of the universe
Who sent His Son for all.

Joy is a resident of Madison County, where she now lives with her husband, Danny Joe Baldwin. She is currently a member of Mt Zion Baptist church in Marshall, NC. As a previous member, she calls Forks of Pigeon Missionary Baptist Church to Waynesville, “home away from home”. She is currently singing with the Gospel Group “Joseph’s Voice” out of Mars Hill, NC. Her latest song “Homecoming” will soon be heard by many.
Your Daughter will Thank You for
Your Time and Tenderness
By James Dobson

The passion I feel for the subject at hand is related to the
dughter who still calls me Dad. Danas is grown now, but
I love her like I did when we were first introduced in the
delivery room. Something electric occurred between us on
that mystical night, and it endures today. I thank God for the
privilege of being the father of this remarkable woman!

Being a father and a type-A personality myself, I took back on my parenting
experiences and recall instances where I could have done a better job. I wish I
could have some of those days back to slow them down. Unfortunately, none of us
is allowed do-overs or negligible. When our record is final in the books, not a
word or a deed can be altered.

Would it be self-servings to tell you that I also did things right during my
early days as a father and that the memories of some very special times with my
kids rank at the top of my list of accomplishments today? Among my favorites are
recollections of Danas when she was five years old. We used to take take
trips together to a nearby park on Saturday mornings and play in a sandbox with
shovels and buckets. I taught her to build sandcastles, explained what a moat and
a drawbridge were, and talked about anything else that seemed to interest her.

Then we would go to a nearby taco stand and have lunch before riding home.
On the way back, we listened every week to a favorite recording of Rodgers and
Hammerstein's Cinderella on a small Craig recorder, and we sang the songs to-
gether. Danas loved those outings, and she can tell you in detail about them today.
And guess what? I loved them too.

From where I sit today, I can say that nothing
and I mean nothing,
from that era
turned out to be
more significant
than the hours I
spent with my little
family. The relationships we enjoy today were nurtured during those years when
it would have been very easy for me to chase every professional prize and ignore
what mattered most at home.

Some years ago, I asked our radio listeners to call our organization and record
a message for their dads. More than six hundred people participated, and not one
caller focused on what their father did professionally. None of them said, “Thanks,
Dad, for earning a lot of money” or “Thanks for the big house you provided for us.”

Instead, caller after caller said, “Thanks, Dad, for loving me and for being
there for me.” Some said with strong emotion, “Thank you for letting me in-
terrupt you, even when you were busy.” Nearly all the calls coming from women
mentioned the presence of tenderness is the relationship.

I address this specifically to dads who are still raising daughters and want to
respond to the desires of their little hearts. My advice is also relevant to fathers
whose daughters are grown. The woman who used to be “Dad’s little princess”
may still long for what she didn’t receive when she was young. Even though these
fathers can no longer play in the sandbox with their five-year-old, it is never too
late for them to say, “You are precious to us.”

From Dr. Dobson’s book Dads and Daughters.

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

Students Help Lead Seminar on Vaping
By Jonelle Bobb
Burke County

Cadence Davis and Gillian Abbe-Freeze started the Burke
Youth Health Coalition when they were students at Heritage
Middle School. Now juniors at Draughn High School, they
continue to bring awareness to health issues facing teens including, most recently,
vaping.

Cadence and Gillian helped organize and lead a PTO meeting at a high school in
Asheville on the subject. They said the seminar was more of an informal Q&A
session with parents wanting to know more about vaping, how to know if their
children are involved and ways to prevent teens from starting in the first place.

Cadence said, “I didn’t realize how much we knew and how much the parents didn’t know.”

Gillian added the goal of the seminar was to get
students, parents, and teachers talking about
vaping and the health dangers it presents. Both
said most parents are in denial about vaping and
haven’t accepted that it is an issue among teens.

Throughout their mission toward healthier lifestyles for their peers, Cadence and Gillian
have focused on mental health, drugs, alcohol, nicotine and most recently vaping. They say most people
recognize smoking as a bad habit but are still on
the fence about vaping and need to be educated
on its health risks and the fact that vaping can lead teens to take up smoking or use drugs.

Cadence and Gillian see themselves and the coalition as a voice for
young people and bridging gaps between teens and the community. They want
people to know what is going on with their school-aged children.

The Burke Youth Coalition was instrumental in getting “Tobacco-Free Campus”
signs for Burke County Public Schools that include not only cigarettes and smokeless tobacco products but also vaping.

The students are working on a plan for a seminar in Burke County similar to the
one in Asheville. They also invite 12-18-year-olds to enter the third annual
Vocal Less photo contest by taking a photo that represents a health and wellness
challenge in Burke County and a possible solution to the challenge.

Burke County Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Larry Pumma said of Cadence
and Gillian, “I applaud these students for taking on the cause of healthy youth.
They are showing great leadership and community activism skills at a young age,
and their actions show they truly have a passion for their peers. Often students,
and even adults, have great ideas but never act on them. Cadence and Gillian
continue to follow through with their goals and make a difference in the lives of others. I appreciate them for their desire to bring tough topics to the forefront and
start difficult conversations about issues impacting our young people.”

Jonelle Bobb is the Marketing and Communications Specialist for Burke County
Public Schools and is a graduate of Catawba’s Webb University and Draughn
High School and lives in Dresel. She has a background in journalism and enjoys travel-
ing, crocheting and spending time with friends and family.

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