



The Inspiring Word

Experience, Wisdom, and the Next Generation

By Terry Cheek
McDowell County



Wow, can you believe it's June? 2020 is half gone. June also brings us to a very special day, Father's Day. This year I have been drawn, more so than in the past, to the wisdom of my parents. The older I get I seem to realize more the value of the wisdom they gave me. Lori and I both are blessed to have mothers with us still. Both of us have had to see our fathers promoted to eternity. We speak often of our parents and the things they taught us as children and young adults. For this issue of The Blue Ridge Christian News, I would like to challenge you to reflect on your parents and the wisdom, experience, and training they provided you. I realize some of you may not have had a memorable relationship with your parents; none of us have lived a storybook life. Maybe your memories are with grandparents, stepparents, foster parents, or adoptive parents. Most of us have a parent role model in your life and they have worked tirelessly to make a godly influence in your life.

May I share a childhood experience with you. The house I live in was built by my father circa 1960. When the sunlight hits my parent's old bedroom door just right, I can see small handprints. They were mine when I was a toddler. Dad worked third shift in a cotton mill. He would come home and go to bed; but I wanted to see him, so I would stand at the door and slap it with my hands. I'm certain I got into trouble, but dad and I were best friends. Where he went, I went. This relationship is missing in too many families today. Men, if you have fathered children please make sure you're a father to your children. If something has gotten between you, there is time to put it to rest and start moving forward with the future God has set aside for you. Reach up to Jesus and reach out to family and watch God work.

Lori and I are fortunate to have many memories with our parents and I bet you do too. I know we live in a fast-paced world and social media seems to have taken the place of personal visits and even telephone calls, but let me encourage you to put life in a slower gear, pour a cup of coffee, a glass of sweet tea or lemonade and find a quiet spot and reflect on your childhood. For example, my father was an outdoorsman who trained me to shoot, hunt, and fish, garden, and provide for myself in the most demanding of times. These are skills that are with me today, and skills that I try to pass on to my grandchildren. A few years ago, I bought a hunting knife blank. I wanted to finish it out myself. Buying a finished knife would be much cheaper. But the skills I used were given to me by my parents and I wanted to use them one more time. The knife with English walnut scales turned out nice

and it fits my hand just right. It's more than making a purchase it's an investment that can be passed along to the next generation. The important things in life don't necessarily come from books. They are life skills, and they are taught, not read.

Those life skills would not be complete without Mom's input into my character. From prayer to church to Bible to manners and family skills she makes a big influence in our lives. Lori and I recently spent an evening talking about how we became who we are. We may have a long way to go but thanks to our parents we have a roadmap to follow. I bet you have a roadmap too. I bet someone has invested in you. Think about who that man or woman is and spend some time thinking about the skills, experience, and wisdom they have invested in you. Look at yourself and consider this question, are you investing in the lives of the children and youth in your life? Share skills, help them have experiences that will last a lifetime, and don't forget your wisdom, pass it along to the next generation. They will put down the cell phones, the computers, the video games, etc.... if they have a reason. Let us start giving them a reason. I found it a pleasure to learn new things with my daughters when they were younger; I still enjoy learning new things with all of them. I consider it a blessing indeed to have six wonderful grandchildren I can learn with. I'm never too old to learn and I find something every day I can invest in their lives. I believe this is the interpretation and application of Proverbs 22:6 *"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."* Also, let's not forget Paul's words to the Ephesians in Chapter 6 verses 1-4. *"Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord"*. This passage speaks to children and parents, providing wisdom for the entire family. It may take some time, it did with me, but I retained my training because it was godly training and as I have gotten older, I return to more and more of it. Parents invest yourself in your children and remember this, being a father or mother is genetic, but being a Dad or Mom comes from the heart. You will be blessed in the end, I have been.

Until we meet again in person or print, may God richly bless you is my prayer!
Terry is the Executive Director and broadcaster of The Inspiring Word media ministry. You can contact Terry by email at theinspiringword@gmail.com Or by visiting www.theinspiringword.org



God: The Object of Faith

By Dan Qurollo
Burke County

Over the last several months, we have discovered how insecure many of the things in which we place our trust truly are. A robust economy was brought to a grinding halt overnight. Our concept of business, as usual, was suddenly and unexpectedly changed. For many this time has been a time of significant challenge because their trust has been placed in the wrong thing.

Faith is often mistakenly regarded as something elusive and difficult to define. Some mistakenly regard it as a blind leap in the dark that has no basis. Simply put, faith is an unwavering confidence in the nature and promises of God. By its very nature, faith must have an object.

Faith is only as strong as the object in which it is placed. One may boast he has an incredible degree of faith; however, if his faith is placed in an object or person that is weak or limited, the degree of faith he claims to possess becomes irrelevant. For example, a person may believe with all his heart that a broken chair will hold him up. However, the object of his faith negates the degree of faith he claims to possess, regardless of how passionate he might express his faith.

Psalm 20:7 begins by stating, “Some trust in chariots, and some in horses.” Here are individuals who place their trust in a variety of tangible items, all of which would be thought to ensure security and safety. The more horses and chariots an army might have, the more secure both the army and the people they were defending would often feel.

In many ways, our trust is frequently placed in tangible objects. It is placed in jobs, paychecks, possessions, and relationships – all of which are tangible. While these things are not automatically wrong in and of themselves, they must not be objects of our faith.

In contrast, the psalmist stated, “But we will remember the name of the LORD our God.” Rather than placing our trust in that which is tangible and therefore limited, believers must place their faith in God. That is the essence of biblical faith. A simple test to see where your confidence is placed is to examine how you respond to the loss of things. The one whose faith is in God will not be deterred. Those whose faith is in other things will find themselves anxious. You may be facing an incredibly challenging situation: trust God wholeheartedly

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



“By His Strength”

By Christy Young
Mitchell County



I have cried myself to sleep endless nights with the worry, confusion, and discord that often occurs in my life. Praying Lord, please take these struggles away from me! Sometimes not understanding why these obstacles have come my way, why my family is faced with heartache??? I have felt broken and defeated; hanging on by a thread. Often God does not take away my problems but gives me refuge. In my weakness, I find strength in God. The Bible teaches us that He is our present help in the time of need. In 2 Corinthians 12:10, the Bible says; “Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.” Even in our struggles, our mess...saving grace steps in to save us and hold us tight. Sometimes our problems seem so BIG and we feel as if God has forsaken us. I have often questioned why God hasn’t answered my prayers or lightened my load. But I can attest that He never has left my side no matter what the circumstance may have been. Through all the turmoil and struggles, God’s presence shines bright strengthening my faith and teaching me to abide in Him. Struggles and pain will not last forever. As a child of God, I know a better day is coming. His grace is sufficient! This world is not all there is. He has gone to prepare a place for us (a place with no more heartache, no more pain) and HE will come again...Halleluiah! While we are here, struggling with everyday problems and pain; remember to trust God and know that He is always faithful. Hebrews 13:5, promises us that God will never leave us or forsake us. As you approach the coming days meditate on the lyrics of the song; “Lord, I Need You”, “Lord I come, I confess, Bowing here I find my rest, Without You, I fall apart, You’re the One who guides my Heart, Lord I need you Oh I Need You, Every Hour I Need You, My one defense, Your Righteousness, Oh God How I Need You.” Remember by His Strength we are made strong. God is much bigger than any problem that we may face. Find your strength, your refuge, and shelter in the arms of Jesus.

Christy Young is the blessed wife of Chris Young and proud mother of Hunter and Holden. She is a life-long resident of Mitchell County, works at Mitchell County Finance Office, and is a member of Bear Creek Baptist Church.



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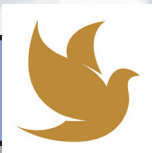
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“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace: that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation: that saith unto Zion. Thy God reigneth!”

Isaiah 52:7 KJV



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Church Directory



Bear Creek Baptist Church

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

Reverend Bruce Cannon

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

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

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

"Home of Tri County Christian School"

Our passion is to help connect the Body of Christ in this area in order to see the Fire of God transform our community, state, nation and world! (See John 17:21)

Berry Chapel Baptist Church

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

Pastor - Steve Williams

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

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The Rock Church

4806 US 64
Morganton, NC 28655
Phone: 828-334-3193
www.trcmorganton.com

Pastor - Billy Chapman

Sunday Morning - 10 AM
Sunday Night - 6 PM
Tuesday Night - 7 PM

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Grassy Creek Baptist Church

793 Old NC 226 Hwy
Spruce Pine, NC
828-765-4620
www.grassycreekbc.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"*

Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church

2187 Jamestown Road
Morganton, NC
828-584-8212

Pastor Steve Beitz

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

Altapass Baptist Church

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

Dr. Marcus R. Benfield

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

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Plumtree Presbyterian Church

4527 Hwy 19E
Plumtree, NC 28664
828-765-6919
www.plumtreechurch.com

Pastor Ryan Bridgeo
pastor@plumtreechurch.com

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

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

Pleasant Hill Baptist Church

2396 Enola Road
Morganton, NC 28655
(828) 437-4082
www.pleasanthillbc.church

Senior Pastor Dr. Jack Hodges

Sunday School: 9:30 am
Sunday Worship: 10:30 am
Sunday Evening: 6:00 pm
Wednesday Evening 6:30 pm

"Love All, Reach All, Teach All, Send All"

West Burnsville Baptist Church

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

Pastor: Terry Long

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

Church vision: Glorifying God through knowing, growing, going, to build the church and impact the world.

Burkemont Baptist Church

4668 Burkemont Rd.
Morganton, NC 28655
828-437-2357

For more information,
please visit
www.burkemontbaptist.org

Dr. Luke A. Lane

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

Marion Seventh-day Adventist Church

188 Ward Dr.
Marion, NC 28752
(828) 668-4018

Pastor Tim Sheridan

Sabbath (Saturday)
Bible Study - 9:15 am
Sabbath Worship - 10:50 am
Reaching the World with the Everlasting Gospel of Jesus Christ!
www.marionnc.adventistchurch.org

First Baptist Church of Spruce Pine

125 Tappan Street
Spruce Pine, NC 28777
828-765-9411
www.sprucepinefbc.com
www.spfbc.blogspot.com

Dr. Rocky Branch Senior Pastor

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

*Knowing God, Seeing God, Serving
God, Submitting to God!*

Great Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church

2907d US Hwy 70 E
Morganton, NC
828-475-2040

Pastor Barry MaHorney

Sabbath (Saturday)
Bible Study-10:00am
Sabbath Worship - 11:30am
Vegetarian Buffet after church
Wednesday - Praise, Prayer &
Proclaim - 7:00pm
www.greathopesda.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 • 9:45-10:40am
Worship Service • 10:45am
Sunday Evening • 6:30pm

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Spruce Pine United Methodist Church

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

Pastor Rick Schilling

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

The mission of Spruce Pine United Methodist Church is to be a beacon on a hill spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ through: Worship, Fellowship, Education, and Nurturing Service

Newland Christian Church

2800 Millers Gap Highway
Newland, NC 28657
Phone (828) 260-1404
www.newlandchristianchurch.com

Pastor - Phillip Greene

Sunday School: 9:45 am
Sunday Worship: 11 am
Sunday Evening Bible Study: 6 pm
Wednesday Evening Prayer Meeting: 7 pm

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The Gift of Flight

By Timothy W. Tron
Burke County

[Disclaimer] – While I don’t discredit dreams, for they are mentioned in scripture, I do look at the following story with a bit of humor and reflection. We can sometimes learn about ourselves in dreams or find warnings of impending trouble, as was the case in this one. Also, keep in mind, I’m blessed to be able to recall some of the events in my dreams; be they good or bad. I’m not bragging, for we all dream at some point in time, but just thankful God gives us such abilities. So, take what you will from the following passage and hopefully it will lift your spirits (yes, the pun is intentional).



Lying upon the grass by the pond, I watched overhead as a Turkey Buzzard soared upon thermals high above where my family was fishing. My eyes followed the bird of opportunity, its wings motionless as the black image carved out arcs in an invisible pattern in the cloudless blue sky. The bird's path began to straighten, and then, as if by chance, at a much higher altitude, the smaller, barely visible ghost-like image of a passenger jet, passed over the carrion. As one of the most improbable intersections had just occurred, my eye then began to follow the plane. Behind in its wake, the air turbulence created the contrail, like the dust rising from behind the cars that would travel down the gravel road that led to my maternal grandparent’s home. The wind would eventually carry it away, and as it drifted off, so did my mind, returning to the images of my own flight the night before. There we were in my dream, being held captive in some type of holding area. It wasn’t something that was an apparent prison, but rather, an enclosure that one might construe as a source of protection from the outside. From within, there were no alarms raised since nobody was trying to leave. The massive front gates were shut tight. Since our arrival, they had remained closed. Not until now did it impress upon me that they hadn’t been opened, nor had anyone questioned why they were not opened, if not occasionally. Something seemed peculiar about it all. It wasn’t until something or someone impressed upon me a reason to go beyond the confines of our fortress that troubles began to arise. For me, it wasn’t a problem because of my gift of flight. When the authorities weren’t looking, I took off and easily cleared the walls of the mighty bulwarks. Later, when I returned, those in charge weren’t definitely upset with what I had done. My disregard for their lockdown had created a buzz among the others. Like a thread of hope, the word began to spread that we might be able to leave. Little did most realize, they had not been offered the opportunity, but instead, I had taken it upon my own accord. Fearing that my example would spread dissemination amongst the population, they raised the heights of the walls overnight.

The next day, it was nearly noon before the sunlight began to flow over the new, improved fortress walls. Like magic, overnight, the height of the walls had been doubled. Once more, the impetus for my reason to leave yet unknown to me now, I flew above and beyond the walls of the compound. Once again, I returned to find the masters of our realm visibly disturbed. The rumors now were rampant. A fevered pitch of enthusiasm to open the gates of the mighty bastion was beginning to rumble through the population. A tide of eagerness was matched with the officials making a public proclamation of doom should anyone leave; it was not safe to go – for their own safety, they must remain.

The statement went against what others had passed from person to person about my trips beyond. I had returned safely and without harm. What was there to fear? Now, fearing for my own safety, my friends encouraged me to leave for good. They knew that I would become a focus of the ruling elite’s wrath. What initially began as a curious endeavor had now grown into an all-out rebellion. That night, as the night before, improvements were made to the fortress. This time, they would stop me at all costs.

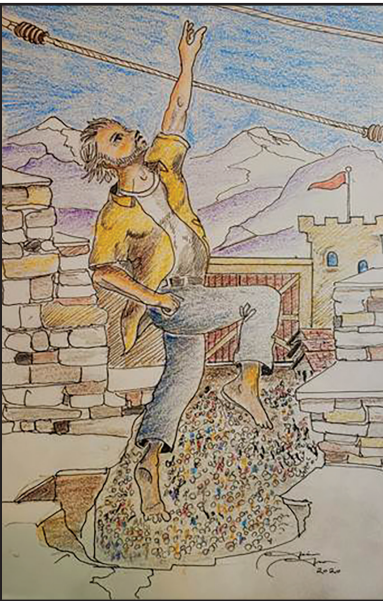
The next morning, early before the sun had even begun to warm the outer walls of the bastion of gloom, I was up preparing to leave. A chubby young lad approached me and begged me to take him with me. He pleaded that he was afraid to stay any longer. He had heard about there being lands beyond the walls of the fortress where we could live. I conveyed to him that it was not possible. Sadly, I had not yet mastered flight to the point that I could carry someone with me, let alone a child of his girth. However, in my despair, I promised him that I would return with help. He smiled and lowered his head as if to cry. My heart was aching as my feet left the ground. He sulked off into the crowd that had gathered to bid me farewell.

As my altitude increase, the maze of bulwarks began to tighten until I reached a point where the passage to the sky above had narrowed. There above me were cables stretched from one insulator to another, making a series of deadly parallel lines. They had covered the entire top of the compound with high voltage electric power lines.

This was the ultimate test of my flying ability. The cables were engineered such that they could only be so close due to the arcing from one to another. Should anything pass to close to one of the wires, the path of continuity would be created, and the surge of electricity would instantly fry the particle or person, as in my case. Looking back, the throng of well-wishers were now being broken up by the armed guards that had begun to move from a position of protection to that of prosecution. There was no turning back. It was now or never.

It is at this point that I must share how flying is achieved in my dream world. There are no wings, there are no propellers. It is merely a feeling of willing your spirit to rise. This feeling becomes so strong that it can literally lift your body with it. Through the years of dream flight, my ability has progressed from the most horrible, to the latest, the most agile. The feeling after awakening from a “flying” dream nowadays is always the same, exhilarating. If it were possible to share,

believe me, I would gladly do so. However, waking up after such a dream hasn’t always been such a blissful occasion. In my early years, my dreams were those of falling. There was no flight, but rather that of uncontrolled free-fall. Each time I would wake up just before impact; bare-knuckle, in your face, heart-pounding fear. This continued until one night, my legs moved, and suddenly, like swimming, kicking my legs could slow the descent. At least the shock was gone, and I wasn’t waking up anymore with a gasp for breath. As the pattern of falling began to slow, the dream of flight evolved to a new level. It all started on the tire swing in front of my Aunt Sophie’s house back in southern Indiana. They, too, lived on an old gravel road out in the country. Underneath the shade of a large oak tree in their front yard, they had a tire swing. In the dream, my cousin was pushing me on the swing when the rope broke. Of course, the tire and I were at the apex of the arc, and when the rope broke, we continued upward instead of down. As in the previous dreams up to this point, I began kicking my legs. Now, as if the tire added a new dimension, my altitude increased. My flight pattern was very unstable, so to try to level out, I stuck out my arms. Things improved, and the wind gave me a momentary lift. Unlike before, this time, it was working. I could hear the growing crowd down below yelling. Other family members had joined to watch me fly away. However, what I thought were cheers of joy were warnings. Ahead of me, the massive steel tower power lines were looming. In the thrill of finally learning to fly, I had not been watching where I was going. Who could know? My focus had been on staying above the ground and not crashing like so many times before. Now I had to maneuver as well?



It was at the moment of impact that the alarm clock beside my bed began to spill a horrid buzzing sound into my ears. Nothing like waking up and feeling and sounding as if you had just been electrocuted to death. Unlike the feeling of joy from “flying” dreams past, this one was replaced with a bittersweet aroma of doom.

However, this did not end my dreams of flying. In time, my flight would evolve from the tire swing to soaring without it. Eventually, my leg kicking and the holding of my arms like wings would cease. As the years passed, my ability to fly in my dreams had significantly improved. The sense of knowing that a spirit within is the mechanism changed everything. Once this was achieved, my maneuverability improved as well. For example, one night’s dream sent me into a gift shop, filled with crystal collectibles. I flew through the store without knocking anything off the shelf or touching the ground. I awoke with a renewed sense of mastery, at least in my dreams.

So, as I stood on the edge of the precipice about to take off, my mind recalled the previous levels of achievement. In my heart, I knew that this was a gift from God. From knowing that I was not alone, I took flight for what might be the last time. Up through the wires, my body lifted. The sensation of hair standing up on my skin as I passed through the high-voltage lines tickled my flesh. Soaring upward and beyond the compound, a feeling of triumph overcame me. I gave thanks for the freedom to do as I may, and in so doing, was now able to free those within. Unlike ever before, I had finally used my gift of flight for a purpose.

As promised, a sense of returning and freeing the captives, including the chubby little boy, washed over me as I awoke. It had been a troubling ordeal, but in the end, goodness and mercy won out over evil.

Jokingly, as I shared this with my pastor this morning, I said that maybe God was training me to be an Angel. For as in Isaiah 40, those that need strength are sustained. For they shall mount up on wings like eagles. As Samuel talked about King David, and his writing of the Psalm when he had finally defeated Saul, he describes God as riding on a cherub and could be seen riding upon the wind. From those marvelous dreams of flight, especially the ones of late, there is no greater sensation than that of feeling your body lift off the ground, weightless, unbound by the gravitational boundaries of this world. As David describes, to be free to ride upon the wind is to know God.

Someday, we shall be afforded this opportunity, should we choose wisely. As I lay on the grass, looking up to the sky, I was thankful to be lying on this side of the sod. There underneath a clear blue azure sky, my eyes soaked in the glory of God’s creation. Someday, my body will be six feet below. Then, I will no longer be hostage to the physical world into which I was born. Eventually, my spirit will be free to fly above those birds of flesh and metal.

Then, and only then will we be free. Thanks be to God. “He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength...But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.” – Isaiah 40:29,31 “And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: and he was seen upon the wings of the wind.” – 2 Samuel 22:11

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

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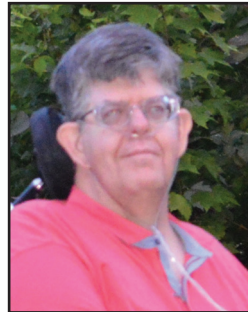
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Allen's Offerings

God's Not Through with Me

By Allen Buchanan
Mitchell County



Buzz word for 2020 is Coronavirus. Not the word any of us would have chosen, it chose the world. With so much to wonder about in dealing with it, I got to thinking about times of sickness that God brought me through. Nothing is too big for my God, not even Coronavirus.

One such time for me was the week that I got sick with bronchitis, I remember leaving work and it took me nearly 30 minutes to get in the truck. Sitting at the red light I felt as though I was falling asleep. Thank God he was watching out for me. Thursday, August 17, 2000, I had gone to another doctor for the results of a blood test he had ordered. He was trying to help find a cure for my headaches. He too suggested they were stress-related or might be "cluster headaches". Symptoms that men get around 40 on the right side of their face and have a few years. Sherri had a cold and it wasn't long before I got a sore throat. Many times, before when a cold was coming on, if I got antibiotics in my system, I usually avoided bronchitis. Wednesday, August 23 I called the doctor's office and requested they phone a prescription for a Z-pack. I was so sick Thursday and Friday. That night Sherri took me to the local emergency room. After x-rays, I was given an additional antibiotic to take with the Z-pack and sent home. I didn't sleep much for coughing. From early Thursday morning till Sunday, I barely got 3 hours of sleep. Sunday morning, Sherri and my mom took me to Memorial Mission Hospital in Asheville. As I rolled into the emergency room at 12:30 pm, no time was wasted before they had me in a smaller room checking me out. X-rays were taken in this room by a portable machine while I sat in my chair. Several different blood tests were taken and a room on the sixth floor was being prepared for me. Little did I know that I would be here for the next 11 days.

According to a specialist, from Asheville Pulmonary, bronchitis was the least of my worries. I had pneumonia and carbon dioxide poisoning. Humans breathe in oxygen and exhale carbon dioxide. Because I'm susceptible to pneumonia and I have had it at least 3 times, I have extreme difficulty releasing all of the carbon dioxides when I exhale. My having Muscular Dystrophy only added to the situation. Therefore, over long periods of time, it had built up and thus was causing my problems.

Sunday, September 3, dad decided to spend the night with me. The next morning, he told me that during the night he witnessed me praying to God. I had a rough night experiencing choking and early in the morning I was sitting up and I said, "Lord please help me. They have done everything they can for me, and I've done everything I know to do, will you please help me?" It was not too long after that until I began coughing the junk up. The doctor stopped by my room that day and told me that I hadn't improved much in a week's time. I felt depressed and thought that I probably would not pull through this time. Those feelings stayed with me throughout the day. Monday night, I remember being in the dark in my room with the Bi-pap mask on and trying my best to get used to it. While sitting there, I looked up as I saw a figure of a head and shoulders with a glow around them. I never heard a loud voice or music, but I did feel a gentle breeze blow across my face, and peace came to me. God told me He wasn't through with me, that He was going to use me. I was so excited that I tried to wake Sherri. She was asleep on the cot beside my bed. I said, "God, wake Sherri and tell her. She won't believe me."

I've been a Christian since I was 7 years old. One night after watching a Billy Graham crusade on television, mom and dad led me to Jesus. Like so many, I lived closer to Him at certain times more than others. Most of my life, I called myself "Thomas". And now, trying to find a cure for my headaches, I prayed for a cure that never came. Was I where I needed to be for Him to work in my life? Would I ever get relief? A song by a popular Christian music group spoke of a need for a closer relationship with God. They had asked God to move a mountain or simply to move them. I too had got to that point. During the August 13 Morning Worship Service, I went forward to rededicate my life. Little did I know that in less than a month I would find myself so much closer to God as the result of sickness.

Romans 5:1-5 states: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

All the time I knew that God lived in my life since age 7, I believed in the possibility that I could live closer to Him. I had witnessed others, why couldn't I? I believe it is because I had not surrendered my all. Today, I can honestly say I've experienced Him firsthand and that I long to be more like Him each day.

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



Bear Creek Baptist Church

By Bruce Cannon
Mitchell County

Psalm 137:1,2 “By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.”

The nation of Judah was in captivity. Their past had caught up with them. The Lord’s mercy had waned, and He allowed the enemy, Babylon, to come into the nation not once, but three times to take the Jews into captivity. Beginning in 605BC Babylon came and took the strong, intelligent, and the best of the nation back to Babylon as captives. It happened again in 597BC and again in 587BC. After the last deportation, the enemy tore the Temple Solomon had built down and badly damaged the walls. The Lord allowed Babylon to be His right hand of judgment against Judah and took away the desire to “fight” from His people. It was His will that they be taken into captivity by Babylon.

The 137 Psalm describes the attitude of the people of Judah in captivity. They sat by the rivers with their harps hung in the willow trees. There was no joy or song in their hearts. Many of their people would never come back to Judah after the captivity was over. They made a life for themselves in Babylon. Some of the women married Babylonian men. Many of the men accepted their positions of servitude in Babylon.

How did this happen? God had given the Promised Land to His people and they entered into it during the time of Joshua. How did they get to the point of having it taken away? The simple answer is rebellion, disobedience to God. The Jews started acting like the world around them. They served other gods and allowed themselves to be overtaken by evil.

Do we understand that the Lord will only allow this to go on so long before He sends in judgment? Before that, however, the Holy Spirit of God brings conviction and chastisement in an attempt to turn His people back to Himself. If that does not work, judgment always falls.

Is that where we are in America? Have we gone so far away from God that He is allowing the enemy to come in and bring great harm? Is the Lord OK with us aborting 60+ million babies? Is He OK with us allowing pornography to go uncensored but censoring the name “Jesus” from corporate prayer in government? Is He OK with children being sent into foster homes with homosexual parents? Is He OK with marriage being redefined in our country as that of same-sex couples? The answer to all of these questions is a resounding, “NO!”

- Let me ask a few rhetorical questions at this point:
- 1) Can we remember a time when the power of God fell, and the Spirit of God tremendously moved in our midst? Are our Churches filled with the power of the Holy Ghost of God or are we just going through the motions?
 - 2) Has our rebellion as a nation caused the Lord to pull back His hand of blessing to a large degree?
 - 3) Is the Coronavirus an agent of God’s judgment as the Babylonian captivity was?
 - 4) What about the Church being cast out of its building for well over two months because of the virus while retail stores remained open and packed with shoppers?
 - 5) Is the Coronavirus the beginning of sorrows spoken about in Matthew 24:7,8?
 - 5) Have we learned our lesson? Do we understand the extreme need to return to Him in brokenness, repentance, and holiness?

If we fall on our knees before God, will it help? Will He run to our aid? Will He restore? Yes! Pray with me for deep cleansing of the people of God. Pray with me for brokenness, humility, conviction, and repentance among all of God’s people. Pray with me that the power of God truly falls in Washington, Raleigh, and all across our country. Pray with me that there is a tremendous move of God that truly brings a Spiritual Awakening in our land. How I long to see evil stopped dead still in its tracks and the power of God turned loose in our homes and churches! How I long to see souls saved, moms and dads on fire for the Lord and children raised up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord! How I long to see the houses of God full of people, full of praise and full of the power of God!

Pray with me, please!

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



Mine Creek Baptist Church

From a Dad's Heart
By Chris Rathbone
Mitchell County

Our oldest son Gabriel is a High School Senior this year. It just doesn't seem possible that this could be happening. Like most parents that have a senior, the time has passed by so quickly. Our parents tried to warn us, but we are so busy "raising" them we don't listen as we should. All too often we didn't take time to cherish what we had when our kids were little.

Our county has a Facebook page to "adopt" a senior. The point is to send encouraging letters, messages, and even gifts to the senior someone chooses to adopt. Because this year's seniors didn't get to do many of the events that seniors usually get to enjoy, many are trying to help and encourage them in different ways. This year our seniors will have a "drive-in" graduation ceremony so each one can be honored for their hard work, dedication, and accomplishment.

For the most part, we have handled this chapter in life pretty well. I and Michelle have had many conversations about how things are gonna change for our family during this time. Both of our boys are full-fledged teenagers and the days of always wanting to hang out with Dad and Mom are over! Sure, we do some things together, but it sure isn't like it was when they were younger. Their interests have changed and, as a dad, it is sometimes hard to find activities that keep their attention, so to speak. You parents know what I'm talking about. Gabe has been busy with finishing up his high school classes, getting things ready for college, working his job, and hanging out with buddies and there's not a lot of time left over for poor ol' dad! It was the same way with me when I was a teenager.

The other day as I was checking out the comments on the Facebook page for seniors and I came across a picture that one of Gabe's teachers had posted. It was a picture of him in 5th grade, standing in front of a school project that we had helped him put together. All of a sudden it dawned on me that Gabe was no longer that little boy that needed help with his work. My heart sank. Even though deep down we know this, often our hearts still think of our children as little and dependent on their parents. When I look at my son, there's not a little kid there anymore, but a young man.....a young man who has grown to be independent, strong, and intelligent. A young man who doesn't have to depend on his dad much at all anymore. He has plans and dreams for the future that are his, not anyone else's.

For years I've told Michelle that hopefully, we are preparing our boys to become men. There have been times I got it right and sometimes I got it wrong. Hopefully, we've prepared our children to face the future. A future that will give them many choices and many paths which they can follow. One thing I've always tried to instill in my boys is to always remember and follow God's plan for their lives. God will open doors and He will close doors, but above all, He has their best interest in mind because He loves them.

My prayer for Gabe has always been for him to recognize the Lord's plan above all. That whatever career path he takes, he will serve Jesus through it all. Because that is all that will matter in eternity.

Gabe, I'm proud and thankful that God chose us to be your parents. We are so proud of the young man you have become. You have worked hard and diligent to get where you are now, and the future is yours for the taking! In my heart when I look at you, I still remember you as a boy, always laughing and full of life. Now you have become a young man and that life is still shining through for all of us to see. My prayer and hope for you is to find God's path for your life and follow Him. He loves you unconditionally and wants His best for your life. You're the best Gabe in the whole wide world!

Even though you've grown strong, intelligent, and independent, just remember that when and if you come to a time in life that you need your dad, I'm always here. We love you and are so proud to be your parents.



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

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Walnut Grove Church

What's In Your Hand?

By Kurt Bomar
Avery County

One of the most successful advertising slogans of all time was the Capital One credit card's "what's in your wallet?" The idea behind it was, if you had their credit card in your wallet, you had everything you needed.

I wonder if they got that slogan from the Bible. Back in Exodus, Moses was alone in the wilderness. In fact, he had been doing nothing of interest for 40 years. That is when he stumbled across a bush that appeared to be on fire, yet it wasn't being consumed. When he went over to examine it, he met God. God told him he had a mission for him. It was indeed mammoth. "Moses, I want you to set my people free." Think about the logistics of breaking about 2 million people out of jail. He understandably didn't think he was qualified and voiced this to God.

Then the Lord asked him an interesting question. "What's in your hand?" He had a staff, nothing more than a walking stick. "Then that's what I'll use" the Lord said.

"What's in your hand Peter?" A net, Peter was a fisherman. "then that's what I'll use, I'll make you a fisher of men."

"What's in your hand Paul?" A pen. Paul was a scholar. "Then that's what I'll use, you'll write a large portion of the New Testament."

We now think of all three of these men as accomplished but understand that at the time, all thought themselves unworthy of their calling.

So here we are now and what do many of us think about our worthiness to be a vessel for the Lord? "I don't have the talent or resources, I can't sing or dance, and nobody wants to hear what I say."

I think the Lord would say to you "what's in your hand?"

When you were born, God gave you gifts that are simply waiting to be activated. What we don't realize is that what you are already doing is that which God will energize and empower for ministry. What's in your hand? Is it a computer, a hammer, a football, or a wrench? Whatever it is, that is what He will use for His glory.

Don't despise what is in your hand, rather give thanks and use it!

Selah (think about it)

Kurt Bomar is pastor of Walnut Grove Church.



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High Country Prison Ministry

By Jody Griffin
Avery and Mitchell County

"Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk." (Acts 3:6)

The men and women who make up the larger ministry "team" of correctional chaplains in North Carolina are gifted and devoted beyond imagination. It is such an honor for me to be counted among their number as a Community Funded Chaplain. I am always in awe of the multitude of talents and abilities whenever I hear of my fellow Chaplains' work. They are so creative and energetic. They respect and encourage each other to become the best that we can be.

The virus that has slowed so many of us from our usual work has only increased the demand for chaplains. The staff members and administrators we serve among are under extraordinary pressure to provide a safe environment for all who fall under their realm of responsibility.

It is in this reality that chaplains seek to offer a comforting presence and encouraging words. Truthfully, I have only been reminded of how woefully inadequate I am to fulfill the high calling we are charged to bring inside the walls. But along with that reminder came affirmation that the calling of a Chaplain is valuable to individuals who live and work there as well as to the institution.

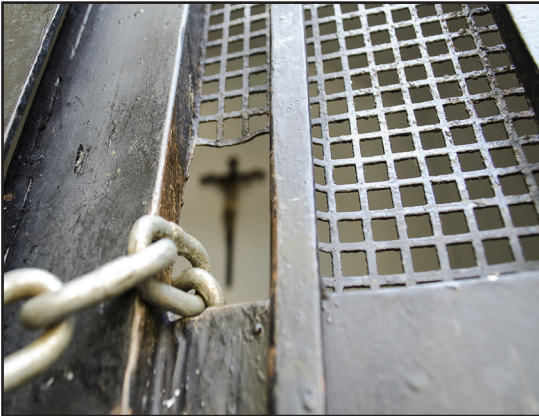
Recently, an offender who attended a Bible study I was leading requested prayer for me and for the other staff who work at our institution. Talk about being humbled...

I had struggled with feeling so unable to 'fill the shoes' of the many incredible religious volunteers who normally provide such rich spiritual leadership to the men housed with us. His suggestion that the men pray for their chaplain showed me that simply by being there with them I was offering them something they truly need, Hope in Jesus Christ.

Sadly, not everyone appreciates the ministry of Correctional Chaplains nor the calling to bring Christ into the facilities in which they serve. I am deeply thankful that the offenders and the staff at Avery Mitchell Correctional Institution welcome my presence among them. I recognize that like Peter, "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee..."

Please pray for all who live and work within the walls. These are long and difficult days, but the work continues! May God Bless You for your prayers and your support!

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



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Seek Instruction

By Doug Harrell
Mitchell County

How often have you tried to assemble something and not read the directions? I think it is maybe more of a man thing than a woman, but I am not sure of that. We tend to grow up with this “please mother I can do it myself attitude," even as a two-year-old! Then the teenage age years; oh boy, at that point we know so much more than our parents ever thought about. Finally, around our mid-thirties, we begin to realize that mom and dad knew a few things.

Many times, we hit life like a whirlwind and make some horrible decisions that have a lasting impact on our lives. We need to all understand that throughout our lives, we do have a set of instructions for assembly to go by, if we will but take the time to read them. Oh, the heartache we can alleviate if we will just take the time to read them.

“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.” Romans 15:4 KJV

“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 KJV

Rest assured my friends that you have no idea what each day will bring you. Your plans are of no real consequence because the Lord can change it all in a literal heartbeat. He is the one operating the controls, not you. Trust and faith in His will is paramount in you being able to face each day with joy and gladness regardless of the circumstances. We can be planning to build bigger barns but as the Bible tells us, that can be for naught.

“And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.” Luke 12:18-21 KJV

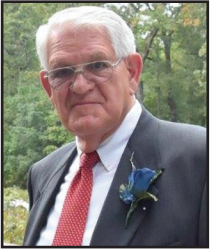
Having faith and being willing to let go and let God is the key thing in our lives. Look up and see what plans God may have for you each day. *“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.”* Jeremiah 29:11 KJV

God is always directing and redirecting our lives each day and each moment of our lives. Have faith, and relax, be willing to listen and respond. You may be getting ready to move in an entirely different direction today. We don’t know, but if we are willing, God can make a way that we may not think possible.

“Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.” Isaiah 43:18-19 KJV

Take some time today and every day to read the manual. It will make life so much easier and you won’t have lots of bolts and nuts left over when you finish the race.

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.

Lifeline

By Christy Lowman
Burke County

“As the deer longs for streams of water, so I long for you, O God.” Psalm 42:1 NLT

In my opinion, the deer is one of the most beautiful, delicate-looking creatures God has made. I so want to seek after God as much as the deer goes looking for water. How about you? Are you like a deer searching for something to drink? Are you thirsty for God? If not how can you become that way?

Deer can be found almost everywhere, from the mountains to the rainforests and on all continents except for Antarctica. There are 60 different species, the largest (now extinct) was the Irish Giant Deer, measuring 7 feet at the shoulder with antlers 12 ft wide. The smallest would be the Pudus, which can be as short as 13 inches high at the shoulder and 33 inches in length. Some deer species are endangered while others are heavily populated. They can live up to 20 years depending on the type and their location.

Does can give birth to twins or triplets called fawns. Fawns are born with white spots that help hide them in their surroundings. These spots fade away after the baby turns a year old. Fawns also do not give off an odor, which protects them from predators. They will live with their moms for up to 2 years. The mother will continue to feed them, 6 times a day, while they are kept out of sight. Fawns can stand on their own in as little as 10 min. and can walk within 7 hours of being born.

Deer herds can consist of up to 100,000 members. Their stomping grounds can be as large as 30 miles. Deer are herbivores that eat plants, leaves, fruit, different types of grass, acorns, and other nuts.

By licking their noses frequently, it increases the deer’s already keen sense of smell. They can smell predators from very far away. Deer can also see up to 310 degrees while humans can only see 180 degrees. Their good night vision is essential to their survival because that is when they are on the move searching for food.

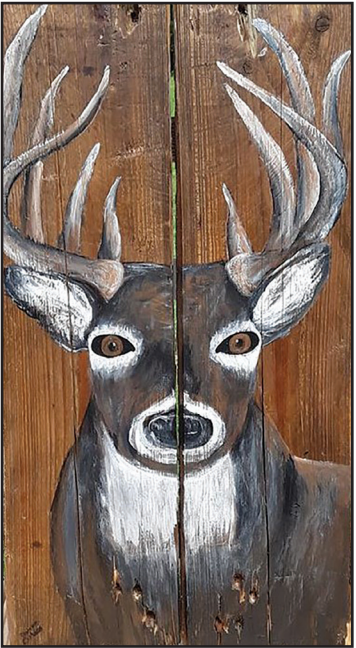
Deer also have optimal hearing. They have a special muscle that allows them to move their ears all different directions to improve their hearing while never having to move their heads.

Male deer, called bucks or stags grow antlers every year (except for the Chinese water deer) that fall off. The new yearly antlers are covered in velvet, a furry coating that is rich in blood vessels and nerves. This allows the antlers to grow at incredible speeds. This antler tissue is the fastest growing tissue known to mankind! Occasionally you can find a white stag. This happens when the deer develops a condition called leucism. This condition causes the deer to lose the natural color of its skin and hair.

Aren’t these animals incredible that God has made? The simple fact that God made all these fascinating animals while caring enough to give them traits to protect themselves to survive makes me want to seek after God and learn more about Him. If He cares so much for animals then He must care even more people. If He didn’t He wouldn’t have sacrificed His one and only Son so we could have everlasting life. The only way I can make it through the problems in my daily life is to rely on God. I can’t do this life without Him present, leading, and guiding the way. I can’t survive without Him, just like the deer can’t survive without water. He is my lifeline. Is He yours?

“The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to tread on the heights.” Habakkuk 3:19 NIV


Dear Lord, I pray that each one of us, will go to new heights to find ways to seek and learn more about you. I pray that we mimic the deer and gather our strength and base our survival solely on You. In Jesus’s name, I pray, Amen.



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


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Howdy Friends

By Steve Williams
Mitchell County

June is here and that means that Father’s Day is near. I sure am glad I have had 3 great men in my life. a good father, Floyd Williams, and a paw-paw, Ed Williams. I have many great memories of doing things with them. They taught me a lot in life, like how to raise baby calves using a bottle. They taught me how to hunt and to fish and how to drive a tractor, and drive nails and plant a garden, and how to kill a hog and how to preserve the meat. These are things I have never forgotten. I will cherish these memories forever. But one thing that stands out to this day about my Paw-paw was that he was a faithful man. He read his Bible every day. He had a Open Window devotions book in his lunch box that he took to work and read before every meal. He would always pray and thank God for what he had. My Dad also has taught me something that I will never forget. That is what it is to be faithful to your spouse. In the latter years of my mom’s life, she had several things happen and was in the hospital several months, but he never left her side. Then eventually we had to place her in a rest home because we could no longer take care of her. And there again every day he would go to the Brian Center and sit with her from 7 am to 7 pm or till they got her in bed. During that time, he stayed with her and took care of her and also visited and helped many other patients up and down the 100 hall of the Brian Center. He did that I know for over 3 years. He showed me what it was to be faithful to the end.

I asked myself what made my dad and paw-paw good men? Well, let me tell you, it was the third man that they knew and that they introduced me to Him when I was a child. This third man was the Lord Jesus Christ. See, a good dad is one who knows Jesus Christ as their Personal Savior. No matter how good a dad or a provider you are you’ll never be the dad you should be until you know Jesus Christ as your Savior. A good dad is one who brings his family to church. Dad, you can take your family all over the world but until you show them the importance of being at God’s House as a family, you’ll never be the dad God wants you to be. A good dad is one who can be respected. I believe a man who Loves God and Honors God with his life will be respected by his family. I saw these three things in my dad and paw-paw’s life. Dads, let me challenge you to step up to the plate and be the dad God wants you to be.

I heard a funny little story the other day about getting on the ball dad. The story goes there was a golfer who hit a ball and it landed on an anthill. The golfer swung at the ball and missed it. His club plowed through one side of the anthill, killing hundreds of ants. He swung again, duplicating the destruction on the other side of the anthill. Still, the ball remained untouched. Finally, one ant cried out to the other ants “if we want to save our lives we better get on the ball” The work of the church is not to gratify man but to glorify God: The Bible says 2 Corinthians 6:2 “... behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” It’s like the ant said, we better get on the ball dads if we expect to do anything for the Lord.

Question of the Month.

If you aren’t going all the way for God, why go at all?

Words of Wisdom

- Don’t pay attention to the person who belittles you. He’s trying to cut you down to his size. N/A
- Want a good spouse? Be one. N/A
- The Lord uses those Christians who stay cool in a hot place, sweet in a sour place, and straight in a crooked place. N/A
- Obstacles are those terrible things you see when you take your eyes off the Lord. N/A
- You can’t climb the ladder of success with your hand in your pocket. N/A

- Dad’s, Here Are Some Words We Need to Think About.
- Many fathers are finding out that a pat on the back helps to develop character-if given often enough, early enough, and low enough.
 - The family tree is worth Bragging about if it consistently produces good timber and not just nuts.
 - A Child isn’t likely to find a father in God unless he finds something of God in his father.
 - Whether a man ends up with a nest egg or a goose egg depends on the chick he married.
 - Every father teaches, some by what he says, more by what he does, but most by what he is.

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



By Monica Henley-Kirtz
Mitchell County

The 2020 National Day of Prayer certainly was different...and challenging! The theme was so appropriate for this year: “Pray God’s Glory across the earth”. The Scripture was Habakkuk 2:14, “*For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.*”

The LORD knew what was ahead for America even before 2020! That would explain the struggle I had from the beginning of the year. As I prayed about this year’s event for Mitchell County, it seemed I struggled to receive direction or develop a plan. It was difficult just to get started! I could not understand what was happening and asked several prayer warriors to pray for me, as I began to think something was very wrong with me. Finally, a few plans started to develop...but very few. When the current virus situation started spreading, it became clearer about the struggle...this spiritual battle. Now I knew why The LORD had delayed the planning!

One thing was certain...the event would not be canceled ...not for Mitchell County...and not nationwide! GOD so graciously allowed us to air the National Day of Prayer for Mitchell County on WTOE and WTOE.com. Our special thanks to Mike Sink and Bruce Ikard for making this possible. Our Mitchell County Baptist Association Missions Director, Preacher Daniel Whetstone opened the program with prayer. Music was provided by Alexis Buchanan, daughter of Jim Jr. and Renae Buchanan, members of Big Crabtree Baptist Church. Alexis is a student at Tri-County Christian School and sang, “Different” by Micah Tyler. Also, a pre-recording of the late Curtis Hughes and his wife, Dawn, was used, entitled, “Heal Our Land”. Dawn is the music director at First Baptist Church of Spruce Pine. Our mayor of Spruce Pine, Mrs. Darla Harding, read the 2020 National Prayer for America. My husband, Jason, and I took a few minutes and prayed for each major area of influence in our nation: government, media, military, business, education, church, and family.

The response was overwhelming! Many more people were able to listen to the broadcast because nearly everyone has a radio or a computer. We heard so many positive comments from the public...it was a true blessing, and I can say that with confidence because GOD did it all!!! All praise, glory, and honor be to HIM!!! Reports and numbers are still coming in on the capacity of this outreach.

This year, it was also an honor to be asked to offer the prayer for the area of education in the North Carolina statewide online gathering. Again, all praise be to Our Mighty and Powerful Heavenly FATHER for great things HE has done...and is continuing to do!!!

Keep praying! Keep looking to the LORD! Stay in GOD’s Word!
*Also, a special thank you to the churches and businesses all over our county, who announced the 2020 National Day of Prayer on their signs. *

Father’s Day

What Gets Our Attention?

It is so tragic when it takes extreme circumstances to get our attention. It is tragic when it takes something earth-shattering to get our attention. It is tragic when it takes devastating circumstances to get our attention. That was certainly true of my experience. When my Dad was diagnosed with cancer from a tumor on his bladder, I pictured in my mind that GOD would heal him, we would move on, and life would return to normal. But GOD had more in mind for me. HE didn’t just want me to have a prayer life that was a “routine” and half-hearted. HE didn’t just want me to attend every church service...while my thoughts were somewhere else. HE wasn’t satisfied with my “lukewarm” CHRISTian walk with Him.

HE longed to be my “first love” again. HE longed for that intimate, sincere, and pure heartfelt relationship with Him...every day. And HE was willing for me to have my heart so broken and my world turned upside down...because of His great love for me...because HE loved me first before I even knew Him. (1 John 4:19)

Does this sound crazy...or backward? Consider this: GOD made us...HE knows how we are put together. (Psalm 139:14) HE put us together. HE knows we were made to praise Him, worship Him, and walk with Him. When we get this out of order, our life is not what GOD intends it to be.

This is why GOD tells us in His Word to humble ourselves...because if we don’t...HE will. (1 Peter 5:6, Psalm 9:12, Proverbs 16:19, Isaiah 57:15, Matthew 18:4, Luke 14:11, James 4:6, Micah 6:8)

So, start today...begin your day fresh and new with Him. His mercies are new every morning. (Lamentations 3:22-23) Humble yourself. How? Being humble is not thinking less of yourself but instead, thinking of yourself less. Come with a humble heart before The LORD. Put Him 1st. Love Him most. Begin to love others.

Then, you will be walking in a right relationship with Him...and remember, it is a daily renewal and a daily walk.
JESUS 1st.
Others 2nd.
Yourself last.

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



And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Ephesians 6:4

The Highest Occupation
By John McCoury
Roan Mountain, Tennessee

The next time you sing the hymn in a worship service, remember that you are singing Scripture, a version of Psalm 100. This psalm is a digest of instructions on how to worship the Lord. Who should worship the Lord? *“Make a joyful shout to the Lord, all you lands!”* (v. 1). God wants the whole world to worship and give thanks to Him. Why are we to go into all the world and preach the Gospel? So that all the world will one day be able to make a joyful shout to the Lord. How should we worship the Lord? First, by serving. *“Serve the Lord with gladness; come before His presence with singing”* (v. 2). We are to serve the Lord with gladness because there’s joy in our hearts and because the joy of the Lord gives strength. Joyful noise leads to joyful service. If we are to serve the Lord joyfully our words must become deeds. Jesus warns against hypocritical worship in Matt 15:8. How are we to serve the Lord genuinely? First, we serve willingly. We are redeemed to do what God wants us to do. This verse was meaningful to Old Testament Jews because they knew about servitude. God delivered them from slavery in Egypt so they might serve Him. Second, we serve exclusively. We cannot serve the Lord and someone else at the same time (Matt. 6:24; Exod. 20:2-3). But we can serve others for Jesus' sake. Our goal is to please Him alone. Our power, wisdom, and the plans for our lives come from Him alone. Third, we serve joyfully. Sometimes we are like the elder brother in the parable of the prodigal son; we may do the Father’s will and work, but we are not far from His heart. God doesn’t want our service to be drudgery or to be done grudgingly. When we serve Him joyfully, we enjoy growth, development, and excitement. Are you happy serving the Lord? We praise God most effectively through our service to Him. Are you Engaged in service to the Lord in your church or community? When you offer your service to the Lord willingly and joyfully you glorify his name, let your words of praise lead to acts of praise! Second, we worship Him by singing. *“Come before His presence with singing.”* I fear that too often in our services singing becomes routine. We hold the hymnal and sing the songs that we know so well, but our minds and hearts are a million miles away. Think about and rejoice in the words you sing. We also worship the Lord by submitting to Him. *“Know that the Lord, God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture”* (v. 3). Submit to Him. Follow Him. Obey Him. Finally, we worship the Lord by sacrifice. *“Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise”* (v. 4). You don’t need to sacrifice animals on an altar, but you can give your time, money, and skills. Why should we worship the Lord? *“For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations”* (v. 5) The highest occupation of the Christian life is worshiping the Lord. Never allow your worship to become routine or artificial. Worship Him with a joyful and thankful heart by serving, singing, submitting, and sacrificing.

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



How Should We React?
By Phillip Greene
Avery County

I’m not sure how to even begin this discussion... Social issues around us in this world seem to come and at times we just do not know the words to say. This is one of those times... Like so many times before... We are left speechless by the anger and hatred that we see around us. We are disgusted by the arguing and divisiveness of some who feel that they must argue about everything that happens around. We are broken when we see another life taken, in what may or may not be a senseless act of violence. We cry for the families, we cry for justice, we cry for a fix...we simply cry.

There are many reactions to things that happen. There are many times that Racism, Sexism, and many other isms enter our conversations and break us without warning....so how can we address those sensibly and humbly? How do we address them and still keep our faith? How do we address them without joining in the arguing, back-biting, and anger?

Look to Jesus... It is ok for us to start conversations...but is it not ok for us to take justice into our own hands? The simple answer? NO.

When we take justice in our own hands, it leads us into anger, resentment, and ultimately sin. It may not be our place to react violently or aggressively. In fact, if we do, more often than not we stir up anger and resentment in others which leads to several issues that become name-calling and arguing. The social media danger is that we become brave, and a little thoughtless, behind a keyboard. We think that because we are not face to face with someone that our words and response will not have results other than a back and forth...

“In your anger...do, not sin.” Oh...what are you posting out of anger? Cursing? Demeaning? Slander? “Do not let any unwholesome talk come from your mouth.” When we are angry, we lose control at times. Most of those times we justify our statements with statements like, “They started it,” or, “I couldn’t help it, I was just so angry.” Again, anger and frustration are not a license to sin, in fact, the instruction is very clear, “In your anger, DO NOT sin.”

How do we overcome this evil with good? We pray. We allow God to work in the situation and we continue to pray for our enemies. Pray for those who persecute, you, and others. Pray for those who are going through a hard time. I’m not saying sit back and watch it happen, say something, call authorities, help get someone involved, but justice isn’t ours to serve.

In fact, to take it a step further...what would Jesus do? Well, what Jesus did was take it to the cross. He died for those who are being mistreated and, believe it or not, for those who are doing the mistreating. It could be your sensible and Christian influence that will allow the Spirit of God into the situation to work on the heart of others. God can do so much where we feel helpless, but it starts with you bringing Him into the circumstance.

We can see God move in a mighty way, but the first step is to react in the right manner and not cause more struggle because of our ungodly behavior. Please think about it. Please pray about it. Please love one another as Christ has loved you.

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

Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding. Proverbs 4:1-9



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The Beginning of Spiritual Life

By Dr. Tom Walker
McDowell County

One of the most familiar verses in all of the Bible is found in John 3:3. Here is what it says, “*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*” Christ in that verse clearly affirms at what point spiritual life begins for one who puts his faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Some people wonder why Jesus said, “Verily, verily” as He opens with a strong statement in John 3:3. It is a double emphasis. “Verily” is actually the Greek word transliterated into our English as “amen” or so be it. Christ is putting a double emphasis upon the fact a person must be born again if he or she plans to enter into the Kingdom of God. One verily would not have been enough for some people, so the Lord makes it a double authentication of a very bold and true statement.

We want to examine the misunderstandings, the miracle, the meaning, and the manifestations of the new birth.

Misunderstandings Concerning the New Birth

Before we see what the new birth is, I believe it would benefit us to see what it isn’t. The could-nots could be quite a long list, but I am going to narrow it down to three misunderstandings to contemplate.

It isn’t turning over a new leaf. Some people think if they will stop doing something and start doing something else, that God will smile upon them with favor and make them His child. Man’s need is not so much turning over a new leaf, but it is receiving a new life from God Almighty through His Only Begotten Son the Lord Jesus Christ. Just reforming your ways does not go into the depths of your heart and drastically and radically change your life. It is a good thing to see a person who is not living right want to change behavior, but that does not produce a born-again experience.

It isn’t quitting bad habits and cleaning up your life. All of us have bad habits; none of us excluded. This is a bit of an unusual illustration but cleaning up a jar does not make it something else. If you wash it and scrub it, it is still a jar. You can take a can of paint, paint the object inside and out, but it is still a jar. All it will ever be is a glass jar, no matter how much external cleaning is done to the object. The only thing that can change what you are is the forgiveness of your sins and the work of the cleansing agent of the blood of Christ through your faith.

It isn’t merely becoming religious, doing good deeds, or going to church. Joining the church does not make you a born-again child of God. You can go aboard on a boat but that does not make you a sea captain. You can fly in an airplane but that does not make you a bird. You can put on a diver’s suit and strap an oxygen tank on your back, go deep into the watery depths, but that does not make you a fish. Joining a church and getting religious will not guarantee you a trip to Heaven when it comes your time to die. I have met a lot of clean living, religious, church-



going people, some of which I will never see in the glory world.

When I was in Navy boot camp, there was a man in my company who had the foulest mouth I had ever heard in my life; however, before he went to sleep every night, I notice his eyes would be closed, his lips would move, and he did something with his rosary beads before he went to sleep. He was religious before he retired for the evening, but that would not make up for his sinful living and his foul mouth all day long. He was religious but was more than likely lost without God and without hope. If you are really saved, it will affect your life toward righteousness during the day.

Anyone would be wise to make sure he or she views salvation as it is really presented in the Bible. What we think about salvation is one thing, but what God says about it in His Word is what really matters when it comes to the well being of our eternal soul.

Meaning of the New Birth

What does it mean to be “born again”? It comes from the Greek word transliterated into our English as “anthen.” It definitely means to be born from above. The new birth is not something that man originates, it comes down from above, it descends from the world above, from Heaven and the heart of God. The Lord wants people to be born again so much that He sent his Son Jesus to make that wonderful act possible.

Some have suggested the term carries possibly three meanings with it. First, it can carry the idea of completely or radically. That well describes the change that comes when one is born from above. A radical change is much different than an attempt at reformation. Secondly, it can mean again or for the second time. We were born once physically, from our mother’s womb, but there has to be a second birth, a spiritual one, for us to go to Heaven. Thirdly, it specifically means from above. The new birth is something that God, through His Son does to us, not what we can do ourselves. The verb “born” in John 3:3 is a Greek passive word. That means we do not actively perform the saving; it is something where we are acted upon from the outside. Clearly, it is something God does for us.

The Miracle of the New Birth

It is a miraculous and marvelous matter when God changes a person’s life by giving them a new birth. The Lord, through his power, can change the most wicked, vile, person that ever lived upon the earth, if that one will come to him in a repentant spirit with faith in Christ in his heart.

If you were to read many of the biographies of great men who have influenced this world for God, you would discover than many of them at one time were extremely wicked men. But something wonderful happened to them. They became a new creature or a new creation through Christ.

The Apostle Paul, by his own testimony, was a religious but wicked person. Though he was religious, he felt the church presented a threat to all he held dear. As a result, he sought to wipe out the followers of the Lord Jesus. He held fast to ancestral traditions and Jewish law. Still, trying to wipe out the church was a wicked thing for him to do. Jesus met him on the Damascus Road and Paul turned from being a wicked, religious man, to being one who loved what he hated and despised what he once loved.

Manifestations of the New Birth

The keyword when we think of how being born again is represented is the word “change.” 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, “*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*”


There is a change in affection. Let’s use the Apostle Paul again as an example. His affection was once linked to Jewish tradition and law. But, after his conversion, he was concerned and occupied with the Gospel of Christ and spreading it around the world. What a wonderful change faith in Christ brought!

There is a change in aspiration. It can be defined as a desire or ambition for which someone is motivated to work very hard. Here was the main aspiration of the Apostle Paul found in Phil 3:10: “*That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.*”

There is also a change in destination. All it takes to qualify for a trip to Heaven one day, according to John 3:3, is being born again. There are two destinations at the end of life, Heaven and Hell. What a person does concerning their sin and with the Lord Jesus Christ, will determine his eternal destiny. The new birth is effective in preparing one for a blissful eternity in the presence of Holy God.

Have you been “born again”? If not, it can happen right now if you will take and embrace Christ as your Savior. Romans 10:13 says, “*For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*”.

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



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Mountain Community Health Partnership Offers Access to Affordable, Virtual Care

Mountain Community Health Partnership (MCHP) has added a network of virtual care opportunities available for all private and public insurances, including Medicare and Medicaid, as well as the uninsured. Like all MCHP practices, services are universally accessible and available on a sliding fee based on income and household size. Accessing care from home is critical given the spread of COVID-19, and medical and behavioral health providers agree - patients should not disengage from their health during these cautious times.

Accessing care is easier than most assume. Register as a patient, if not already registered, and set up an appointment over the phone. When the appointment is scheduled an email or text will be sent providing simple instructions and a link. Click the link a few minutes before your appointment time and your doctor will appear on your screen.

A virtual visit takes place via video or phone using a smartphone, tablet, or computer. Once the visit is finished, notes and referrals are provided for the patient similar to an in-person appointment. If needed, prescriptions are electronically routed to a preferred pharmacy.

“Mountain Community Health Partnership virtual care makes the care we provide available through the technology of everyday life,” said Josh Newton, PA-C. “It is easy to access and encourages patients in need of care to remain engaged in their health despite the need to stay home.”

As patients today try to keep a safe social distance, a virtual care program is the most effective way to receive care while avoiding public places. Patients need to practice safe social distancing, but not at the expense of their health, so everyone is encouraged to schedule a virtual care visit to stay on top of routine care.

“Younger patients nationwide have been seeking out virtual care for years,” said Chuck Shelton, Chief Executive Officer for MCHP. “It’s quick, it’s easy and it’s cost-effective. We want patients to be cautious about contracting or spreading COVID-19, but we would never recommend patients – especially those who may be chronically ill – neglect their health during this period of social distancing. Virtual care offers everything needed to stay engaged in your health during this trying time!”

Patients concerned they may have been exposed to COVID-19, or those experiencing fever, cough or shortness of breath are encouraged to access virtual services as well. Everyone is encouraged to call 828-688-2104 and speak with a staff member about accessing services, or the best course of action given your specific circumstances. MCHP is here to help, and community members are encouraged to reach out anytime.

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our butts off the bench and work the fundamentals. That starts with picking up the manual and reading it. Start at the beginning. The so-called New Testament makes no sense without the context of what God did for thousands of years before Jesus took flesh.

The manual says that revival will sweep the world in the last days. In John 4:34, Jesus tells us that His food is to do the will of the One who sent Him. How dare we seek nourishment from any other source? He goes on to say, “The reaper receives a reward and gathers fruit for eternal life, so that the sower and reaper may rejoice together.” God’s fields are ripe. The harvest window is brief. God’s children must work to make it happen. Revelation 14:12 defines His children as those who keep His commandments and faith in Messiah. Believers who refuse to do both may find themselves on that Great Day wondering what happened.

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 12:17. We will soon resume meeting each Sabbath—Seventh Day—in Marion. lostranger@mindspring.com

Jim & Beverly Huskins are members of Obedient Heart Fellowship.

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Sudoku Solution

2	8	7	9	5	1	6	3	4
5	4	1	3	6	2	9	7	8
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A Grateful Girl

Craving Connection

By Patti Jensen
Mitchell County



“Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble.” Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

Quarantine. Stay at Home. Isolate.

Could you have ever imagined we would see these days? They are crazy times for sure. And scary. And sad. Our world has turned into something we don't recognize. And if you are like me, even after six weeks of this, I don't think I have it figured out.

While there have been many times, I have prayed for more time to stay home and "piddle", work on new projects and cook all the recipes. This isn't what I had in mind. And honestly, I'm not sure I like it all. But one thing is for sure, it has forced us all to focus. Focus on the good things, the small things that matter. But it also has magnified something that I have been feeling for a while.

I need people. I need friends. And nothing can make you feel more isolated than, well, being isolated.

Even before the coronavirus pandemic, I had become increasingly aware of the importance of friends in my life. The need to build a tribe that I knew I could count on. Count on for support. Prayers. And yes, even impromptu shopping trips. Friends who I knew I would hear from.

And I stepped out and verbalized this to those around me, I was surprised at what I heard. They too were lonely. Women who I saw as popular, fun, surrounded by people, hundreds, or thousands of social media followers...they were lonely too. The more we talked the more we confirmed this craving for connection. These women didn't always have things in common...some are single, some are married with no children, some are young with young children, some have teenagers, some are empty nesters, some work, some stay home....but every single one discussed those feelings of loneliness, feeling like they didn't really have a group of friends they belonged to. Now everyone had friends...people they smiled at and hugged at the coffee shop, people they commented on their posts on Facebook, and people they sat with at church.

But they, like me, were beginning to feel this deep urging for more of a connection. For me, it was a pull deep within me for widening my circle of real women who I could show my flawed self to and they would say..."I see you, me too". Women who weren't all like me, but who loved God and wanted to be better, more real, and wanted to make a difference in each other's lives and the lives of those around us.

I think we all could probably claim many friends. There are our Facebook friends, our church friends. our work friends, our neighborhood friends and our school friends. But those are just the people we show our pretty pictures too. Our pretty selves. Our funny selves. We don't really show them our true selves much do we? The selves that God sees. That God knows.

What stops us from having these connections? Have you revealed yourself to someone before and they betrayed your trust? Have you reached out and tried to make deeper connections with friends and they don't respond? Have you sent lunch date texts to friends and they always have something else to do? Yep.... that hurts. And it can cause us to just stop, pull away, and be alone. But that is not God's plan for us. He says "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another and all the more as you see the Day approaching." Hebrews 10:25

A lot is going on in the lives of women around us right now. They are hurting, searching, fearful, worried, and lonely. And yet, we may not see all of that because, like most of us, they are pretending. I am purposely working on reaching out, in being authentic and I encourage you to do that as well. We are meant to be together. His Word says that two people are better than one because they can encourage each other to succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble.

I am working on a new project for women to connect. I'm excited about this project and I look forward to sharing it with you. Stay tuned for more information and be sure to follow along on my blog at www.agratefulgirl.com to be the first to hear about it.

Until then, be encouraged. You are not alone. Let's all work on being more of our real selves and in making deeper connections with those around us. I believe that God wants us to take our insecurities, our loneliness, and make an effort to reach out. In doing this, we take our eyes off of our loneliness and put our focus on God. We put our focus on serving Him as we serve our friends. It doesn't mean that we won't still have days of feeling lonely, defeated, less than....it just means that we will know that God is with us, and working through those we reach out to. And through us, as we reach out.

And more than anything, always know that God is with you. He is your Comforter. Your Friend. Your Counselor. Begin each day with a prayer of gratitude for all that you have. Pray for your friends and then give someone a text or call to say hi and encourage them. It could be the very thing that God uses that day to make a difference in your life or your friend's.

I welcome you to reach out to me by messaging me on Facebook. I would love to connect!

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

The Rest of the Story

I have no idea how many of you have ever worked in cornfield beans, but if you have, I am sure you have probably walked out of the field itching, I know I have done that many times. Clint was extremely worried, as he should have been, about using any kind of chemicals, and I was always conscious of warn- ing him when there was a danger. He did have red welks around his arms and neck the day he can in from the bean field. I can still see him before he went to the field with his chemical suit on, respirator and gloves, I had put a little fear in him because I did not want him to get hurt or exposed to anything that might hurt him. When I looked at his neck it was instantly apparent what had taken place. The look in his eyes said, am I going to live? He did look much better after the shower and piece of Barbara’s delicious cake.

Betsy, Barbara, and I had a belly laugh about the watermelon situation, Clint was beginning to get the hang of farm life about the time we took over the paper, and he moved to Spruce Pine. Those were the days my friend!

Farmer Doug

Funny Farm

Dear friends,

As I reminisce about my past agricultural prowess, I am still amazed to have survived so many near-misses with death at Harrell Hill Farms. There are nights I awaken, ter- rified of “what might have been,” always thankful for God’s protective covering.

This month I want to share two short stories, more evi- dence of how easily things can go awry!

Hazmat Suit...

It was a sweltering summer day as Doug dispatched me to spray insecticide on rows of beans and tomato plants. While I don’t recall the exact name of the chemical, I believe it was the first cousin to Agent Orange. Despite temperatures in the 90’s, my buddy insisted that I wear a ridiculous crepe suit, gloves, and hat. “Pollard, this is a dangerous chemical and you need to be careful not to let it get on your skin,” Farmer Doug warned. Always compliant, I slithered my then fat self into the hunter’s green ma- terial, donned my farmer’s gloves, and set out to eradicate the veggie cannibals.

I had the presence of mind to stand down-wind of the fine chemical mist so as not to drink too many of the tiny droplets. And spray I did...up and down... all around...bugs gasping for their last precious breath as I bobbed and weaved among the rows. Dodging pigweed, swarms of hornets, and all manner of creepy- crawly things I maneuvered throughout the vast garden. Mission accomplished. Returning home that evening the skin on my neck was burning, tingling, and feeling as though a gazillion fire ants were feasting on my blood. As I looked in the mirror, I noted what appeared to be a vast blister, better said leprosy! Alas, my life flashed before my eyes as I envisioned the end...surely the dastardly chemi- cal mixture was expediting my trip to heaven. I scurried to the farmhouse kitchen, hoping only to bid farewell to Doug and Barbara.

Running headlong into my mountain-man friend, my eyes telegraphing terror and distress, he asked, “Pollard, what’s wrong with you?” I explain how I fol- lowed his instruction, “Doug, I wore the suit and gloves even though the heat was nearly exhausting. I even thought to stand upwind of the spray. But, as you see, my skin is being eaten from the outside in.”

That crooked smile and mischievous look, the one he always displays just before saying “Pollard, I don’t know what I’m gonna do with you,” that one...and he asked, “Uh, did you get tangled up in the beans?” Thinking back, I recounted how a couple of times the cornrow beans had wrapped their stringy vines around my neck, once nearly taking me to my knees. “You are allergic to the bean vine, lots of folks are,” Doug said. “Take a shower, dry it off and you’ll be okay in a couple of days.” Snickering, having a bit too much fun, in my opinion, my friend offered me a piece of cake. And I devoured it, thankful that God spared me death from the nuclear material.

Waving Watermelon...

I had been plowing, hoeing, raking, and otherwise eating dust all day long. An extended dry spell plagued our mountain farm as Doug lovingly and painstakingly taught me the process of harvesting hay. I had recently learned to lift and transport the round bales (a story for another day) and was returning to the barn with a fresh load.

As you know from previous musings, I love driving the tractor ☺. Tooling along down Harrell Hill Road I “was one” with the land...content in my role as farmhand extraordinaire...privileged to captain the Kioti along our rural roads. I’m telling ya, this was a hot day and I’d had no water in a few hours (Doug didn’t give me breaks ☺). As I rounded the bend, I saw a lovely lady standing at the in- tersection of Harrell Hill Road and Byrd Road. Drawing near I recognized Betsy, Doug’s cousin, and my friend. Her arm was extended as though flying a kite, but I quickly noticed that instead, she was waving a piece of watermelon.

As I passed by, I could almost taste the succulent, dripping, cool red melon. And I wondered aloud, “Why is Betsy standing there waving a slice of water- melon? Such unusual customs in these mountains.” Nevertheless, I smiled, tipped my Farmer Clint hat as a gentlemanly gesture, and went to deposit the hay. All the while wishing I could figure out a way to finagle that watermelon from Betsy.

A week or so later Doug remarked, “You hurt Betsy’s feelings and I think you might want to talk to her about it.” I searched the cobwebs of my mind to compre- hend what I possibly could have done to offend this wonderful woman. “What did



I do now?” I whined. Once again, his eyes two mischievous marbles, my friend explained, “Betsy tried to flag you down for some watermelon last week and you just drove by and waved.”

I immediately went on the attack, defensive to the extreme I proclaimed, “Now look, I don’t know the rules of etiquette here. What was I supposed to do? You know I like Betsy, and you know I like watermelon. What you don’t know is that I WANTED Betsy’s watermelon! But how was I to know she wanted to share with me? It just didn’t seem right to stop and say, ‘Hi Betsy, may I please have your watermelon!’ Or what if I had leaped from the tractor and said, ‘Gimme that watermelon Betsy!’” Bursting into laughter my friends Doug and Barbara nearly died at the hilarity of that vision.

That was an important day, though, in my education at Harrell Hill Farms. What I learned is that on the farm virtually every gesture has meaning, and every movement has a purpose beyond what is apparent.

A few days later I apologized to Betsy for my faux pas. “That’s okay,” she said. “There’s always another day and another watermelon.” So, if you’re new here and don’t know what to do, remember...never fly by a lovely lady waving watermelon in your direction ☺!

As always, I thank God for the memories and expe- riences at Harrell Hill Farms...growing more distant now as the years roll along. Your old pal Farmer Clint enjoyed a special time of healing and restoration in the cornrows, sorghum cane fields, at the river, at the farm- house table...among true friends. Thank you, Jesus ☺.



Still humbled in these hills,

Farmer Clint



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New Dimensions School

End of School Year 2019-2020

By David Burleson
Burke County

It is difficult to believe that another school year has ended. It seems only yesterday we were preparing for the 2019-2020 school year. During that preparation, who would have dreamed that this year would have ended the way it has. It is with sincere gratitude that I want to thank the dedicated employees of New Dimensions for the way they embraced the challenges of this year. Much of the success we have experienced this year must be attributed to the dedication and hard work from our staff, parents, and especially our wonderful students. We have provided a clean, well-maintained building and an educational program that is second to none throughout the country. Without these quality individuals, our school would not be able to offer the best for the children we serve. Great staff and the dedicated board make all the difference.

Also, on behalf of New Dimensions, I want to thank our entire community for the support given to our school and the acknowledgment that the education of our children is very important to the future of our community. We have garnered tremendous support from our business and community partners, not only financially, but also by allowing their personnel to come into our schools to mentor students and to provide contacts with positive adult role models.

In addition, we acknowledge the tremendous support on the part of parents. We appreciate the concern for their children and their willingness to work with us to provide the best educational opportunities possible. We continue to believe that one of the most important relationships that can be established is between the home and the school. If we work together and support each other, the potential for the success of every student is greatly enhanced.

Finally, yet most importantly, I would like to thank our students for the great job they have done this year. We are proud of their accomplishments as well as the way each represented our school. The character of our students allows us the ability to do provide a variety of activities. Students, thank you for being the people you are and, Parents, thank you for the lessons you have taught your children! You represent all of us well.

On another note, a major goal for our school is to provide students the opportunity to be successful in their pursuits. One area that measures their success is the testing program implemented by the state of North Carolina. This year those tests have been waived but we are very proud of the success New Dimensions experienced during the last year of testing. During the 2018-2019 school year New Dimensions achieved a performance grade of B. However, we know that our students are capable of even more. We desire to rank in the top ten percent in our state in all accountability measures and will work diligently to accomplish that goal. However, testing alone is not the only means for student success. New Dimensions realizes the importance to offer services that provide a well-rounded, balanced education for all our children so they can meet the demands of an ever-changing world. We cannot allow testing to dictate what we do for our children, but we must allow the needs of the children to dictate what we do for them.

At New Dimensions, we believe in reducing class size to better provide instruction for our students. Next year our teacher to student ratio in grades K to 5 is 1:16. Currently, our middle school teacher to student ratio is less than 1:20. Our school also provides the most up to date technology to enhance our educational program. Next year, each student at New Dimensions will be assigned a Chromebook for their individual use.

The staff and board of New Dimensions are working to develop an appropriate plan to return to school this fall when we are allowed to do so. We will do all possible to protect our students and staff without making our school like a prison. More details will be forthcoming when more details emerge concerning school openings in the fall.

As summer begins, we want to make our community aware of the activities that will be happening for students over the next couple of months.

YMCA Summer Camp is being offered beginning June 8th at New Dimensions. More details are provided on this link: <https://www.ymcacv.org/camp>

Coach Michael Brooks will be hosting a summer athletic camp sometime later this summer.

If there are questions about the New Dimensions School or any of these summer activities, please do not hesitate to give me a call at (828) 437-5753.

As we work to make New Dimensions the best school it can possibly be, we look forward to your continued support.

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



Snow Hill Baptist Church

The Essential Church - No Regrets Family

By Dean Honeycutt
Mitchell County

I was a little upset, to say the least when churches were put on the back burner in the state of North Carolina. While church members were not being allowed to go back into their buildings people could still go to the abortion clinics and liquor stores. When the government regards sinful acts as essential and places of worship as non-essential, we have a serious problem.

Thank the Lord U.S. District Judge James Dever III issued a temporary restraining order against Governor Roy Cooper's order on limiting the number of people who can attend a church service. I trust at the time you are reading this article we are still worshipping the Lord in our churches.

I want to help you understand that for 2000 years believers have been gathering to worship the Lord. This idea that we can be the church, but not gather is unscriptural. We do not have to be in a building to worship, but we do need to gather as a body of believers. The Bible teaches us in Hebrews "*not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together.*" (Hb. 10:25) First Corinthians 12:27 teaches us "we are the body of Christ and members in particular." In this context, we understand that this is talking about a local visible body of believers who worship together, baptize new believers, and share in the Lord's table. Being able to have drive-in services and stream sermons were good and necessary alternative, but nothing can beat the personal fellowship of believers coming together for worship.

After preaching a Facebook live message at Snow Hill on a Wednesday night with less than ten people in the audience I went down to my office to put something up. When I came back up, I saw a young lady at the altar praying. I did not know what was going on. I did not give an invitation. But the Holy Ghost had moved. So, my wife and I sat quietly in prayer. The young lady arose from the altar with tears streaming down her face saying I miss praying in the altar. At that time, we had not been in our sanctuary for eight weeks. I understood then more than ever how essential church is.

I can honestly say God has been good to us and blessed our little church. We have been patient and God has brought a lot of good out of this pandemic. What the devil has intended for evil God has turned it into good. I had a young woman sing so beautifully during a drive-in service who I had never heard sing. We had people stepping up and helping us with the outdoor sound system. And people setting up and taking down tents on the rainy days. We have had hundreds of people respond to our Facebook live services. I have felt the love of God and the love of God's people. Many of my pastor friends have been a great encouragement to me. They have all done a fantastic job pastoring churches during this crisis. So, God has blessed us in many ways, for which we are most grateful.

I want you to understand that Christians come to church at their own risk. For the first 300 years of Christianity attending a church service was dangerous. Many Christians were imprisoned, tortured, fed to lions, and killed for following the Lord Jesus Christ. Why would these early believers hazard their life for Jesus? Because they loved the Lord with all their heart, soul, and mind and they knew "to live is Christ and to die is gain." They were willing to lay down their life for the sake of the Gospel. I cannot promise you that if you go to church you will not get the coronavirus any more than I could promise you that you will never have a car wreck. But, I can tell you this if you do get the coronavirus God is in control and He does not let anything happen to you that He is not fully aware of and is able to handle. If the early disciples did not believe this, they would not have hazarded their lives for the sake of the Gospel. Would God require anything less of me or you?

We have had it too easy in America. And the coronavirus has been a real challenge for the New Testament church. I believe the Lord is seeing what we are made of and putting us to the test. More birth pains will come, and we need to be ready and continue to "*press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*" (Philp. 3:14)

I leave you with this Word. 2 Corinthians 4:8-11 (KJV 1900)
"8 We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; 9 Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; 10 Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. 11 For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh."



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



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The Importance Of Prayer

By Glenda Ward
McDowell County



In the prayer, we know as the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus gives some important principles for us to follow when we communicate with God through prayer. There are some key points to Spiritual growth and development through prayer. In Jesus’ teaching, He gave the Lord’s Prayer as a model for prayer to His disciples.

Our Father in heaven is our God. *“For I am the Lord, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy”* (Leviticus 11:45).

Prayer Point 1 *“Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed it be thy name.”*

The Lord’s name is Holy. We are made in the image of God; God is Holy, and in every part of our life we are to seek to be holy in His likeness.

Prayer Point 2 *“Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done, in earth as it is in heaven.”*

In Heaven’s way, we are to align our hearts, our minds, and our wills in God’s likeness, and from this will our right Christian actions begin to grow. We are to keep God in center stage in our inner being – our soul; staying focused on God and making Him the center of our life.

Prayer Point 3 *“Give us this day our daily bread.”*

We are to be truly and fully dependent on God confessing our need and relying on His promise as our source for all provisions in our life. Everything we have comes from God.

Prayer Point 4 *“Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.”*

If our relationship with God truly aligns with God’s ways, then our earthly relationships and our Spiritual life will be intricately interwoven with God in His likeness.

Prayer Point 5 *“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”*

In our world today, just as there has always been, distractions and temptations are thrown at us from all directions. We, as Christians are to choose to turn and walk away from all things that go against God and His teachings. Satan is the master at disguising pleasurable acts and situations. He is a mastermind at manipulating and enticing wrongful situations and circumstances. We are to safeguard ourselves against that evil power! Stay focused on God.

Prayer Point 6 *“For thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever.”*

All things that we do should ultimately be for the Glory and Worship of God. We are to strive to grow Spiritually, being mindful of who we are in Christ and our Christian daily walk with the Lord. We are to be humble in how we consider ourselves and mindful in how we consider and seek God and His Kingdom. In all things, we do we are to praise, honor, and glorify God and His Holy Name.

There is nothing more important than prayer to help us grow into mature Christians. Prayer is the way of developing our Spiritual walk. Sometimes God does not answer our prayer and the Holy Spirit lets us know there is some sin in our life whether it be selfishness, jealousy, pridefulness, or even more. Read Romans 8:26.

If God answered prayers automatically, there would be no growth. If we never prayed, there would be no dependence on God. The wisest thing we can do is learn how to pray. Prayer is God’s way of drawing us close and bonding us to Him. Christians connect with God when we pray. Prayer is our relationship with God. We are to put everything before our heavenly Father when we pray. Nothing can be hidden from God when we pray. God reveals Himself to us when we pray, therefore prayer is educational. As we pray the Holy Spirit brings strength and encouragement to us.

Jesus was a popular teacher. People gathered in multitudes to be near Him and to hear His teachings. But among the people, Jesus withdrew at times to pray in private. *“But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thy hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly,”* (Matthew 6:6). Jesus preached what He practiced. When we pray in private, we are seeking only God. Praying in private is the key to a personal private relationship with God. *“Continue in prayer and watch in the same with Thanksgiving”* (Colossians 4:2). We are to devote ourselves to prayer. Paul the apostle stressed the importance of prayer. We are to devote time in prayer. God’s Word in Scripture and prayer work together in binding our relationship with Him. God speaks to us through His Word and through prayer we speak to Him. Prayer should never be neglected. Prayer is a means of obtaining Spiritual and physical satisfaction in life. Prayer helps us stay focused and is also our weapon against Spiritual attacks.

Paul tells us we need to “be watchful” and to “be thankful”. When in prayer we need to be alert, completely engaged with our hearts and our minds. To stay awake to the mental attitude of expectancy. *“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit and “watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication...”* (Ephesians 6:18). Prayer is Spirit-enabled and Spirit-directed. Supplication in prayer bears a Spirit of reference and devotion with it. A solemn prayer that should be made with clear focused minds and hearts. *“And above all these things put on charity, which is the “bond of perfectness”* (Colossians 3:14). Paul also says we are to “be thankful” in prayer. “And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful” (Colossians 3:15). *“Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving”* (Colossians 4:2).

As you pray remember prayer will not always change our troubles and circumstances in life, but prayer should transform us. Prayer should change us from within. Prayer takes practice and discipline and it is not just the work of the person praying! Jesus, the Holy Spirit and the Body of Christ is working right alongside of us when we pray. Your Spiritual growth takes place during times of prayer. You grow when you take the time to spend quality time in God’s presence talking to Him.

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

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

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By Nancy Malik
Avery County



Beautiful June in the High Country and in particular, Avery County, is God’s special show of love as flowers, animals, trees, the air, babbling creeks, and people are rejoicing in His Glory as anticipation that summer is here! Warmer air, after a very cold May, gets us out more often to connect with Creation! As we garden, tend our plants, and mow our grass, we are tending God’s lovely plants created by Him beginning on Day 4 of Creation. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control are the Fruits of Spirit.

As we remember His fruits of the Spirit, we are tending the souls He gave us and renewed in us when He opened His heart to all. We live in a very different time with a worldwide virus that has changed our lives. Trying to keep up with new rules, to wear or not wear a mask, to blame people from other places, and being scared and afraid can make us very edgy. But God gave us His fruit as a gift of life! The older age group, 60+, of whom I am one, is more susceptible to the virus and have had to stay isolated longer than other age groups. My older sister lives in an assisted living residence in Oklahoma City. She is one of 2 residents that has a dog. She can walk her precious friend twice a day and I believe it has helped her maintain a sense of acceptance of her situation with her age group. But most people in this age group that live in these homes for older people, have found that isolation can be debilitating. The only other resident she has had contact with is her neighbor across the hall and they sit 6 feet apart in the hallway twice a day to keep their sanity. Her daughter and grandsons’ wave to her from her window as they connect to each other at this time. Eating in their room, alone, seems so sad, and has been found to attribute to deaths in our special homes for older people from loneliness.

RAM, Reaching Avery Ministry, helps the isolated in their outreach and many are blessed by this powerful local outreach and the ones who work so hard to meet the needs. Their contact as food is handed out, might be the only one many of the poor of Avery County receive. Sharing our fruits, given to us by God is an answer to a very hurting world. They were poured into us as we started and continue a journey with Him, and aren’t meant to hoard, but to be shared! Let us remember our lonely family member, neighbor, church member, or someone we don’t even know, by seeking out their needs.

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, patience, gentleness, and self-control are the fruits of the Garden of God. As our hearts are tenderly cared for by our loving Savior, may we tenderly care for the needy, the lonely, the hopeless, especially in ...such a time as this!

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



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The Breastplate of Righteousness

By Caron Cline
Burke County

The Apostle Paul’s words to the Ephesian believers in the first century are more applicable than ever to twenty-first-century believers. We are living in unprecedented times which affords Satan and his cohorts a perfect opportunity to inject the virus of fear into believers and unbelievers alike. Yet, we have a Biblical mandate to be strong in the power of the Lord; to stand firm against these schemes of the enemy. Every believer is issued a hazmat suit known as the armor of God which is sufficient to protect us from exposure to the deeds of darkness.

Last month we examined the first piece of armor Paul listed in Ephesians chapter 6: the belt of truth. This is the foundation that strengthens our core. It is imperative that we walk in truth as the body of Christ. Remember: we are in a spiritual battle against an unseen enemy who never takes a vacation. Every piece of armor is vital to our spiritual survival. This second piece of armor that Paul mentions is the breastplate of righteousness. The Roman soldiers wore a sleeveless piece of armor usually made of iron to protect their heart and lungs. It had overlapping pieces of metal with connecting front and back sections. The Greek word for ‘breastplate’ is ‘thorax’, which can literally mean a heart protector. The metal pieces helped deflect the blows from the enemy’s swords and other weapons which could pierce the heart or lungs. This breastplate was also designed to be flexible to allow soldiers mobility during battle.

Jeremiah 17:9 proclaims that the heart is deceitful and wicked above all things. We cannot change it, fix it, or restore it. We need a heart transplant and God is the best cardiologist in town. He planned to make a great exchange for anyone who believes in the name of Jesus. In Ezekiel 36:26, God spoke this word to His people: “*And I will give you a new heart and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes and be careful to obey My rules*”. The promise for a new heart was echoed throughout the Old Testament, although it was quite mysterious to its hearers. A New Covenant would someday be established through the Messiah. He would fulfill all these promises.

In Isaiah 61:10, the prophet declares that the Messiah will cover His people with a robe of righteousness. All of our good deeds are as filthy rags in the eyes of a holy God (Isaiah 64:6). Only perfectly righteous One; One who kept the whole law; One who was willing to become the sacrifice, could provide permanent righteousness.

2 Corinthians 5:17 says that ‘*if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things have passed away; behold new things have come*’. He has made us new creations with new hearts and new spirits.

Praise the Lord we now stand as new, holy, and blameless children of the living God and it is a gift totally free of charge. However, we must never forget the great ransom paid to secure our release from the power of the evil one and of sin. The blood of Jesus was necessary to destroy the works of the devil.

He became sin so that we could become the righteousness of God in Him. We now stand before God as righteous children because of His grace toward us in Christ Jesus. This type of righteousness is called ‘imputed’ because we did nothing to earn it, therefore, we must guard our lives against self-righteousness and the pride that the enemy tries to plant into our minds.

Humility and awe should be our continual response to this grace freely given. Our righteousness was purchased by the blood of Jesus and offered freely to all who believe on His Name. As Romans 5:19 declares, ‘*For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One (Jesus) the many will be made righteous*’. What a powerful and amazing promise!

Since we have put on this breastplate of righteousness, our behavior must follow suit by practicing our righteousness so that our Father in heaven will be glorified.

A study of Ephesians 4:20-31 teaches that we have received the gift of righteousness, but we must put it on by refusing to live in the past. Remember, we are new creations. Some old clothes do not fit over our new breastplate.

Paul lists them in these verses in more detail but here are the highlights: Honesty: Put away falsehood (stop lying); stop stealing and work instead; practice self-control by thinking before speaking; do not allow bitterness, wrath, anger, and slander to fill us. Be kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving.

Ephesians 5:1-5 expands this theme. We are to be imitators of God, ridding ourselves of any type of sexual immorality, whether that is physical or emotional. Pornography is one of the greatest addictions of our time and it is running rampant in our churches. It destroys the lives of people by destroying their relationships.

Paul spoke strongly to the Corinthian church concerning the importance of keeping our bodies pure.

Sexual sin is a sin against one’s own body and God is very serious about having a pure bride for His Son. Looking back at Ephesians 5:5, we see a link between a sexually immoral person and a covetous person, or an idolater. These sins are often listed together (1 Corinthians 5:11; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Revelation 21:8; Galatians 5:19; Colossians 3:5).

Why?
The word ‘idolatry’ is a noun and means the worship of idols. It is defined as ‘extreme admiration, love or reverence for something or someone’. When Christians engage in sexual immorality it is spiritual adultery because they are now part of the body of Christ. God has said there are to be no other gods before Him and if a believer covets someone who is not their spouse it is disobedience. Disobedience to the word of God shows that this believer has elevated the forbidden



person to a place above Jesus, becoming guilty of idolatry. Jesus always deserves first place and will accept no other.

The breastplate of righteousness is our protection against these deeds of darkness. Jesus has broken the power of sin that once held us in its grip and those who are truly born again have a desire to live a righteous life. Do we fail at times? Yes, but our Father will deliver us. We can confess our sin and He promises to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Keeping short accounts will protect us from the enemy’s attacks. We must put on the breastplate of righteousness and stand firm against the schemes of the devil. If we have a desire to obey the voice of God, He will empower us to do so and the enemy won’t stand a chance!

Caron 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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Did Yeshua Fulfill the Messianic Expectation as Prophesied in the Hebrew Scriptures?

By Creation.com

I remember reading some astonishing facts published by mathematician Peter Stoner about the probabilities of any one person fulfilling even a small number of the biblical prophecies concerning the Messiah—they were mind-boggling. The chance of one single man fulfilling only 48 Messianic prophecies found in the Tanakh (Old Testament) would be 1 in 10^{157} *—to understand, that would be like the chance of finding, on the very first attempt, one specific electron out of all of the electrons in all the known mass of the entire universe! *1 followed by 157 zeros.

Yeshua however, fulfilled not just 48 Messianic prophecies—He fulfilled more than 324 individual prophecies that the Prophets wrote concerning the Messiah! Math not being my gift, the first calculation was amazing enough for me. To extrapolate the mathematical probability of the 324 prophecies being fulfilled by any ONE MAN must be a number beyond comprehension for anyone! Although I already “knew that I knew that I knew” that Yeshua was the Messiah of Israel, this little mathematical study was another powerful confirmation.

To the Jewish People, this is more than a matter of random interest. The Messiah has been prophesied in Scripture with great specificity, though sometimes hidden and sometimes allegorical and poetic—beginning with Genesis 3:15.

The following is a list of important Messianic prophecies that were fulfilled by Yeshua with their corresponding New Testament references:

List of Messianic Prophecies:

1. Messiah is to be born in Bethlehem
Micah 5:2; fulfilled in Matt. 2:1-7; John 7:42; Luke 2:4-7
2. Messiah is to be preceded by a Messenger
Isaiah 40:3; Malachi 3:1; fulfilled in Matthew 3:1-3; 11:10; John 1:23; Luke 1:17
3. Messiah is to enter Jerusalem on a donkey
Zechariah 9:9; fulfilled in Luke 35-37; Matthew 21:6-11
4. Messiah is to be betrayed by a friend
Psalms 41:9; 55:12-14; fulfilled in Matthew 10:4; 26:49-50; John 13:21
5. Messiah is to be sold for 30 pieces of silver
Zechariah 11:12; fulfilled in Matthew 26:15; 27:3
6. The money for which Messiah is sold is to be thrown “to the potter” in God’s house
Zechariah 11:13; fulfilled in Matthew 27:5-7
7. Messiah is to be born of a virgin
Isaiah 7:14; fulfilled in Matthew 1:18-2:1; Luke 1:26-35
8. Messiah is to be hated without cause
Isaiah 49:7; Psalm 69:5; fulfilled in John 15:24-25
9. Messiah is to be silent before His accusers
Isaiah 53:7; fulfilled in Matthew 27:12
10. Messiah is to be executed by crucifixion, by having His hands and feet pierced
Psalm 22:16; fulfilled in John 19:28
11. Messiah is to be given vinegar to quench His thirst
Psalm 69:22; fulfilled in Matthew 27:34
12. Messiah is to be executed without having a bone broken
Exodus 12:46; Psalm 34:21; fulfilled in John 19:33-36
13. Messiah is to be buried with the rich when dead
Isaiah 53:9; fulfilled in Matthew 27:57-60
14. Messiah is to be raised from the dead
Isaiah 53:9-10; Psalm 2:7; 16:10; fulfilled in Matthew 28:1-20; Acts 2:23-36; 13:33-37; 1 Corinthians 11:4-6
15. Messiah is to be executed by crucifixion as a thief
Psalm 22:16; Zechariah 12:10; Isaiah 53:5, 12; fulfilled in Luke 23:33; John 20:25; Matthew 27:38; Mark 5:27, 28

In his book, *Science Speaks*, mathematician Peter Stoner says that by applying the modern science of probability to just eight of these prophecies, “. . . We find that the chance that any man might have lived to the present time and fulfilled all eight prophecies is 1 in 10^{17} .” That would be one in 100,000,000,000,000,000. In order to comprehend this staggering probability, Stoner illustrates:

“. . . we take 10^{17} silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They will cover the state two feet deep. Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly. Blindfold a man and tell him that he must pick up one silver dollar and say that this is the right one. What chance would he have of getting the right one? Just the same chance that the prophets would have had of writing just eight prophecies and having them all come true in any one man, from their day to the present time, providing they wrote in their own wisdom.”

“Now these prophecies were either given by inspiration of God or the prophets just wrote them as they thought they should be. In such a case the prophets had just one chance in 10^{17} of having them come true in any man, but they all came true in Christ [Mashiach].

“This means that the fulfillment of just eight prophecies alone proves that God inspired the writing of those [eight] prophecies to a definiteness which lacks only one chance in 10^{17} of being absolute.”

1 Stoner, Peter W. *Science Speaks*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1963, pp 100-107
Yeshua said to them, “This is what I meant when I was still with you and told you that everything written about me in the Torah of Moshe, the Prophets, and the Psalms had to be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds so that they could understand the Tanakh, telling them, “*Here is what it says: the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day; and in his name repentance leading to forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed to people from all nations, starting with Yerush-alyim.*” Luke 24:44-47 CJB

Many learned Jewish men and women have come to faith in the last 40 years simply by reading their Tanakh. Some were reading through to equip themselves to dispute a child that had come to believe in Yeshua (Jesus), which was a very shocking

continued on page 37

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Can't Find My Way Out Of A Paper Bag

By Steve Bietz
Burke County

Although the American cartoonist, Charles Schulz, passed away over 20 years ago. His influence on society lives on in his comic strip creation called Peanuts. I was reminded of the genius of Charles Schulz just this week as I was sorting through an old cache of newspapers and magazines that I had kept because at one point, they had caught my eye. A Peanuts cartoon was among the stack. It starts with Lucy at her five-cent psychology booth, where Charlie Brown has stopped for advice about life.

"Life is like a deck chair, Charlie," she says. "On the cruise ship of life, some people place their deck chair at the rear of the ship so they can see where they've been. Others place their deck chair at the front of the ship so they can see where they're going."

The good "doctor" looks at her puzzled client and asks, "Which way is your deck chair facing?" Without hesitation, Charlie replied with gloominess, "I can't even get my deck chair unfolded."

Indeed, I often believe I got stuck with that same deck chair, Charlie. I was talking to one of my church members the other day, and we were comparing our inabilities. You know, the who is the worse game. We both sounded a lot like Charlie Brown. I told my church family member how dumb I could be, while he came back with his own rendition of how dumb he could be. I'm not sure who won. He got in the last word with the standard comeback, "Pastor, sometimes I can't find my way out of a paper bag." I only responded with a nod and a smile to my church member, but on the inside, just to myself, I admitted that those paper bags can be rather formidable.

If I pray for direction and God's guiding hand, why can't I find my way out of a paper bag? One of my favorite authors, Ellen White, penned these words on page 196 in her book, LIFE SKETCHES. "We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history." In the book of Hebrews, which most scholars attribute to the apostle Paul, we find the writer qualifying his previous words in Hebrews chapter 11 where he expounds eloquently on the faithfulness of an assortment of people we read about in scripture. I find myself concerned with me and my deck chair as I read Hebrews chapter 11. I mean if a paper bag trips me up, then I certainly cannot add my name to the faithfulness list that Paul shares.

But it is then that Paul gives council that I seem to forget so easily. *"Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author, and finisher of our faith."* Hebrews 12:1,2. When I am beaten by a deck chair of life, it is when I forget who the author of my faith is. When a paper bag baffles me, it is usually because I have let it slip my mind who is the finisher of my faith.

We are hoping I pray, coming out of an unprecedented time, where a virus paper bag has kept us locked up. We can't seem to unfold our deck chair pandemic. But we can have that blessed assurance that deck chairs, and paper bags that ensnare us, are no match to the Author and Finisher of our faith.

Steve Bietz, Pastor, Morganton Seventh day Adventist Church.



Treasures

By Patricia Jackson
McDowell County

Recently my friend helped me clean out a storage building. I wanted to unburden myself from material things I would never use, and hopefully find others who would use them. She waited patiently as I rifled through each box, considering each article, and occasionally sharing the history of my treasures. At one point, I held onto an object, previously belonging to my mother. I could not decide whether to keep it or let it go. I then quickly handed it to her and said: "you keep the treasure and I will treasure the memory". At this point, she reminded me of the scripture in Matthew 6 *"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal, But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."*

I reflected on how some of my treasures were already corrupted. I thought I had packed them securely in a secure building. But a mouse chewing or soiling the item or time had ruined some of them. Sadly, on earth, there is no guaranteed safe place, due to fires, moths, rust, thieves, time, or even a little mouse.

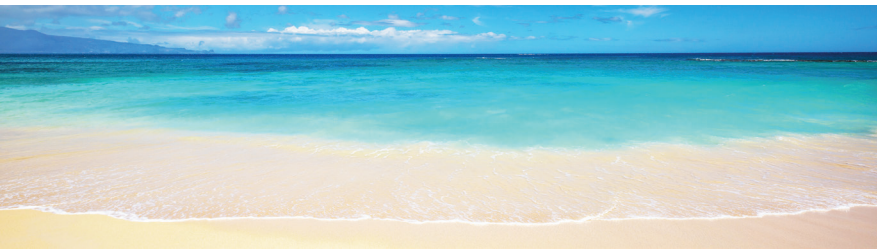
Often times we think of a treasure as having great monetary value: diamonds, gold, silver, or gems. Very few of us will ever own truly expensive treasures. Our earthly treasures are things of the heart, often things we cherish, of value to no one but us. We are treasuring the memory of the item, as well as the actual item. Egyptians were buried with many different objects because they believed those objects would help the deceased in their journey to the afterlife. It's not unusual for a loved one to place a favorite child's toy, or a favorite piece of jewelry worn on the deceased, in the casket. We know these items will never leave the casket. The items we treasure here have no comparison to the treasures we will have in heaven. How do we store up treasures in heaven? First, we need to realize that Jesus Christ is the most important treasure of all. Just as we have a personal relationship with inanimate objects, we must have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ; by accepting him as Lord and Savior. When Jesus is our treasure, we will give our time, our money, and resources to serving him and to his work. We can only do that if we are motivated to serve Christ.

Colossians 3:23-24 tells us we must work at it with all our hearts to receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward because we are serving the Lord. Our ultimate rewards are with God. We must literally set our mind on things above, and not be preoccupied with things on earth. God has blessed all of us with spiritual gifts, whether it be praying for others, preaching, singing, teaching, testifying, or playing a musical instrument. If we give of ourselves fully to the work of the Lord, we know our labor in the Lord is not in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58).

When we set our affection on things above and not on things on the earth, we will have wondrous treasures in heaven. That should be our daily goal.



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



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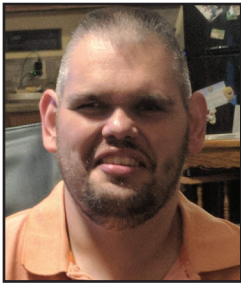
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Glorification
By David Valls
Mitchell County



For our final article on salvation, we are going to examine the ultimate promise of glorification. God's purpose for saving us is not just keeping us from hell, but to conform us into the image of his Son, Jesus Christ. The Bible tells us that Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. The Bible also tells that if we then are risen with Christ, we will also be glorified with Him. What does this mean? It means that it will be changed from the corruptible nature of our flesh into that which is incorruptible. The Bible tells us we are not born of corruptible seed but incorruptible. This is about the spiritual nature we received when we accepted Jesus as Lord. We were transformed inwardly at the moment of salvation, and since that time we have been in the process of being conformed into the image of Christ. Paul tells us that as we have born the image of the earthly, and we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Let us remember that there is a resurrection of the dead... both of the just, meaning those that are saved, and the unjust, meaning the unsaved. All of us will experience life beyond the grave, but we have a say in where we spend it!! We either accept the message of the gospel, trusting Jesus for salvation by putting faith in His redemptive work at Calvary and His miracle resurrection.... or we can reject and be damned to hell for all eternity, forever separated from God, with no way to escape. The choice is ours. We can choose life or death...and in choosing life, we can choose glorification! You may ask what does being Glorified with Christ mean? Well, there is much we will not know about this until we experience it firsthand, but we do know that there are two realms that exist, the natural and the spiritual. As humans, we are made up of flesh and bone, but we are also living souls. In that same sense, when we receive our resurrection body it will be spiritual in nature... a body not designed for this earth, but for a new heaven and a new earth! The Bible says, if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall also be raised in the likeness of His resurrection. Christ took on flesh so He could die for our sins but He was raised spiritually... He had a body similar in appearance to what He had before, yet we read that He was able to enter into a locked room with the disciples. Because while at that time He still retained certain aspects of the natural body in terms of appearance, He was far from the body of sin that He had been clothed in, yet He never sinned even once. He lives eternally so all who are saved, free from the power of sin and death...and in that, we have the blessed hope of being glorified with Christ. We are sown in dishonor, raised in glory, sown in weakness, raised in power, and given a natural body that will be a risen spiritual body. May we find assurance in both the promise and the power of the resurrection!

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

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COVID-19

By Dr. Miguel Cruz
Yancey County



COVID-19 has changed the way we look at our health. In this article, I will take you on a journey to look at things a little differently from all the media hype you have probably been hearing. I do not want to bother with any statistics or confusing facts, as you are already hearing way too much of that. What I want to focus on is the host, your body.

In immunology, the host is what we call the body, in which the bacteria or virus (the bugs) are reproducing. If the bugs have a good environment in which to grow and reproduce, we call that a good host. If the environment is not so good and the bugs are not reproducing or are even dying, we call that a bad host.

So, the question I have for you is do you want to be a good host or a bad host to invading viruses and bacteria? I hope your answer is a bad host. You want your body to be a hostile environment to invading and unwanted bugs.

If you have been keeping up with the COVID-19 news, we are being told that the symptoms can be everything from that of a mild cold to death. What is the difference between these people? Why are they now telling us that the rate of infection can be 10x or more than what is being reported because the antibody testing is showing up a large number of people who apparently had it and did not know?

The answer is the difference between a good host and a bad host. On one extreme is the bad host. The body has an excellent immune system and capacity to recover, the important part here is the capacity to recover, we will talk more on that later. The strength of the immune system and capacity for recovery is dependent on many things. Some we can't do anything about, but most factors can be controlled by us, such as the foods we eat, the air we breathe, and our environment. In this article, we don't have room to get into specifics, that will be discussed in future articles and have been discussed in past articles. I believe that most of the people reading this already know if they are eating healthy or not and you already know if you are getting enough exercise or not. You may not be all that sure about the air or the environment you are living in, that is for a future article.

Let us discuss the opposite extreme, the good host. In this example, the body may not have a good immune system, and the capacity to recover is limited. The bugs now have an environment that allows them to reproduce at will and take over. Here is where the immune system actually becomes part of the problem because as has been reported, most deaths actually caused by the coronavirus are because of the patient's inability to breath and that is because of the immune response affecting the lungs.

I want to ask you a question, is your current lifestyle producing a bad host (bugs don't survive) or a good host (bugs have a party). I think you probably already know. If you believe you are currently a good host, I encourage you to take a step today to make improvements, maybe it's just to drink more water or go for a walk, perhaps make better food choices. It does not matter how you start, what matters is that you do. Think progress, not perfection.

If you feel you are already a bad host, meaning you exercise regularly, eat healthily, are conscious of your environment and stress, and make your health a priority, then congratulations. Keep up the good work.

If you are not sure, then look at your past health. Do you catch whatever is going around easily? When you get sick it takes weeks to get over it? You feel tired all the time? If you are answering yes to these then you are probably a good host and it's time to take a serious look at what to do about it. Seek out a health care practitioner who is willing to take the time to give you good advice on what you can do to help yourself.

Hope this helps, as always you can send any questions or comments to drmacruz@icloud.com

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Chiropractic: It has long been known and clinically proven that chiropractic adjustments stimulate your bodies to release endorphins which not only feels good but stimulates the immune response. Most of our long-time patients have seen this for themselves and will get extra adjustments when needed.

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Functional Medicine/ Laboratory testing: Our approach to functional medicine is using labs and a thorough physical exam to determine the state of your health, then recommend an approach to recovery without the use of drugs or surgery. Common conditions we see are type 2 diabetes, adrenal fatigue, thyroid problems (Hashimoto's), auto-immune disorders, gut health, hormonal problems. Additional services we are offering during these times:

Lesia offers phone consultations in the convenience of your own home on health coaching and options to keep you & your family healthy during this time.

Ask for details.

Dr. Cruz is also available to answer questions and give whatever advice necessary.

Private appointments are available to be seen outside of normal business hours. Our emphasis during this pandemic is on your health instead of the virus. Of all the news and supposed facts being passed around, one thing is certain, some people are dying from the virus while others did not even know they had it. Why is that?

The reason has to do with the health of the host (our body). If we are healthy, the virus does not have a good environment to live and the immune system quickly takes care of the problem. If we are unhealthy, the virus thrives, and the results are usually not good.

Our emphasis has always been on the overall health of our patients. Our goal is to provide the absolute best in natural health care solutions for your life.

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

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I Used to Dunk a Basketball

By Jim Huskins
McDowell County



Ancient wisdom contends that the world is composed of three types of people: those who make things happen, those who watch things happen and those who wonder what happened. The monument of the present circumstance insists that God’s people cannot afford the luxury of either of the latter two groups. My adolescent aspirations included being 6’10” and playing for UNC. I found it impossible to make either goal happen, but basketball still consumed an inordinate portion of my youth. I was not talented, but I was taller than most. I have long arms, and I worked hard. I played through junior high, high school, and two years for my small Bible college. I thought I was devoted to the game, but I discovered otherwise.

Junior year found me at a larger school. Their excellent program needed no walk-on mediocrity. I filled my time with academics, music, and social life, and I looked forward to our first home game. The old rush grabbed me at the tip. I jumped up and cheered when one of our forwards drove that play to score. Soon afterward, however, my attention wandered. By half time I was bored. I walked out and never went back. I loved playing, but I discovered that I am not a spectator.

Unfortunately, “spectator” is an apt description of many spiritual lives. Church attendance is mostly watching. I cannot remember a time when “successful” churches were not defined by the scope of their facilities, the size of their budgets, the talent of their performers, and the qualifications of their professional staff. For the past thirty years, assemblies of the “most successful” congregations have approached uncanny resemblance to the Roman Coliseum. I find no Biblical mandate for a grandstand or bleachers in God’s Kingdom. Rather, we have a sixty-six-book instruction manual for how to play the game.

Our world has changed, but our commission has not. Our Captain and Commander still requires us to make disciples of all nations, immersing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit and teach them to observe everything that He taught. That will never happen as long as “the team” is content to be entertained while warming the bench once or twice a week. The work of being and making disciples requires active commitment from every believer. “Let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.”

The notion that we can sit comfortably on the sidelines while our Leader requires us to take up execution stakes and imitate Him has always been ludicrous. As the world now flounders in a torrent of events which threatens to sweep away not only prosperity and decency, but also every significant liberty, God’s children must be found in the breach acting like Jesus. He ministered to those hungry, thirsty, estranged, naked, sick, and imprisoned. Most importantly, He built with His own perfection and suffering the bridge which reunites sin-cursed mankind with Holy God.

The cornerstone of His belief and practice—the secret of His success—is an uncompromising commitment to what is taught in the first five books of the Bible: The Torah. The only way we could have come to a spectator-oriented practice of Christianity is by ignoring those books. Jesus, Paul, and the other NT writers revered them.

Everything about the life and ministry of Jesus is, in the words of J.K. McKee, “Predicated upon the validity of Moses’ teaching.” I used to believe that “Jesus kept the law so that I do not have to.” It’s what I was taught. That false doctrine is based on a spurious notion that “the law” is some arbitrary set of standards God erected as a barrier between Himself and us. According to this view, He is now “satisfied” because “someone” finally ran that gauntlet successfully. But the truth is that the Torah is God’s instructions for living. Grace is not an excuse for ignoring those instructions. Torah tells us how to love God with our entirety and our neighbor as ourselves. Jesus could not have been clearer on this topic. He did not remove even the smallest pen stroke from Torah. Why would He? As the Living Word of God, He was the one who gave Torah to Moses at Mt. Sinai. He does not change and neither does His teachings. Every day He gazes intently into my eyes and yours and says, “If you love me, keep my commandments.”

Pandemic and economic collapse may be—as politicians claim—mere hiccoughs on the path toward unimaginable peace and prosperity, or they may be outliers of the apocalypse. Either way, our job is the same. Coach wants us to get

continued on page 13

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Habits of the Heart: A Study of the Spiritual Disciplines “Solitude”

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



In my previous articles, I have written about four “Inward” Habits of the Heart or spiritual disciplines that we must pursue in our faith journey to maturity in Christ. As we choose to spiritually discipline ourselves, the Holy Spirit then transforms us into the image of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Those first four inward habits: Meditation, Prayer, Fasting, and Study are the first four of what has been identified as twelve fundamental spiritual disciplines for the believer. Last month, I surveyed the first of four “Outward” Spiritual Disciplines that must be practiced for God to continue to mold us into the image of His Son. It is only as we mature in Christ will we trade in the worldly trappings of living for self and commit ourselves to live for Christ. As we live for Christ, we take on the character of Christ, allowing the Holy Spirit to produce the Fruit of the Spirit, and only then will we choose to live lives of Simplicity, Solitude, Submission, and Service.

The second outward discipline is “Solitude.” Perhaps you may be thinking that you know very well the meaning of solitude now that our whole world has been firmly entrenched in the current “Stay-at-home” state-wide orders. Indeed, this pandemic has forced seclusion, isolation, confinement, and aloneness. But is what we have collectively experienced through this ordeal anything akin to the biblical spiritual discipline of solitude? Even though there may be elements of this crisis that have drawn you into a deeper daily encounter with God, the answer to that question is, “Not likely!” Isolation, whether forced or unforced, is not the locale in which God is calling His children to live.

The Spiritual Discipline of Solitude is a spiritual habit of the heart that calls the child of God and moves us to be free to be alone both with ourselves and with God. Coercion or forced isolation is not the spiritual experience of solitude. Now you may well find solitude in the midst of forced isolation, but our Lord’s call is not disconnectedness from our fellow human beings, but rather a free, volitional choice to seek after an aloneness with our Savior and our friend, Jesus. That special experience of being alone with the Lord begins with our own ability to be comfortable with who we are in Christ. That, my friends, is usually a struggle for most people.

We often find Jesus intentionally removing Himself from the hustle and bustle of life and ministry in order to momentarily be alone with Himself and His Father. We read in Matthew 14:23, “*After He had sent the crowds away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone.*” He also gave guidance on what to do during times of solitude. In Matthew 6:5-13, a passage that led up to the Lord’s model prayer, Jesus urged His followers to speak (pray) to the Father in the sanctity and privacy of an “inner room.” There they would converse with the Heavenly Father, not with meaningless repetitions, but with fervent adoration, praise, and supplication.

Jesus was a busy man! He carried the weight of the world upon His heart and mind. He knew that He was humanity’s only hope for healing and restoration; their only hope for eternity and salvation; their only source of peace and strength. Imagine carrying that throughout your life! The emotional, spiritual, and intellectual weight of that was enormous—and our Lord knew that He could not carry it alone.

Isn’t that what we are tricked into thinking—I can carry this particular burden alone? I don’t need anyone else! I don’t want anyone else! But Jesus shows us the truth. He didn’t need to rid Himself of the burdens, the difficulties, the responsibilities, nor relationships. He didn’t need to lay them down, bury them, or numb Himself out to them. No! —He needed to get away momentarily to the “wilderness” of solitude—so that He could commune with God, the Father. That is what solitude is! It does not mean to be alone. It does not mean that we seek or choose to be alone or by ourselves—although oftentimes, in order to find a place of solitude, it is necessary to choose to be alone. It is the spiritual discipline of choosing to move to a place, a time, a moment when and where we choose to be alone with ourselves and with God.

Solitude must be chosen—consistently and guarded energetically. Steve Grezlek writes, “Solitude frightens us. In it, we are stripped of all the hubbub with which we fill our lives to muffle our true spiritual loneliness.” Perhaps one of the reasons that we have a hard time with silence is that it makes us feel so helpless. Richard Foster suggests that we have become so “accustomed to using our

words to manage and control others—that silence leaves us at a vulnerable place emotionally where we wonder who will take control.” Satan, of course, uses our confusion and vulnerability to attempt to convince us that if we are not in control, that we are unsafe and insecure, and that we will likely be harmed, forgotten, and/or abandoned—by God and by everyone else. And so, we fill our lives with noise and activities—where we attempt to stay connected and try to somehow manage how we can stay in control. That process works to keep us busy—but it doesn’t work to move us toward God. By the way, God’s plan, and design for us is for a deep, intimate relationship with Him. Our close relationships with others are just “icing on the cake.” Noise and busyness keep us estranged from God. They unknowingly function to break our fellowship with our creator and sustainer. And in our fervent pursuit of busyness, we seek to entertain ourselves and others, thinking that it will fill our empty soul’s tanks. But it doesn’t!

Solitude frees us to entertain true company with our Father in Heaven. Perhaps that is one of our greatest fears—that when we choose silence and solitude, then our truest and deepest motivations of our hearts will be revealed to God, the Father—and He will reject us! But that is a lie! He already knows your innermost secrets. He already understands the dark and evil heart of sinful man. And even though He sees all, His love has made a way to cover our sins—through the sacrificial death of Jesus. So when we come to Him, we come out of thankfulness and praise.

Let me suggest some simple, yet powerful steps to take to reach for and experience the spiritual discipline of solitude:

1. Commit yourself to move towards Jesus—Jesus said over and over, “*Come to me...!*” “*Come...and I will give you rest.*” (Matt. 11:28). “*If you wish to be complete...come and follow Me*” (Matt. 19:21). “*If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.*” (Mark 8:34) “*Let the children come to me...*” (Lk. 18:16). Over and over, Jesus said to draw near, approach, and come to Me.
2. Look for and step into what Foster calls “little solitudes”—look for little moments throughout your day, from morning until bedtime and take advantage of those little solitudes (e.g., a morning cup of coffee, waiting in line to pick the kids up from school, the silence when you first arrive home after a busy day at work, and etc.)
3. Find a quiet place (war room, prayer closet, and etc.)—plan and set up a unique place separated from the normal day’s activities and demands where you can “go” there to find a place of solitude and connection with the Lord.
4. Plan times of retreat—these are needed to reorient ourselves. They permit us to step outside of our daily schedules to seek a unique and specially dedicated period of time in solitude and study with the Lord.

Let me make one last bold statement—Until you become comfortable with solitude, you will never experience the depths of the person of Jesus! Along with the wonderful experience of meeting God face to face in that amazing encounter, there is also another benefit to solitude. I agree with Foster who suggests that one of the “fruit of solitude is increased sensitivity and compassion for others.” Having become accustomed to deep fellowship with our Lord, we now know freedom and are set free to be with other people. As Foster aptly states, “We have a new attentiveness to their needs, new responsiveness to their hurts.” We are now armed and ready to be living witnesses for Christ and powerful, compassionate, and loving instruments in His mighty hands.

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



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Pandemic Resources Available from NCBAM

By Dr. Sandy C. Gregory, Ministry Director

With older adults in the crosshairs of the Coronavirus, I've never been prouder to work alongside the mission-minded team members at North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry (NCBAM). We are all working vigorously to create, adapt, and improve services that provide "help for the journey" to North Carolina's seniors.

The following resources are available from NCBAM. Please use or share it with seniors in your communities.

The NCBAM Hope Line was established last June as a "warm-line" to connect



with seniors experiencing social isolation and loneliness. Since the pandemic began, we've added two lines and daily service to meet the demand. If you are 65+ and need someone to talk to, give us a call at 866.578.4673 (9:00 am-9:00 pm). The NCBAM Call Center is available Monday – Friday, 9:00 am-5:30 pm. We offer information and referral as well as connections to Baptists on Mission volunteers who may be available for meal delivery or other essential services.

Team members from NCBAM have created "Sixty Second Soul Stretch" videos that offer movement, mindfulness, and God's word to help calm the mind, relax the body, and stretch the soul! The videos feature movements from the evidence-based Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program, Matter of Balance, and Tai Chi for Fall Prevention. Look for the "Sixty Second Soul Stretch" playlist on NCBAM's YouTube channel.

Team members are also making calls to our "Servant Care" participants to check on them and encourage them. Call us at 877.506.2226 to enroll in Servant Care. It's open to Baptist ministers, (65+) their spouses, or widows.

NCBAM continues to work closely with state agencies such as the North Carolina Coalition on Aging, AARP-NC, and numerous Area Agencies on Aging—sharing timely information and resources. To help the state better understand the needs of senior adults during the pandemic, we've also conferred with North Carolina's Lieutenant Governor's office.

Please give NCBAM a call at 877.506.2226. We'd love to partner with you in your ministry or outreaches to senior adults.


Dr. Sandy Gregory is the Director of the North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry.



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First Row: Delaney Jenkins, Allie Miller, Lucas Jenkins, Ruth Hurtado, Jeremiah Greene, Cannaa Grindstaff
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Something To Think About -
“Living Through Disappointments”
Jeremiah 10:19
By Dennis Love
McDowell County



For the past three months, we all know what it is like to be disappointed and what it is like to have our plans changed. Have you noticed that before COVID-19 that life was passing us by at the speed of light? I mean the weeks were flying by at record speed. But now that we have been confined to our homes and not able to meet together as the body of Christ, the time has seemingly slowed down to a crawl. So, yes, we have had to deal with some disappointments over the past several months. But can you imagine experiencing personal tragedy and disappointments your entire life? I cannot imagine that, can you? Throughout his life, Jeremiah experienced one disappointment after another. His family turned on him. The entire nation of Judah turned against him. He watched the enemy come and take his people into captivity. And he watched the city where he lived and the temple where he worshipped be completely destroyed. If ever a man had a broken heart it was Jeremiah. Imagine serving God faithfully all of your life and then seeing it all fall apart! Jeremiah could have died a bitter and broken man, but he didn't. He was able to face his disappointments head-on and live for God through them.

Look at what he says in Jeremiah 10:19. *“Woe is me for my hurt! My wound is grievous; but I said, truly this is a grief, and I must bear it.”* Notice closely what he says. He said, “This is a grief and I must bear it.” He doesn't say this is more than I can bear. He doesn't ask when all of this is going to end. He says, this is a grief and I must bear it. This is one of the greatest declarations of faith that you will find anywhere in your Bible. How did Jeremiah learn to face and conquer the disappointments of his life? Well, the first way he discovered to face and conquer the disappointments of his life was that he learned to:

Expect Disappointments in Life Life is not always going to be sunny and clear. There's going to be days---even weeks---even months when life is going to be filled with disappointments. Some people have this idea that Christians who are faithful escape disappointments. That is not true! God does not promise that we will never have a broken heart. As long as we are on this earth, we will have some tears and we will have our share of disappointments. Some of the greatest people in this book had their share of disappointments. Don't you know that Abraham was disappointed in the behavior of his nephew Lot? Don't you know that Joseph was disappointed in the way his brothers treated him? Don't you know that the sins of Israel broke the heart of Moses? Jeremiah didn't try to fool himself into thinking that everything was fine. He said, *“Woe is me for my hurt.”* He admitted that he was hurting. He confessed that he had been wounded by those who should have brought him great joy. So, expect disappointments in life. It's one of the hard facts of life and we are living it out right now. Here is something else Jeremiah teaches us. He teaches us that:

Our Disappointments Are In The Hands of God Now I'm sure that there were times that Jeremiah thought the Lord had forsaken him. Why wasn't God answering his prayers? Why wasn't the Word of God that he was preaching bearing fruit and changing his nation? Was it really worth staying there and preaching to a bunch of hard-hearted people? Listen to Jeremiah's declaration of faith once again in v19. *“Truly this is a grief and I must bear it.”* Did you hear what he said? He doesn't blame God for not answering his prayers as he expected Him to. He doesn't try to change God's mind and plead with God not to send judgment upon His own people. He simply accepted the burden of his grief and trusted God to work it out for His good and perfect will. We must do the same! We have got to trust God to the point that we know that He is going to work out this virus to accomplish His good and perfect will. We need to learn what Jeremiah learned. We need to learn that our disappointments are in the hands of God. There is a basic law in this universe that says: “Fight the will of God and it will break you; accept the will of God and it will make you.” Question is, which will we do? Then there is a third truth that we learn from Jeremiah and it is this.

Yield to God's Will and Let Him Mature You and Use You Do you see what Jeremiah is doing here in this verse? He's simply yielding his will to God's will. He is not trying to get his own way. He said this is a grief and I must bear it. In other words, this is something I'm going to yield to God and let Him work out His perfect plan for me and His people. Now, what was the result of Jeremiah doing this? The nation of Judah was taken into captivity by the Babylonians. Jeremiah was kidnapped and was taken into Egypt and tradition says that this man Jeremiah was stoned to death for preaching the truth. The story here doesn't have a happy ending, but God's will is carried out, and as long as the will of God is being carried out, there will be a happy ending. What I'm saying to you is that Jeremiah's life was a life of disappointments, but he lived through them. Now you read this, and your heart is probably hurting right now for Jeremiah. His entire life was one disappointment after another. But before we get teary-eyed for Jeremiah, remember this folks. Jeremiah was a lot like Jesus. When God made Jeremiah, He was making a man that would mirror Jesus Himself. Do you remember when Jesus walked among us that He asked His disciples who do men say that I am? Do you recall what they said? They said, “Well, some say you are Jeremiah.” They compared Jeremiah to Jesus. The disappointments of his life are what carved Jeremiah into the spitting image of Jesus Himself. Now is that not what disappointments are all about? Isn't God taking our disappointments to make us more into the image of His dear Son, and isn't He taking COVID-19 to work out all things for His own good? Now I know that we look at all of this as a great disappointment in our lives. But understand this truth folks. Our disappointments in life are God's opportunities to mature us and to also promote the Good News of the Gospel. So, for this brief time of grief, let's bear it like Jeremiah bore his grief---not complain about it. Let us allow God to mature us through all of this and let's

allow God to use each of us in and through all of this to share Jesus with others around us. To me, that's really something to think about!

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



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Melodious Weapon?

By Ken and Jan Merop
Avery County



A long-ago memory surfaced after hearing a praise song that declares that the believer’s weapon is a melody,
Wow! How can that be?
The memory then came back in living color. I was participating in my first Christian Writer’s Conference where I actually allowed myself to say, “I am a writer,” believe it and accept it. Though others believed it about me, I needed to hear God’s call on my heart in a fresh and confirming way.
But it also gave me this encouraging memory.
A fellow writer stood up and spoke of a time when he and his wife had buried a child. The grief was overwhelming. We all felt his pain as we silently wiped the tears from our eyes.
They had tried counseling, prayer, speaking with pastors, friends, family, each bringing a measure of healing. However, at church one Sunday, his wife felt the Lord tugging at her heartstrings.
Her spirit heard the Lord say to let go and really worship. The grief was still there. The pain is oppressive. But God’s response to her pleas was, “Worship Me.”
And, so she did.
She melted into a puddle of agonizing tears and used them to bathe her sorrows with the worship of the only One who could heal her heart and give her purpose, deliverance, and peace.
At the time, the lyrics of this praise song hadn’t even been written. However, the truth of the message was being written in the heart of this young woman and her husband.

Their weapon against their pain was a melody of praise.
The Word of God tells us in Psalm 22: 3, NKJV “You are holy, enthroned in the praises of Israel.”
All believers belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, when we praise God, he is present in our praises where we find healing, deliverance, and fullness of joy.
So, in the midst of what we all we have been through and continue to face with COVID-19, let’s seek the only One who can soothe our troubled souls, heal and deliver us.
We are warriors in this war against an invisible, invasive enemy.
“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble,” says Psalm 46:1.
So, let’s lift a song of praise as we seek His divine wisdom and His presence for our President and all those warriors on the front lines.
What may seem a simple melody to some, when coupled with the truth of God’s Word, is a mighty weapon.
So, sing! Selah

*Consider the Lilies
Look! Jesus says to us.
Look at the lilies and see their beauty.
They don’t worry about too much or too little rain.
They receive what is sent and are dressed so artfully.
Be like them.
“If God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers...he will certainly, care for you.”
Matthew 6:30, NLT*



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

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Cars and a Little Boy’s Words

By Marlene Houk
Burke County

“Lightning McQueen!” My friend’s four-year-old exclaimed. His body stilled as he stared at a book of puzzles from his favorite movie, Cars. He is quickly searching his 1,600-word vocabulary, scanning for words to express his delight at his present. The plastic covering flew off, and he turned the pages, as he quietly stated his favorite page, Jackson Storm.

And I marveled at his ability to use words that revealed his emotions, his knowledge, and his experiences.

Even before birth, babies have an in-born ability to learn and use language. “More than our upright posture, the opposing thumb, and any other human ability, our language capacity mirrors our Creator.” Says John W. Oller, Jr., professor of Communicative Disorders at the University of Louisiana and widely acclaimed researcher and change agent for education for more than five decades. In fact, as Dr. Oller states in another article on the ww.AnswersInGenesis.com website, “We do not find languages lying around, like flowers in the desert or gems at the bottom of the ocean. Miracles aside, to acquire a language, every human must begin life with the human language capacity already within them, and then they must be exposed to the conventional uses of their language.”

Jesus Christ, who spoke into existence our universe, is called the Word in John chapter 1. How incredibly breath-taking that He would grant us the privilege of reflecting His glory by allowing us to use words. In addition to this marvelous capacity, the Word Himself lives within us. Words can kindle a great fire of hatred, create a wall of refuge and comfort, or become iconic calls to honor and courage. But, transcending this power, our words can point others to Christ and give them eternal hope in a time of crisis.

An example of this power of words to share the Gospel grew into a rich harvest recently through the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. They report that “More than 191,000 people have visited these sites [special web pages created to address fears related to the Coronavirus], with over 11,000 people indicating decisions for Jesus Christ and 2,200-plus requesting follow-up.” And eternity is changed because we are created with an ability to show others the gift of eternal life and the hope that is born from their new relationship with Jesus.

Indeed, as an article on PsychCentral states, “According to Andrew Newberg, M.D. and Mark Robert Waldman, words can literally change your brain.” They explain, “Positive words, such as “peace” and “love,” can alter the expression of genes, strengthening areas in our frontal lobes and promoting the brain’s cognitive functioning. They propel the motivational centers of the brain into action, according to the authors, and build resiliency.”

The Lord has given us an amazing ability to reflect Him through our use of words. He has created perhaps the most stunning system in the universe through the 6,912 recorded languages. Words stir us. Words change our world. Words give us pleasure. But the greatest use of our words is for Jesus Christ.

“She gave me a puzzle-book and a real book, and Playdough.” My little friend said to my husband over the phone, a person he had never met. But the power of his words brought a smile to my husband, to me, to his Grammie, his aunt, and to all who heard him. Thank you, Jesus, that you are the Word, and that I can reflect you when I speak. “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.” (Psalm 19:14)

Note: To witness more of the power of words, watch “When the World Is Shaken” on billygraham.tv

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



Our Confidence In Crisis (Psalm 78:7)

By Shawn Thomas
Angleton, Texas



In Betty Rogers’ biography of her late husband Will, she tells about the time when she and Will were visiting Europe, and air travel was still relatively new. She wrote, “Will insisted on flying the (English) Channel to Amsterdam. It was to be my first flight, and I was in a real panic. ... With the ground falling away under me, I reached over to hold on to Will. He laughed and said, ‘Woman, don’t hold on to me. I couldn’t be of any help to you!’”

Betty Rogers thought of her husband as a “security blanket” — and he WAS for her in many ways — but Will was right; if that plane were going to crash, he wouldn’t be of any help to her. Her ultimate confidence could not be placed in him.

And that’s a picture of what Psalm 78:7 teaches. God had commanded His people in verse 5 that they were to teach their children, and then verse 7 relates just what the lesson was that they were to teach them: “that they should put their confidence in God.”

This lesson is foundational because it is how we are saved in the first place: by putting our confidence in God, trusting that what Jesus did for us when He died on the cross, will save us. Placing our confidence in our own good works, or in men’s religious systems, will fail us. Our trust must be in HIM, and in what HE did on the cross, alone.

This is also very applicable for us in our current COVID-19 situation, isn’t it? If we are wise, whenever we come into times of difficulty, we will ask what God wants us to learn from these experiences. Psalm 78 instructs us that perhaps the most important lesson God has for us during this time is to make sure that our confidence in these days is in HIM.

We need that reminder, because it is so easy in times like this — perhaps without even thinking about it — to put our trust in things other than God. We might hear people say things like:

— “Well I trust our President; I know that Trump is going to get us through.” Their trust is in a man.

— Or: “I know Uncle Sam won’t let us fail; they’ll send us enough money to help us.” Their trust is in the government.

— Someone else may think: “I’m a ‘self-made man;’ I’ve got a big savings account; I am going to be just fine.” Their trust is in their money.

— Or it might be: “I don’t have anything to worry about; I’ve always been healthy” — so their confidence is in their health and physical condition.

— Or: “I know we’ve got the best medical system in the world here in the Houston area” — and their trust is in medicine.

— Or someone thinks: “If I don’t have anything else, I know I have my family; they will always come through for me.” So, their trust is in their loved ones.

But one of the repeated emphases God gives us in scripture is that our ultimate trust is not to be placed in anyone or anything besides HIM.

Psalm 20:7 says: “Some boast in chariots and some in horses, but we will boast in the name of the LORD our God.” God wants our trust to be in HIM. Trust GOD to be the One who delivers you in the day of trouble; not anyone or anything else.

It’s just like Will Rogers’ wife Betty on that airplane: her ultimate trust could not be in him if things went wrong. That confidence would fail her! It’s the same with us in this COVID-19 episode. Don’t put your hope in the wrong sources for help in this time; make certain that your trust is in God alone.

Now, that does not mean that God won’t USE some of these other entities:

- God may USE our President.
- God may USE the government.
- God may USE doctors and medicines.
- God may USE your family, and bankers or politicians, or whomever. God raises up people all the time that He employs for His own good purposes.

But the thing is, our ultimate trust is not to be placed in any of these instruments that God may use but in God Himself. If we begin to put our trust in other things, God will often allow them to fail, to demonstrate to us that our ultimate confidence is not to be found in them. Our ultimate trust is to be in God. Himself. Alone.

Psalm 78 reminds us of this fundamental lesson God wants us and our loved ones to learn during this time: “That they should put their confidence in God.”

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

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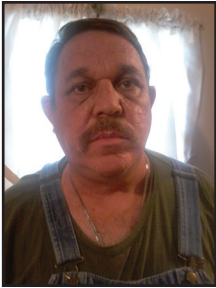
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Tested by Fire

By Stanley Fisher
Mitchell County

Zechariah 13:9 “And I will bring a third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my GOD.”



I think of myself as a phoenix that's risen out of a fire through the grace of GOD. Epilepsy is my testimony. And as Mark 9:22 says: *“And oftentimes it has cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him”* gives an idea to someone who's not experienced it firsthand as good of an idea of the experience from one point of view as anyone can have.

There are multiple things that the LORD has used (all of the experiences in my life, "of which can't be counted") to shape, mold, and sanctify me.

The place and state that I would be in today will never be known here in this earthly life.

The chapters in life are all a lesson to be learned, to make or break a heart for GOD "the potter". He uses these to make us into the vessels that HE wants to use to serve HIM with a pure heart, and a toughness to endure service to minister with and make Satan to be seen as the fool that he is.

To thoroughly sanctify/purify requires a process of separating the desirable from the undesirable parts of us. That also is used to temper us, as steel, to be used in tools to withstand wear and tear from friction in society that was created by sin. I am very thankful to GOD for allowing what He has allowed in my life. I know that for the double dose of trouble I've experienced; there's a double dose of blessing in store for me.

If you are going, or ever do go through something seen as horrific by man it can be something in GOD's hands to be turned from ashes into beauty. There are many examples of that all around us.

Stanley Fisher is a member of the Western Carolina Church for 22 years and a member of the Green Valley and Spruce Pine Community.

I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth. 3 John 1:4



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Last Words

By Tracy Jessup



“Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him, and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them.’ When he had said this, he died.” --- Acts 7:58-60

“I’m so bored with it all.” – Winston Churchill, British Prime Minister
“I finally get to see Marilyn [Monroe] again.” - Joe Dimaggio, Baseball Player
“Love one another.” – George Harrison, Guitarist, and Ex-Beatle
“I want nothing but death.” – Jane Austin, Celebrated Novelist
“I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country.” – Nathan Hale, Revolutionary War Spy

What do the above quotes have in common? According to Business Insider, these are some of the most memorable last words in history. Aine Cain writes, “There's a reason there are so many books listing memorable deathbed sayings throughout history out there. Perhaps we'd just rather believe well-known figures tend to die saying something clever and profound...But, for that reason, final words can be quite tricky. As with any quotes on the internet - and historical quotes, in general - it's hard to sort out what's true and what's phony or exaggerated” (“13 of the most famous last words in history,” 10/31/19).

Recognized as in the Church as the first martyr, there is nothing phony or exaggerated in Stephen’s last words. Filled with the Holy Spirit, he never stops bearing witness to Jesus, up to his dying breath. Perhaps this is why three times his words so beautifully parallel the words of Christ. First, “he gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God,” which echoes the words of Jesus on trial before the chief priests and scribes (cf. Luke 22:69). Secondly, he prays, *“Lord Jesus, receive my spirit,”* words reminiscent of Jesus on the cross (cf. Luke 23:46). Finally, Stephen prays, *“Lord, do not hold this sin against them.”* Stephen’s last words cause us to remember the words of Jesus, who from the cross, prayed, *“Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing”* (Luke 23:34).

On the heels of the thrill and wonder of resurrection, it is good for us to be reminded that the stakes of following Jesus are high. Yes, Christ is victorious over death, hell, and the grave, but his message will continue to be misunderstood and rejected. Those who stick around and continue to follow Jesus even after the resurrection will still at times face suffering. Nevertheless, the presence of Christ and the hope of glory give occasion in life and in death for all Christians to bear witness to the beauty of our Lord and Savior.

Prayer: Lord, I thank you that “in death, and in life I'm confident and covered by the power of your great love” (from “One Thing Remains,” Bethel Music Publishing).

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

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Trifecta – Too Young, Too Smart, Too Successful to be an Alcoholic

By Lawrence Traylor
Jacksonville Beach, Florida



It is like a Jeopardy game show question: “What are the three reasons most often given as to why Christians with obvious drinking problems cannot get sober?”

My personal and professional experience in the rehab, recovery, and treatment world suggests it is either one, a combination of all three of these reasons; too young, too smart, or too successful, as to why Christians believe they cannot and do not drink alcoholically. They believe with unbridled conviction that they cannot possibly be alcoholics.

In my case, it was all three reasons, “the trifecta” as I like to refer to it, as to why I could not possibly be an alcoholic.

I was 38 years old, a Sociology major and graduate of the American University, a proud homeowner living outside of Boston, and a successful, small business owner, who as a Christian attended church each Sunday. How could I possibly be an alcoholic? Besides, many friends and especially relatives had spilled more alcohol than I ever drank.

The craving for me started on most weekdays between 2:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. It was at this time each day that I would start romancing the idea of having a few cold, “Tall Boys” on the drive home. Winter or summer, hot or cold, it made no difference. Stopping each late afternoon at the local convenience store or “packy” as we say in Boston and purchasing what I considered my just reward for completing yet another day at work became a ritual.

I had become like Norm on Cheers. How else was I supposed to make my way home through the late afternoon traffic? Besides, I worked hard each day and deserved a few beers on my way home, didn’t I?

I used to say, ‘I only had a problem when there was nothing around to drink.’ I had always believed alcoholics were dirty, lived outdoors, and people who drank cheap wine from screw-top bottles.

Arriving at home each day before taking my winter or suit jacket off, I would routinely reach into the fridge for another of my trusted friends, my Buds.

Oftentimes I would proceed to have several additional ice-cold beers in arm’s reach while taking a hot bath or sitting in our outdoor, bubbling jacuzzi.

Just one or two more before supper and I’d have captured once again that elusive beer buzz, I so craved at the end of each day.

I thought I could stop drinking at any time if it became necessary. The simple truth was I was a Christian living a lie and had a secret I dare not share with anyone. I knew deep down inside I was not able to stop or even control my drinking. I began to worry that it was just a matter of time before I too hit what I had heard referred to as an alcoholic’s “bottom” and lost everything. I discovered later in my treatment-related career there are two “bottoms” an alcoholic will experience. These are what are referred to as high bottoms and low bottoms.

Examples of an alcohol addict’s low bottom oftentimes include DUI’s, divorce, bankruptcy, job loss, hospitalization, house arrest, or jail.

But again, how could I be an alcoholic? I was only 38 years old, a college graduate, a Christian, successful, and owner of a sailboat and a BMW.

It was not until a Sunday afternoon after church in the winter of 1992 my wife gave me a life-changing ultimatum and choice between continuing to drink or losing my marriage and children. I needed help from God. I finally surrendered and sought relief. I had become desperate and sick and tired of being sick and tired. It was in taking a fellow Christian and church member’s advice and attending twelve-step meetings that allowed me to come to grips with the fact that I had become powerless over my daily alcohol consumption with the loss of my life, health, and family truly being at risk.

I proceeded to attend ninety 12-Step meetings in ninety days. In hindsight, these meetings saved my life, physically, mentally, and spiritually. I developed a new, closer relationship with God and my church family. For the very first time in my life, I felt like I truly belonged.

The gratitude I have today stems from the fact that I did not have to lose everything as so many others had before I succumbed, surrendered, and acknowledged my alcoholic disease.

Almost daily I hear my alcoholic clients oftentimes in denial say the following: “I’m too young,” as “I’m only () fill in the blank, years old. How can I possibly be an alcoholic, I’m too young.” “Yes, my mother and father drink too much and are alcoholics but they are in their mid-seventies.” “Not me, I’m much too young to be an alcoholic.” The undeniable truth I have learned over the years is that alcoholism affects men and women Christians of all ages.

“I’m too smart”, as “I have an MBA from a good school and have received excellent grades throughout my entire academic career. I believe the only high school and college dropouts, can be alcoholics.” They tell me, “not me, I’m much too smart and intelligent to be an alcoholic.” “Besides, I have a great work history and a promising career.”

Experience has taught me the undeniable truth that intelligence is no more a factor as to who may or may not be an alcoholic than the day of the week, they were born on is.

“I’m too successful,” as “I don’t live outdoors, I didn’t spend last night under a bridge. I have an excellent paying job, a home in a nice neighborhood, and a BMW in my garage. No. I’m definitely too well off financially and too successful to be an alcoholic.” Again, my years of experience suggest the undeniable truth that money and an individual’s wealth and success play no role as to who may or may not be an alcoholic.

Alcoholism has been described not only as a disease but as an “allergy” as well. Can you imagine someone being allergic to nuts or certain seafood thinking that just this once it will be OK to eat them knowing for certain how violently ill, they will become upon consumption? This is the insidious, insane behavior of the af-

flicted mind of an alcoholic.

Today, with 28 years of sobriety I have a personal and professional life second to none and continue to attend many 12-Step meetings throughout the week. I cannot help but smile on the inside when I hear yet another client tells me they believe they are too young, too smart or too successful to be an alcoholic.

Lawrence (Laurie) Traynor lives in Jacksonville Beach, Florida — a member of the recovery community and volunteers his time free of charge in helping addicts and alcoholics, their loved ones and their families locate drug and alcohol assistance resources, (904) 553-1600





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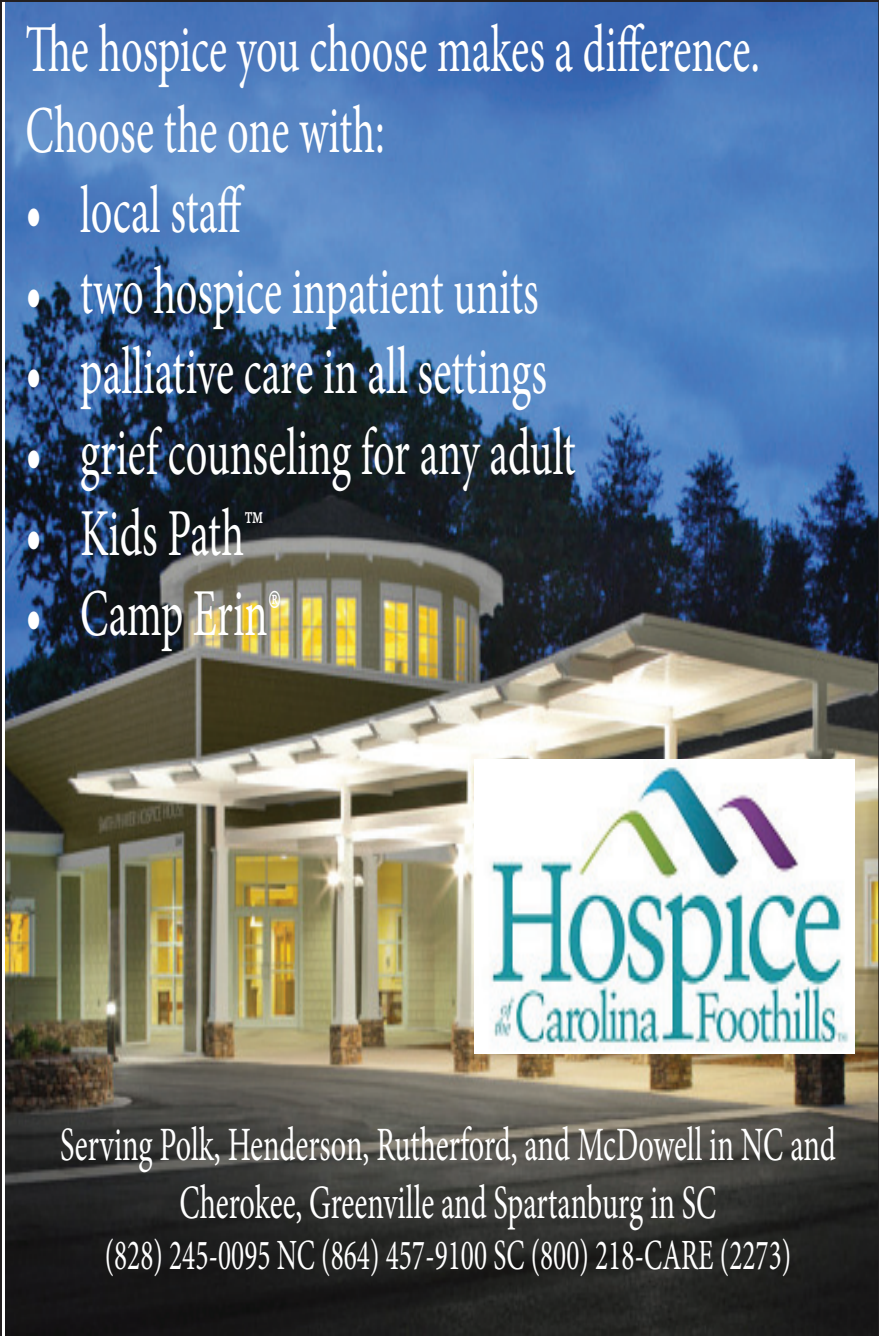
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YOUR GOVERNMENT PAGES

NC Senate District 47



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

On May 16th, US District Judge James C. Dever III granted an emergency temporary restraining order against Gov. Roy Cooper's executive orders requiring all worship services involving more than 10 people to be held "outdoors unless impossible." In their complaint, the plaintiffs stated that the Governor's requirement violated their Free Exercise rights and right to assemble under the First and Fourteenth Amendments, and the Establishment Clause under the First and Fourteenth Amendments, in applying unequal treatment between religious entities and individuals and non-religious entities and individuals. For instance, businesses were allowed to operate at 50 percent capacity and funeral services could have up to 50 people in attendance. Furthermore, Gov. Cooper's orders authorized criminal prosecution as a Class 2 misdemeanor for violating his order. Judge Dever ruled that there is no pandemic exception to the US Constitution or the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment.

In his order, Judge Dever asked, "who decides whether it is 'impossible' to worship outside?" Gov. Cooper's counsel responded that a sheriff or local law enforcement officer would make that decision. So, if a sheriff or local law enforcement officer is at odds with the decision of a religious person or entity to hold a service with more than 10 people inside because it's "impossible" to hold the service outside, then the religious person or entity could be prosecuted for a Class 2 misdemeanor.

I think it's glaringly obvious that this is an outrageous and wrong overreach of power aimed exclusively at churchgoers. That is why I am a primary sponsor, along with Senators Warren Daniel and Danny Britt of Senate Bill 781 – Freedom of Speech/Press/Exercise of Religion. The North Carolina Constitution states in Section 13 of Article 1 that all persons have a natural and inalienable right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their own consciences, and no human authority shall, in any case whatever, control or interfere with the rights of conscience. On this foundation, our bill limits provisions of an executive order or local ordinance from prohibiting or restricting the public press, protest, or religious institutions during a state of emergency.

I am thankful for Judge Dever's temporary restraining order. It highlights that we must remain vigilant of all attempts to erode and restrict our religious freedoms, regardless of where or from whom they originate.

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

NC House District 86



Rep. Hugh Blackwell
919-733-5805
Hugh.Blackwell@ncleg.net

The North Carolina State Auditor recently published the results of a new audit that the state legislature required as a result of serious delays and cash shortages in the state's department charged with road maintenance and construction. This report by the state auditor reported major overspending by DOT (the N.C. Department of Transportation) consisting of a \$742 million excess in spending. The report finds that the department planned to spend around \$5.94 billion in the fiscal year 2019 but surpassed that amount by 12.5%. The State Auditor found three reasons for the department's overspending: (1) the spending plan was not based on actual cost estimates for the specific projects and operations scheduled for the fiscal year, (2) the Chief Engineer's office did not monitor highway division compliance with the spending plan, and (3) the Chief Engineer's office did not enforce highway division compliance with the spending plan. To account for the cited errors, the audit recommends, as you would expect, basing the spending plan on specific projects and operations for the scheduled fiscal year and that the Chief Engineer's Office should monitor each highway division's spending regularly.

To make matters worse, funds available normally to DOT have been negatively impacted by COVID-19. Our state DOT operations are primarily funded through gas taxes and motor vehicle sales taxes, all of which are substantially reduced by less mileage being run up by citizens and businesses and by a reduction in vehicle sales, all related to the shutdown of the state's economy. Thus, out of both its mismanagement and the economic shutdown, DOT has decreased expenditures by delaying or suspending road and bridge projects, suspending, or decreasing certain programs and services, and implementing a hiring freeze on almost all jobs.

DOT announced in late April that all but fifty major road projects scheduled to start in the next twelve months have been delayed. The only projects still proceeding as planned are those funded by state bonds and federal grants rather than by state gas tax or motor vehicle sales. DOT has published a list of projects still scheduled to be awarded in the next year, as well as projects that have schedule changes. Projects for which bids have already been awarded are not yet affected. DOT also predicts a further \$300 million budget shortfall for the fiscal year that ends June 30. With all of these events affecting DOT, I feel sure you can count on substantially increased oversight of DOT by the legislature until their mismanagement is appropriately resolved and as the consequences of the shutdown of the state's economy unfold. Indeed, the State Auditor also recommended that the legislature require oversight for taxes going to DOT to the same enhanced level as it does with other taxes going to all other state agencies. I think you can expect we in the legislature will follow through on that.

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YOUR GOVERNMENT PAGES

NC House District 118

PANDEMIC RELIEF LEGISLATION UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY NORTH CAROLINA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The Short Session reconvened on April 28 to pass important legislation to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. House Bill 1043-Pandemic Response Act and Senate Bill 704-COVID-19 Recovery Act were passed on May 2 with the House voting 119-0 and the Senate voting 46-0. It was signed into law on May 4 by the Governor. These two response packages approved over 1.5 billion in relief funding and recovery due to the pandemic. It covers a wide range of entities to include:

Small Business

- \$125 million for small business loans

K-12 Education

- \$75 million for school nutrition
- \$70 million for summer learning programs
- \$11 million to improve K-12 internet connectivity
- \$30 million to K-12 schools for computers and other electronic devices
- \$10 million for mental health and other student health services
- \$5 million for computers and other devices for school personnel
- \$4.5 million for cybersecurity at schools
- \$3 million for non-digital instruction for students with limited internet access
- \$1 million to improve internet access by installing WiFi routers in school buses

Higher Education

- \$25 million for community colleges
- \$44 million for UNC System schools
- \$20 million for private colleges

COVID-19 Supplies and Support

- \$50 million to enhance Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- \$25 million to expand testing and contact tracing
- \$25 million for financial support for assisted living facilities
- \$20 million for enhanced public health capacity
- \$20 million for behavioral health

Rural Broadband

- \$9 million to help expand rural broadband

Social Services

- \$19 million for foster and childcare
- \$6 million for food banks
- \$5 million for community health centers
- \$5 million for free and charitable clinics
- \$1.5 million for prescriptions for uninsured

COVID-19 Research

- \$29 million to UNC School of Public Health/NC Collaboratory
- \$20 million to Wake Forest University to expand the antibody study
- \$15 million to Duke University Human Vaccine Institute
- \$15 million to ECU Brody School of Medicine
- \$6 million to Campbell University School of Osteopathic Medicine

Hospitals

- \$65 million to rural hospitals
- \$15 million for North Carolina teaching hospitals
- \$15 million for a general hospital relief fund

State and Local Government

- \$300 million for local government coronavirus relief reserve
- \$50 million for rural and underserved communities
- \$100 million for counties
- \$85 million for state government operations
- \$300 million for transportation operations
- \$5 million for tourism industry support

DIVISION OF MOTOR VEHICLES –The COVID legislation provides a 5-month extension on any credential that expires on or after March 1 and before August 1. Some examples would include extension for drivers licenses, permits, and identification cards; vehicle registrations; payment of vehicle property taxes; handicapped parking placards; mechanic licenses; motor vehicle dealer, manufacturer licenses, and others. The bill also allows DMV to waive any penalties for late registration renewal. Customers who already paid a \$15 late fee for renewal in March or April will be reimbursed.

DIVISION OF EMPLOYMENT SECURITY – Our office has received the most calls regarding unemployment. This has been a trying time for everyone, but we are seeing a little break in the time it is taking to get payment issues resolved for our constituents. The bottom line is DES was not equipped to handle the number of claims generated by the pandemic, they lacked having enough staff to minimally operate this process, and they encountered tremendous computer systems problems. To date, DES is approaching 1 million jobless claims and \$1 billion paid out in state and federal unemployment benefits. DES is handling the state claims as well as the federal stimulus claims and everything in between.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 135 – Stay-at-Home order issued by the Governor will be in place until May 8. Currently, the COVID 19 cases for District 118 are Madison 1, Haywood 13, and Yancey 1. We are very fortunate in that these numbers are remarkably low.

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Thank you to all those who serve or have served!



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Paycheck or Portfolio? What do you want in Retirement?

By Steve Gaito
McDowell County



I recently attended an online retirement summit where a presenter asked us a question: "Do your retired clients want a portfolio or a paycheck in retirement?"

Since I have been on the investment side of the business for most of my career and have helped many clients build a solid retirement plan with a 401(k) or 403(b) plan, my knee jerk reaction was a portfolio.

When I was comparing The State Retirement Plan and Optional Retirement Plan available to NC State professors, the math showed that the Optional Retirement Plan was the better choice. For most of the faculty, this was the best choice at the time.

After multiple significant downturns in the market since 2000 and the increasingly large government debt, I now see the paycheck vs. portfolio debate from a new perspective. Over the last 10 years, I have worked with retirees under both systems and discovered that those on the State Retirement Plan seem to be more satisfied than those on the Optional Retirement Plan.

I had a hard time understanding why someone that was getting a check every month from the state and had \$300,000 in a 403(b) plan was happier than the one that had \$1,500,000 in their optional retirement account.

This all made sense to me when I heard the story of the two golfers playing a round when the news came in about the massive drop in the stock market. The golfer that had the monthly guaranteed income wasn't affected because his paycheck would be in the bank at the beginning of the month. The other golfer with a 401(k) or IRA plan was a wreck and could not concentrate on golf anymore.

Guaranteed income creates a level of satisfaction and security that is hard for portfolios to match.

Does this mean that future retirees with 401(k) plans are doomed to be unhappy in retirement?

Absolutely not.

It means they need to create lifetime guaranteed income like a pension—designed for their specific needs and circumstances.

It makes sense psychologically because for most of their working careers they have received a regular paycheck. They know how to manage a specific amount of recurring income.

But most retirees don't have the experience or knowledge to manage a portfolio or the risks that extend well beyond the obvious market risk. Here are just some of the factors that will affect your retirement plan:

- Longevity: How long will you need retirement income?
- Long Term Care: How much of your retirement income will need to be allocated for health care?
- Inflation and Deflation: Your retirement dollars won't have the same buying power as they do today, and your assets could lose value.
- Government Regulations: Changes in policies and the economic impact of global events like the recent pandemic can affect your retirement strategy.
- Retirement Taxation: Without careful planning, you could lose more of your retirement than necessary because of complicated taxation laws.

These and other factors can have a significant impact on your retirement, but they can be managed with proper planning.

If you have between \$300,000 to \$3,000,000 set aside for your retirement, you need to address each of these in your retirement plan. Failing to address these risks means you don't have a retirement plan—you have an investment account. If you have less than \$300,000, you'll still need a plan for minimizing risk, but you will have fewer options.

As A CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ practitioner, I help people address these needs and create retirement income plans that allow you to enjoy your retirement and be happy.

I am available in person in my office, over the phone, and online via Zoom to help you create the retirement you deserve.

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



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Burke County Public Schools

BCPS to give Students devices to take home - Grateful for Chromebook donation from Lenovo

By Cheryl Shuffler
Burke County

Burke County Public Schools received a gift of 1,400 Chromebooks from Lenovo. The donation will help the district provide a technology device for every student to use at school and at home for the upcoming school year. Kindergarten through second graders will receive iPads, fifth graders will receive Macbooks, and third and fourth graders and sixth through 12th graders will receive Chromebooks. The district will deploy the devices by Aug. 1.

In updating the Burke County Board of Education, Dr. Melanie Honeycutt, chief information officer, said the device rollout will include an orientation for students and parents and a how-to video on setting up the device at home.

For families with no internet service at home, students will be able to download work where WiFi is available, complete their work offline, and then return to a WiFi zone to upload and submit work. To assist with WiFi, the district has access to 86 hotspots available for checkout. The district also received seven AT&T WiFi Rangers that will be installed on school buses and parked in various locations around the county. Wireless access is also available in the parking lot of school campuses as well as the parking lots of public libraries and other public locations. Honeycutt said the district has fully recovered from the ransomware attack in early March. “Our network is stable and secure,” Honeycutt said. “We have measures in place to prevent this from happening again, including a multifaceted network with virtual local area networks and cloud-based support programs. We have tightened our content filter authentication so that we can log suspicious and malicious internet traffic to specific users in our network.”

Burke County Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Larry Putnam said, “Our technology department has worked tirelessly to help us recover from the ransomware attack, which happened to hit us two days before Gov. Cooper declared we were in a state of emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We are pleased to say we have recovered completely from the attack. We are also very excited to now be a one-to-one district and that every student will not only have a device to use at school but also to take home with them. A big thank you to Lenovo for their donation of 1,400 Chromebooks to help us reach this technological milestone.” Libby Richards with Lenovo said, “As a global company with a large local presence, Lenovo is committed to doing all that we can to help those in need around the globe and here in North Carolina, home to our North American headquarters. We are leveraging our strengths as a technology company to give back to schools, hospitals, and community partners around the world. To date, we’ve given \$12.17 million globally, \$1.55 million of which has been donated in North Carolina. This includes more than \$1 million to local North Carolina schools, providing laptops for students where needed and assisting school districts as they have transitioned to distance learning.”

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



Proverbs 11:28

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Praise the Lord

By George Patton, Jr.
Burke County

Praise the Lord for all His greatness. What the Lord is doing here in Liberia is something like I would never have imagined. We just got back from the jungle once again. This was our second trip there. The first trip I really felt like the people were examining us and we were examining them. This time we really built some amazing bonds. When we arrived after traveling on the home-made rail car for 3 hours, we still had to walk back in the jungle another hour across one log bridge, 2 bamboo bridges, and in one place we crossed on rocks. When we got to the village, they gave us the room we had used previously. After settling in, I went to look around the village and found them roasting some fish and something that I was not sure of. I asked them what it was, and they told me that it was a python that they would be making some roasted python soup. I knew then that I was truly back in the jungle. We rested well that night as we listened to the jungle creatures. The next morning, we began our seminar, teaching the basic truths of the Bible. Our class went from 9 am to 1 pm the first day. They asked me if there was any way, we could go until 2 pm or 3 pm the next day. They were so eager to hear the truths of the Bible. I could not believe how hungry they were. Some of these pastors and leaders walked for 2 hours to get there and 2 hours back. There was one evening they even had to walk home in the rain. We covered many topics. Who Jesus is, the truths about baptism, leadership, church



organization, evangelism, discipleship, prayer, and Bible study. We touched on Homiletics and Budgeting. They took note after note and then the last hour they spent asking questions. It was so glorious the way the Lord was moving. At night we had a church service. This went on for 4 days. By the time it was done 49 people wanted to be baptized. Praise the precious Name of Jesus. I asked them “Where do you do your baptizing?” They took me to the same area that they told me that caught the pythons, boas, and fish. I looked at the water and I thought to myself, “Lord Jesus I am really going to need your assistance with this one.” They decided that we would have the baptism the next day. The men of the village spent the evening cleaning the area, cutting back some of the weeds, and opening the way so we could better get to the water. The next morning, we met at the church. We sang a song and then headed down to the water. When we got to the water’s edge, we had prayer. I told them, lets ask the Lord if the is any sin that has not been repented of before we go in the water. We want to be prepared for all the Lord Jesus has for us today. After we prayed, I was the first one into the water, praying all the way. I found a deep spot and then one by one they came to be baptized. I truly could not believe what was happening. Some of the people that were being led out to the water had already started crying as the Holy Spirit began to fall on them. Some of the people after being baptized had to have help to get out of the water, the Holy Spirit had taken them in such a way. I was weeping tears of joy with them as the Lord continued to minister to each one individually. After all the people had been baptized, we pastors gathered and prayed as the people sang. When we finished praying, we went to the water’s edge where the people were singing, and once again the Holy Spirit fell. The people went to their knees crying and weeping before the Lord. No one wanted to leave. Finally, the hand of the Lord lifted enough that we could head back to the church. We all wore white shirts that day and as I looked, I could see that the dirt from the muddy water had covered my shirt. The Lord spoke to me, “That is what sin looks like to me.” I thought as these people were being baptized, the Lord was washing them clean. One of our pastor brothers went ahead and was taking pictures as I led the people to the church through the jungle. The Lord spoke to me and said look behind you. As I looked back, I saw a line of people dressed in white following me. The Lord said, “That is what heaven is going to look like. You are leading people dressed in white to Me, marching on towards heaven.” I could hardly fight back the tears thinking to myself, “Thank you Lord Jesus for giving me such a privilege to lead people to you from around the world.” Praise the Mighty, Wonderful Name of Jesus.





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George Patton is an evangelist/missionary to the world from Grace Baptist Church in Morganton.



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“Laughter Is Healthy For You”

By Buddy Freeman
Madison County



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

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

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

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

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

Iron Sharpeneth Iron Proverbs 27:17
History, Archaeology, Science, and Biblical Prophecy

continued from page 20

and horrifying concept to them. In studying the Messianic prophecies, they found Mashiah! Some, like Sharon Allen, were Orthodox and did not surrender easily to the authority of the Scriptures but sought the help of Orthodox Jewish Rabbis and Leaders to help her find alternate understandings of the Scriptures to no avail. The authority of the text spoke undeniably for the Messiahship of Yeshua.

Study the prophecies yourself and ponder the mathematical probability of just one person fulfilling even a few of these specific prophecies. Even more importantly, be intellectually honest and open to truth. Pray. Ask the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob if Yeshua is the Messiah of Israel. He will answer you and lead you into all truth.

Would you like to pray with someone? Are you questioning the possibility that Yeshua is the Messiah? Send a prayer email.
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Crossword

Crossword 255 and Solution
ACROSS
1 Peter followed him ____ off
unto the high priest's palace
(Matt 26:58)
5 Like ____ tooth or a
lame (1,3) (Prov 25:19)
9 So the Israelites put away
their ____ and Ashtoreths
(1 Sam 7:4)
14 lest he ____ thee to the
judge (Luke 12:58) KJV
15 Balaam for reward, and
perished in the gainsaying of
____ (Jude 11) KJV
16 May the LORD be ____
and faithful witness (1,4)
(Jer 42:5)
17 What ____ you that you keep
on arguing? (Job 16:3)
18 it came between the ____ of
the Egyptians
(Exodus 14:20)
19 ____ the dust off your feet
when you leave
(Matt 10:14)
20 Whoever loves God must
also love his ____
(1 John 4:21)
22 I'm not strong enough to
dig, and I'm ____ to beg
(Luke 16:3)
24 like locusts they ____ the
land and then fly away
(Nah 3:16)
25 the sons of Rephaiah, of
____, of Obadiah and of
Shecaniah (1 Chron 3:21)
27 A man finds joy in giving an
____ reply (Prov 15:23)
28 each man under his ____
with the banners of his
family (Num 2:2)
32 during the time of King
Herod, ____ from the east
came (Matt 2:1)
35 let us consider how we may
____ one another on toward
love (Heb 10:24)
36 together with the two posts,
and tore them loose, ____ and
all (Judg 16:3)
37 for a possession of a
buryingplace ____ you
(Gen 23:9) KJV
39 settled them in the towns of
Samaria to ____ the Israelites
(2 Kings 17:24)
41 stored up huge quantities of
grain, like the sand of the
____ (Gen 41:49)
42 speechless (Isa 35:6)
44 he has appeared once for all
at the end of the ____
(Heb 9:26)
45 wild goat, the ibex, the ____
and the mountain sheep
(Deut 14:5)
48 and ____ those that robbed
them, saith the Lord GOD.
(Ezek 39:10)
50 in letters of Greek, and
____, and Hebrew
(Luke 23:38)
51 ____ was the father of
Methuselah (Gen 5:21)
54 one of the Pharisees ____

Jesus to have dinner with
him (Luke 7:36)
57 the pot is to be ____ and
rinsed with water (Lev 6:28)
59 A ____ is hidden for him on
the ground (Job 18:10)
60 The man who was healed
had no ____ who it was
(John 5:13)
62 ill-bred, uncivil (1 Cor 13:5)
63 They make many promises,
take false ____ and make
(Hos 10:4)
64 From morning ____ evening
he explained and declared to
them (Acts 28:23)
65 The fathers eat sour grapes,
and the children's teeth are
set on ____ (Ezek 18:2)
66 his enemy came and sowed
weeds among the ____
(Matt 13:25) KJV
67 shout (Jer 51:38) (KJV)
68 I was given a ____ like a
measuring rod (Rev 11:1)
DOWN
1 Jezebel's husband
(IKing 21:7)
2 with silver, iron, tin, and
lead, they traded in thy ____.
(Ezek 27:12) KJV
3 You are to ____ it as an
inheritance for yourselves
(Ezek 47:22)
4 They greatly love to wander;
they do not ____ their feet
(Jer 14:10)
5 ____ instruction, and in the
end you will be wise
(Prov 19:20)
6 The ____ out of the wood
doth waste it, (Ps 80:13)
KJV
7 by his right hand, and by the
____ of his strength
(Isaiah 62:8)
8 to be offered, and the time
of my ____ is at hand
(2 Tim 4:6)
9 Amorites and the kingdom
of Og king of ____
(Num 32:33)
10 for the day of the LORD is
coming It is close ____
(2,4) (Joel 2:1)
11 Bring me a heifer, a goat
and ____ (1,3)
(Gen 15:9)
12 Author of one of the
Gospels (Col 4:14)
13 Some people are like ____
along the path (Mark 4:15)
21 he passed Peniel, and he was
limping because of his ____
(Gen 32:31)
23 The ____ is laid for him in
the ground, and a trap
(Job 18:10)
25 the sucking child shall play
on the hole of the ____
(Isa 11:8) KJV
26 and ____ son of Jether,
commander of Judah's army
(IKing 2:32)
29 earneth wages to put it into
____ with holes (1,3)
(Hag 1:6) KJV

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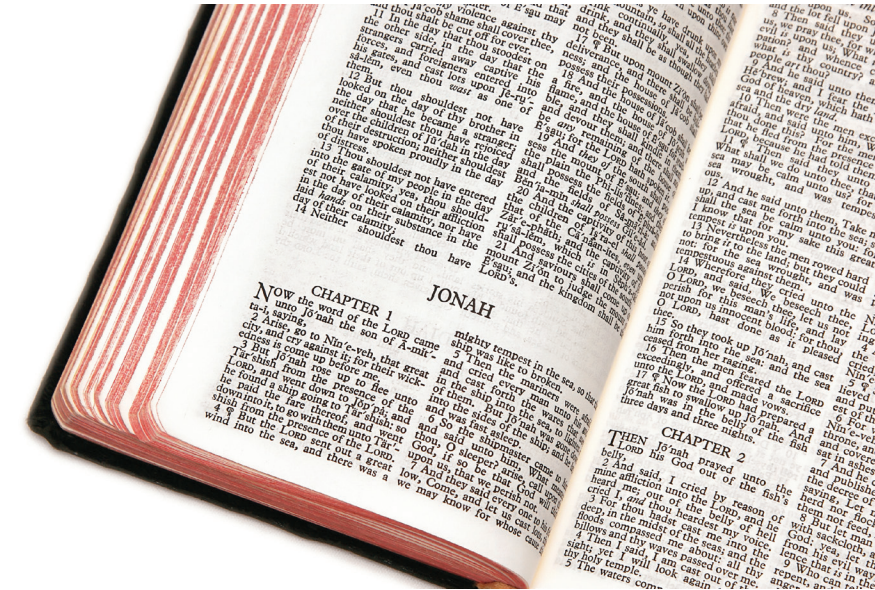
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30 I have fought the good
fight,
I have finished the ____
(2 Tim 4:7)
31 I also want women to ____
modestly, with decency
(1 Tim 2:9)
33 The grace of our Lord Jesus
Christ be with you all. ____
(Rev 22:21)
34 The sun turned black like
sackcloth made of ____ hair
(Rev 6:12)
35 and to understand the ____
of
wickedness (Eccl 7:25)
38 the men that held Jesus
mocked him, and ____ him
(Luke 22:63) KJV
40 for the ____ is worthy of his
hire (Luke 10:7) KJV
43 the kingdom of heaven will
be like ____ virgins who took
their lamps (Matt 25:1)
46 successor of Elijah
(2 Kings 2:9)
47 talking about and listening
to the ____ ideas
(Acts 17:21)
48 I want you to ____ the words
spoken in the past by the

holy (2 Peter 3:2)
49 Eber, Misham, Shemed who
built ____ and Lod
(1 Chron 8:12)
52 tasteless, unrefined
53 Have you not put a ____
around him and his
household (Job 1:10)
54 Have ____ become your
enemy by telling you the
truth? (1,3) (Gal 4:16)
55 and ____ begat Shem, Ham,
and Japheth. (Gen 5:32)
56 I cast my ____ against them
(Acts 26:10)
57 Go, ____ everything you
have and give to the poor
(Mark 10:21)
58 He was a prophet, powerful
in word and ____ before God
(Luke 4:19)
61 If we live, we live to the
Lord; and if we die, we ____
to the Lord (Rom 14:8)

Solution on page 14



Enjoying Everyday Life

Enjoy Your Life Today

By Joyce Meyer

How do you feel about your life? Would you say you love it? Or do you just get through each day, enduring the things you don't want to do, putting up with the things that frustrate you, wishing you had someone else's life? Do you believe you will finally be happy someday...when you have this or that?

People often say things like: "I'll be happy when I have a different job." "I'll be happy when I'm married." "I'll be so glad when the weekend gets here!" "I'd be so happy if I had children." And then after the children come... "I'll be so happy when these kids are finally grown and out of the house!"

It's a mistake for us to go through life thinking we can't be happy until we have something we want or our circumstance changes. The truth is we'll always find something to be unhappy about until we learn to be happy in the Lord.

I know about this from personal experience. I got a very bad start in life, and it made me a miserable, angry, insecure person who didn't trust anybody because I believed if I didn't take care of myself, nobody else would. And that caused me to be very selfish and self-centered.

But God didn't create us to live selfish lives, spending all our time trying to get what we want. He put a desire in us to have pleasure, but we will never really experience His blessings – His peace, joy, love, and all the good things He wants to give us – if we live with a "What about me?!" mentality.

John 10:10 (AMP) says, "The thief comes only in order to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have and enjoy life, and have it in abundance [to the full, till it overflows]."

The enemy – the devil – wants to steal our joy and destroy our lives. But Jesus came and died on the cross to give us abundant life, "to the full, till it overflows"! And it's a tragedy when born-again Christians don't enjoy their lives because they have a "barely getting by, hanging on till Jesus comes to get me" mentality.

If you're unhappy and want to enjoy your life, I want to give you two keys to help you get there.

The first key is to make an attitude adjustment.

Having a negative, critical attitude and feeling sorry for ourselves sours everything. We all have things we could complain about, but it doesn't do any good, so we're just wasting our time and energy when we give in to it.

Make a determined decision to have a more thankful attitude in your day-to-day life. Thank God for the good things you can think of right now, and actively look for more things to add to the list each day. This will help you stay focused on God's goodness.

Another way to improve your attitude is to get your mind off yourself and think about others more. Ask God how you can be a blessing and help make someone else's life better. When we're paying attention to others, it's easy to find something we can do, whether it's giving an encouraging word or compliment, a random act of kindness, or a hug. There's really no end to the ways we can show God's love to someone around us.

The second key is to have a proper perspective.

Loving or hating a thing often comes down to how you look at it. It's possible you can have more joy in your life simply by looking at it from a different perspective.

Whatever you focus on, that is what you're going to get. If you focus on trouble long enough, that's all you'll expect, and it will likely develop.

What we choose to focus on gets larger in our lives. If we don't have a proper perspective of it from God's point of view, it will grow and get out of balance. For example, in marriage, people sometimes get so focused on the things they don't like about their spouse that they totally forget all the good things they love about them.

I know life is not easy, and we all have to deal with hardship at times. But when you're struggling, realize that although you have some trouble, things could be worse.

I certainly don't mean to make light of a serious issue you're facing; my purpose with this point is to help you keep your perspective based on God's Word and His promises. Because when you choose to trust Him in every circumstance, He will always be bigger than your problems!

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



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