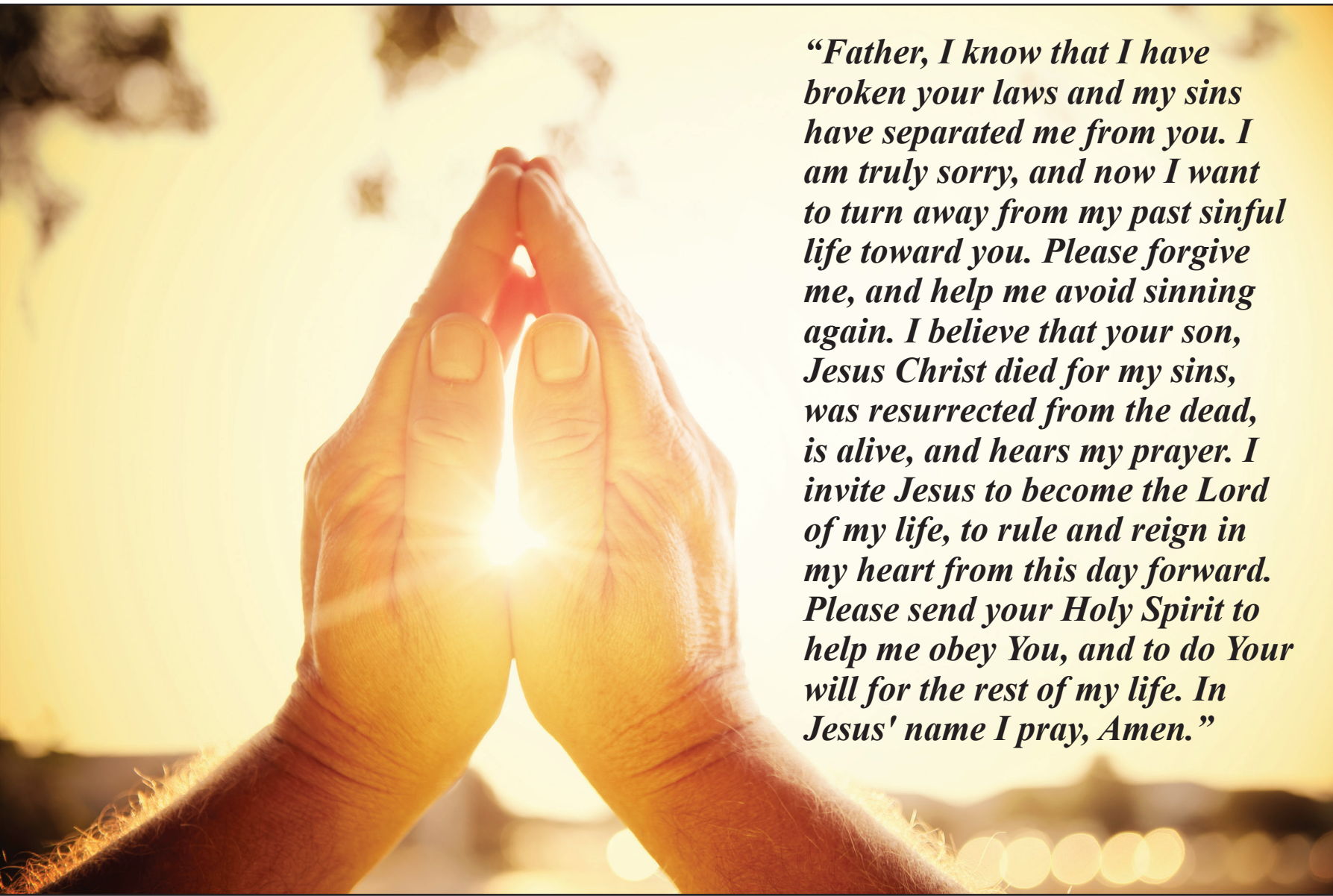




# BLUE RIDGE CHRISTIAN NEWS



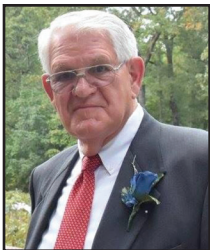
***“Father, I know that I have broken your laws and my sins have separated me from you. I am truly sorry, and now I want to turn away from my past sinful life toward you. Please forgive me, and help me avoid sinning again. I believe that your son, Jesus Christ died for my sins, was resurrected from the dead, is alive, and hears my prayer. I invite Jesus to become the Lord of my life, to rule and reign in my heart from this day forward. Please send your Holy Spirit to help me obey You, and to do Your will for the rest of my life. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.”***

## Life Lessons

By Doug Harrell  
Mitchell County

As I look at the destruction and turmoil going on in our country today I am dismayed at what I see. Protests that are destroying people’s homes and businesses, people being arrested because they were trying to protect themselves and their property. Our police and armed services being trashed, our laws being trampled without any punishment, people showing no respect for our country and its history. I see stories of our churches being burned, our religious artifacts and statutes being toppled, broken, or defaced. What is going on? Are we seeing the end of times being played out in front of our very eyes? America has always been great because we were a Christian nation that was based on principles laid out by our founding fathers. Our halls and buildings proudly displayed the Ten Commandments, our meeting and events were began by prayer and reverence, now we are not even allowed to mention the name of Jesus for fear of offending someone. We want to tear down and destroy any reference to those things we were founded on. I was reading in the scriptures this morning and wanted to share some verses with you.

*“The ox knoweth his owner; and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger; they are gone away backward. Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment. Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah. Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats.*




*When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.”* Isaiah 1:3-20 KJV

If we continue on the path we are currently on I truly believe that the hand of God that has so blessed this nation will be withdrawn, we will no longer be the most blessed nation this world has ever known. We need to rise up as one nation under God and reclaim our heritage. Reassert our faith, protect with our very lives, if need be, the heritage that we have been so blessed with. We can no longer close our eyes and pretend we don’t see what is taking place.

Be willing to stand firm, protect our churches, and our right to worship freely, to sing joyous songs of praise to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Work tirelessly to elect and put in place leaders that stand on strong Biblical principles. The hour is short and the need is dire, wake up before it is too late.

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



***“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”***

***John 3:16***



By Joy Baldwin  
Madison County

THE CRY

*I heard the cry from out the world,  
Oh God deliver me  
From death's dark dungeon was the cry  
We're dying don't you see.*

*For some, it was their first time  
When calling out to God  
And others, tho He knew their name,  
They'd spoken not a word.*

*God's warriors falling on their knees  
In daily faithful prayer  
With confidence did seek their God  
They knew that He was there.*

*Oh, friend please don't delay your cry,  
Pray God to save your soul  
You need Him more than ever  
He wants you in His fold.*

*The Bible is God's letter  
Jesus died for me and you  
No greater love had any man  
He hears your cry, it's true.*

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



Forests

By Nancy Malik  
Avery County



In the High Country of the Blue Ridge Mountains, August is all fun and games with warm, beautiful, lazy summer days. COVID 19 has dampened some of the fun. But it is still wonderful to see the green and blue of these mountains, skies, lakes, creeks, and rivers! Avery County in August burst with different shades of greens as the forests cover the gems inside them.

Forests are full of hidden treasures among the many trees that create them. Flowers, woodland animals, and birds, butterflies, and other flora and fauna abound. They are thick, dark, and can hide things. Deep within the acres of trees can be beauty such as waterfalls, rivers, creeks, rocks, and wildlife. Secrets that are waiting to be revealed are there. But they can also harbor dangers. How are you doing this summer with months of masks, social distancing, closings, openings, and high expectations for an answer to the COVID virus?

God is in control of the Universe and this planet with a world-wide pandemic hammering away at it. We have found sunshine has indeed slowed it down. How do we pray? For a vaccine, opening up nursing homes that have isolated older people for months? My sister is in one in the mid-west and has not been allowed to leave the premises, and many times her room, due to the virus. This has gone on for 5 months now and she is so unhappy there.

In our forest of a pandemic, the hope lies in the Lord. We shall turn our lives over to Him and no fear! God has numbered our days. Let's lift up our eyes to Him and place our cares on Him.

Each day has a gift He wants us to receive. His salvation is eternal life! What a treasure!

Enjoy August and all it has to offer us. Warm days, yard work, sunrises, and sunsets, flowers, wild animals are blessings, indeed! God has blessed us so much and those of us who love it here, are blessed by being able to enjoy all these local advantages. We can enjoy living in the forests of the Blue Ridge during the COVID!

Forests are full of wonder. Some might harbor something dangerous; snakes, wild animals, poisonous plants, or animals. But forests are also beautiful. What is beautiful about COVID? The world has come together through technology and Christians are reaching out to each other and the lost in record numbers!

Stand firm; do not fear and enjoy the forests and the trees!

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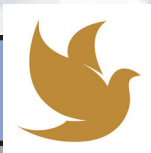
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“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace: that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation: that saith unto Zion. Thy God reigneth!”

Isaiah 52:7 KJV



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# Church Directory



## Bear Creek Baptist Church

327 Bear Creek Road  
Bakersville, NC 28705  
[www.bearcreekbaptist.com](http://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](http://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](http://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

Where Everybody is Somebody  
And Jesus Christ is Lord!

## The Rock Church

4806 US 64  
Morganton, NC 28655  
Phone: 828-334-3193  
[www.trcmorganton.com](http://www.trcmorganton.com)

### Pastor - Billy Chapman

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

Come Join Us  
Tent Revival 2020

## Grassy Creek Baptist Church

793 Old NC 226 Hwy  
Spruce Pine, NC  
828-765-4620  
[www.grassycreekbc.org](http://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](http://www.morgantonsda.org)

## Altapass Baptist Church

3631 Altapass Hwy  
Spruce Pine, NC  
828-765-0660  
[altapassbaptistchurch@ccvn.com](mailto:altapassbaptistchurch@ccvn.com)  
[www.altapassbaptistchurch.org](http://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

*"A Christ-Centered,  
Bible Believing Church"*

## Plumtree Presbyterian Church

4527 Hwy 19E  
Plumtree, NC 28664  
828-765-6919  
[www.plumtreechurch.com](http://www.plumtreechurch.com)

**Pastor Ryan Bridgeo**  
[pastor@plumtreechurch.com](mailto: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](http://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](http://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](http://www.marionnc.adventistchurch.org)

## First Baptist Church of Spruce Pine

125 Tappan Street  
Spruce Pine, NC 28777  
828-765-9411  
[www.sprucepinefbc.com](http://www.sprucepinefbc.com)  
[www.spfbc.blogspot.com](http://www.spfbc.blogspot.com)

### Dr. Rocky Branch Senior Pastor

Sunday School - 9:30 am  
Sunday Worship - 10:45 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](http://www.greathopesda.com)

## Pine Branch Baptist Church

48 Church Road  
Spruce Pine, NC 28777  
Phone: (828) 765-9101  
[www.pinebranchbaptist.net](http://www.pinebranchbaptist.net)

### Reverend Bobby Joe Greene

Sunday School • 9:45-10:40am  
Worship Service • 10:45am  
Sunday Evening • 6:30pm

A Bible-believing Fellowship  
Loving God and Loving People

## Spruce Pine United Methodist Church

11090 Hwy. 226 South  
Spruce Pine, NC 28777  
[www.sprucepineumc.org](http://www.sprucepineumc.org)  
[spumc3@bellsouth.net](mailto: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](http://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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What We Believe

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

God

God is the Creator and Ruler of the universe. He has existed eternally in three persons and chooses to manifest Himself in these three ways: as God the Father, as God the Son, and as God the Holy Spirit. These three are co-equal and are one God. (Genesis 1:1, 26-27; 3:22; Psalm 90:2; Matthew 28:19; 1 Peter 1:2; and 2 Corinthians 13:14)

Jesus

Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, who is fully God and fully human in His incarnation. He lived a sinless human life and offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all humanity by dying on a cross. He arose from the dead after three days to demonstrate His power over sin and death. He ascended to heaven and will return again to reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. (Matthew 1:22-23; Isaiah 9:6; John 1:1-5; 14:10-30; Hebrews 4:14-15; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Romans 1:3-4; Acts 1:9-11; 1 Timothy 6:14-15; Titus 2:13)

The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the very Spirit of God, fully divine, manifested in the life of every believer from the moment of salvation. He is equal with the Father and the Son as God. He is present in the world to make men aware of their need for Jesus Christ. He provides the Christian with power for living, understanding of spiritual truth, and guidance in doing what is right. The Christian seeks to live under His daily control. (2 Corinthians 3:17; John 16:7-13; 14:16-17; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 2:12; 3:16; Ephesians 1:13; Galatians 5:25; Ephesians 5:18)

The Bible

The Bible is the divinely inspired, authoritative, infallible, living and active Word of God to all men. It was written by human authors under the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is the ultimate source of truth for Christian beliefs and living. In it we find a guideline for right relationship with God and God's creation, and a blueprint for personal, emotional, and spiritual growth. (2 Timothy 1:13; 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:2-21; Psalm 119:105, 160; 12:6; Proverbs 30:5)

Humanity

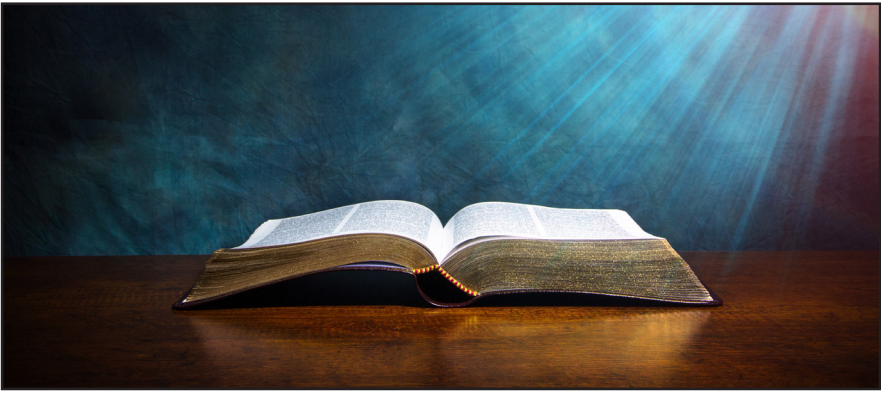
Humanity is designed and made by God in His image. We have been created as cognitive, moral, ethical, and physical beings and have been equipped by God for both relationship with Him and with one another. Both male and female are gifted by the Creator with characteristics which equip them for the purpose for which they have been created: relationship, dominion, and responsibility. Although God designed us to have fellowship with Him, we became alienated from God through disobedience. As a result, all human beings are born with a sinful nature and choose to sin against God. We are incapable of regaining a right relationship with God through our own efforts. (Genesis 1:26-28; Psalm 8:3-6; Isaiah 53:6; 59:1-2; Romans 3:23; 5:22; Colossians 1:21; 2 Corinthians 5:17)

Eternity & Eternal Security

Our soul, the essence of our being, was created by God to exist forever. That forever is spent in one of two places: eternally present and in union with God because of His forgiveness and salvation or eternally separated from God because of sin and unbelief. At the moment that our physical body dies, those who are saved are immediately taken to heaven. Those who have rejected God's gift of salvation will spend eternity separated from God in hell. Because God gives man eternal life through Jesus Christ, the believer is secure in that salvation for eternity. Salvation is maintained by the grace and power of God, not by the self-effort of the Christian. It is the grace and eternal power of God that gives this security. (John 3:16; 5:11-13, 10:29; 1 John 2:25; Romans 6:23; Revelation 20:15; 2 Timothy 1:12; Hebrews 7:25; 10:10-14; 1 Peter 1:3-5)

Salvation

Salvation is God's gift of redemption and reconciliation to Himself and is offered freely to all who accept, by faith alone, Jesus Christ as God's only son and receive Him as Lord and Savior. We can never make up for our sin with self-improvement or good works. It is only by trusting in Jesus Christ as God's offer of forgiveness that you can be saved from sin's penalty. Eternal life begins the moment you receive Jesus Christ into your life by faith. (Romans 5:1; 6:23; Ephesians 2:8-9; John 1:12; 14:6; Titus 3:5; Galatians 3:26)



It's Not About Trying Harder

By Kurt Bomar  
Avery County



I have at times in my life believed and have found that most Christians still believe they are the initiators of spiritual blessings. They feel that if they can just pray enough, or do a little more, or be a little better, God will love them and bless them. So they try a little harder. They try to walk worthy—but sooner or later they fall flat on their face and have to throw in the towel. The final result is they feel worthless.

Probably the most misunderstood principle in Christianity today is that our Christian walk is not something we do to try to earn God's favor, to get Him to love us more. Rather our walk should be a response to how He loves us, for what He's done for us, and how good He's been to us.

The Apostle John summed it up, "*we love Him because he first loved us*" (1 John 4:19). We don't love him in hopes that He'll love us. It's like the difference between a bribe and a thank-you card. One is offered in expectation of a nice return, the other from a thankful heart with no strings attached. Which do you think God would enjoy receiving?

When you boil it all down, when we "try harder" to please Him, we are really insulting Him. We're saying, "I can fix this problem without you, God". Isn't it better to get in the mindset of sending Him a bunch of thank you cards as we realize He is changing us? Selah (think about it)

Kurt Bomar is pastor of Walnut Grove Church.

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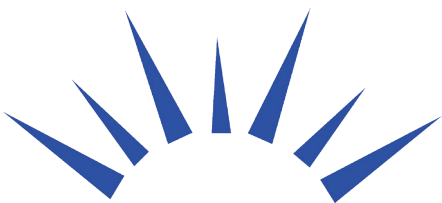
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Grain Of A Mustard Seed -  
Northern Israel – 1 Kings Chapter 12

By Glenda Ward  
McDowell County



Israel is a place containing a lush, green, thriving reserve in which colorful, yellow mustard bushes grow a little taller than head high. Is this why Jesus referenced having the faith as a grain of mustard seed in Matthew 17:20 and Luke 17:6 “If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed”; as to our faith and doubt?

It is hard for us to imagine the culture and what people were like back in Jesus’ day. In reading 1 Kings chapter 12 your imagination will swell. You can feel the Old Testament come to life. The kingdom and the twelve tribes of Israel are divided. In this chapter, Rehoboam, son of Solomon, is now the king of the southern kingdom, and Jeroboam, son of Nebat, is the king of the northern kingdom, and neither king is obedient to God’s ways. Tel Dan located in Northern Israel is at the foot of Mount Hermon and is not a place Christian travelers would go to learn the foundational truths about their faith. Tel Dan is one of two sites in which King Jeroboam built altars that were set up as an alternative place of worship. The king took counsel and made golden calves for each altar saying it was too much for the people of Israel to journey to Jerusalem to worship. This thing he did became a sin: for the people went before one of the two altars to worship (verses 26-30). Jeroboam was always on the list of bad kings and not someone you would want to try to be equal to or rival with.

Tel Dan does come alive as we read 1 Kings 12:31. Jeroboam also made shrines on high places – built up high – and made priests from the ranks of the lowest of people that were not Levites. These places were not hidden or protected from sight. Everyone could witness what was happening as sacrifices were being offered on the altar as if being lifted up on a stage. Actually, in today’s time those teaching, preaching, or leading worship stand up on a raised platform leading and directing us to the One God we are to worship. This ancient high place at Tel Dan is a good reminder of the influence those standing in front of us on a platform have on people today. We need to keep in mind if the wrong person is on the platform leading and instructing as was true all those thousands of years ago, they can lead many people astray and away from the One true God.

There is trouble in our thinking as this passage of Scripture points out the danger of worshipping solutions of our own making; and isn’t that what these idols represent. In 1 Kings 12:33, we see that Jeroboam built alternate places of worship, made golden calves to worship, and even changed the time and season of worship. God had been clear in His directions of how to worship, but somewhere along the way Jeroboam in his thinking thought he knew better than God.

Don’t we sometimes do the same thing? We say we trust God and we believe He is working in our lives, except when we don’t see or feel His working at the time. Don’t we try to interfere trying to modify His plans or change things to fit our schedule or our situation? At times like this we try to take control trying to create our own way; disobeying God; and maybe, unintentionally leading others astray.

It is painful looking at the truth of how often in life we (or in my case I) have departed from trusting God. I have been impatient with God so many times and trusted myself more than God. But this is where God never fails us, leaves us, or forsakes us. Always we can look back and we can see the one set of footprints at these times of struggles in our lives, and we know without a doubt that God has been with us – this is when He carried us – to keep us on His straight and narrow path. I can say that God only let me move so far away till He pulled me back in line and I mean pull ...I want to do things my way sometimes so badly, yet He graciously and tenderly lets me know I am in the wrong. He lets me know His way is the right way. Honestly, I have given God some really hard times wanting things done my way because I was not seeing results that I thought I should be seeing in the time frame that I thought they should be happening. But God holds steadfast keeping me in line with His Will. This verse in Matthew 17:20 has come to mind so often. The Lord reminds me our faith only needs to be the size of a grain of mustard seed and no high place, a false idol, or mountain can stand against it. Truly I have learned what it means to “be still and know that I am God”. In Hebrew “be still” means let go. God tells me like it is. God lets me know that He is in control and I need to let go and follow His direction. He makes this clear in a way that is kind and loving yet with a firm grip. I have learned to listen and hear God’s love, leadership, and direction. I have learned a lot about being patient and persevering. God works in His own time frame. Our timing is not God’s time. He is still working on me and I thank God for His grace and mercy in my life!

Israel is a reminder of God’s great faithfulness. Instead of our looking up to the high places and trying to reach Him, God came down low. Jesus’ birth was in a lowly place to a humble couple. Angels came down to announce His arrival to the meek and lowly shepherds in the fields for anyone to see. Jesus lived an ordinary, and yet extraordinary life as the son of man and the Son of God as we read in the Gospels. Then Jesus ascended back to His heavenly Father from the Mount of Olives, one of the lower elevations on the Judean mountain range.

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.

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: [it is] the gift of God: Ephesians 2:8-9



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Something to Think About  
Ask “What” Instead of “Why”

By Dennis Love  
McDowell County

Most of us know that the Bible teaches and says; “*If any of you need wisdom, you should ask God, and it will be given to you. God is generous and won’t correct you for asking. But when you ask for something, you must have faith and not doubt. Anyone who doubts is like an ocean wave tossed around in a storm.*” (James 1:5-6)

Are you going through a rough time right now? You’re not alone! People within our church families and people all over this country are feeling the effects of the pandemic. Covid-19 has taken a toll on our mental, physical, and emotional health. There are many uncertainties and questions about how to move on with our lives in this ongoing crisis. Everybody’s struggling! Here’s the good news in all of this. The Bible tells us exactly what we should do when we don’t know what to do. God says in James 1:5 “*If any of you need wisdom, you should ask God, and it will be given to you.*” Understand that God isn’t holding back wisdom. He gives wisdom to anybody who will ask Him for it.

Have you asked God to give you wisdom on how to handle this pandemic? Have you asked God for wisdom on what to do about your job, your future, your kids, your health, or whatever you’re right now struggling with? God will give wisdom to anybody who asks for it. King Solomon, one of the richest and most successful men who ever lived, had everything he needed and everything you could possibly want in life. But, he still asked God for wisdom. Solomon knew that riches and power and comfort meant nothing if he couldn’t make wise decisions. So he asked God for wisdom to know what to do and how to do it. Did you know that wisdom helps us to learn from any trouble we’re going through? It helps us to know what to do and how to move forward in a way that pleases God. God uses every challenge to develop us, not defeat us. It may seem like our country is spinning out of control as our circumstances keep changing day-by-day. Your stress, your fear, and your worry may be at an all-time high right now. But, now more than ever is the time for each of us to ask “WHAT” instead of “WHY.” Ask God what He wants you to learn from this time of crisis and what He wants you to do. Ask God what He wants you to learn and what He wants you to do with whatever you’re struggling with. He has promised to give you His wisdom in generous portions. Remember, ask God what, not why! Now that’s something for us all 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 40 years, and they have lived in Marion for six years. They have two sons and four grandchildren and two step-grandchildren.*



By Jody Griffin  
Avery and Mitchell County

“*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.*” (Psalm 119:105)  
Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, “*If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed. And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*” (John 8:31-32)

I once served as pastor for a lady who had been blind since her childhood. Her sisters loved her so and provided such wonderful care for her. Her name was “Sister” and she was my teacher in many ways.

Sister would always delight in my visits and she would inevitably leave me feeling so richly blessed just for having spent time with her. Isn’t it just like God to turn a ministry around from giving to receiving?

Eventually, Sister had a series of life-threatening events wherein her faithful sisters were told she likely would not be with them much longer. Time after time this frail bodied little believer would astound physicians, her family members, and preachers by rebounding. She was such a tough one! Time after time she would speak of her trust in the One.

Most impressive about her was the fact that in the years I knew her, I never once heard Sister complain. Not once did she bemoan her fate. Not once did she question why she had to endure life without her sight. No, this woman’s faith in God through Christ Jesus her Lord was all she needed to endure. She trusted God with all of her heart.

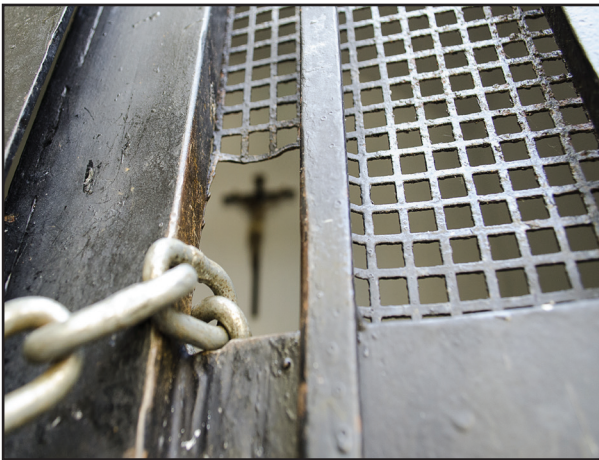
Towards her last days, I had been granted access to a collection of favorite Scriptures that my friend had compiled to read to his mother. I purchased several copies of this compilation and took one to Sister. Explaining to her that I wanted to give her a gift of never-ending value, I opened the book and began to read the Scriptures written therein. Sister lay there with an expression of peace that truly was beyond all understanding.

One day she had some sort of “event” and one of her siblings requested I hurry to her bedside. Arriving I found Sister lying in the bed, writhing in pain, and greatly agitated. So I did what I had been doing with her so frequently, I read aloud God’s Word. This particular day Sister’s condition had rendered her unable to speak or move. But as I read the sweet Word of God’s promise to her, tears began to flow from her eyes. She couldn’t see, but she could listen. And as she listened, the Lord moved...

She died soon after and I realized that I had been allowed into her room that day to witness the Truth of this verse. Sweet little blind Sister had experienced the lamp of God for her feet and the light of God for her path! And that path had led her into her eternal dwelling.

COVID restrictions currently prevent offenders from attending corporate worship services. To offset this temporary loss, as Chaplain I have begun positioning myself near where every one of the men pass on their way to/from their meals. Each day I have offered to those who will receive it, a passage of Scripture that will encourage, uplift, and bless them. One man told me that he looks forward to receiving that Blessing every day because he goes back and reads that passage immediately. And when he does, the Lord “opens his eyes to the glory of God”! This is a wonderful reminder that God’s Word can equip us to face life’s challenges and keep on keeping on...until we too are led into our eternal dwelling. Thanks, Be to God!

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



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How Dry the Bones?

By Jim Huskins  
McDowell County

August can be a dry month even in the rain forest that is Western North Carolina. The worst drought we can imagine, however, would never compare to the dryness confronting Ezekiel in the 37th chapter of his book. In this famous passage, the prophet is led “in the spirit” to a place reminiscent of the mythical, African valley where elephants supposedly make their last journey to die among untold thousands of their fellows. The fable of the elephant graveyard endures because such a place would provide boundless wealth to its discoverer. So much ivory without the mess and bother of killing or smuggling.

Ezekiel’s vast, above-ground graveyard reveals a promise which dwarfs the value of a boatload of ivory: eternal life with Our Creator. The Valley of Dry Bones is one of many scriptures that ties the beginning of God’s book to the end. Genesis 2:7 tells us that God formed man from dust and breathed His life into this creature to make him a living soul. The Hebrew word translated “soul” means “the union of dust and spirit.” We do not have a soul, we are a soul. Even the name Adam underscores this fact since it can be translated “creature of dirt.”

When the animated wad of dust chose sin and death over direct communion with God, he learned the stark repercussions of that choice: “You are dust, and to dust you will return.” The only hope for formerly animated dust is resurrection. Unobtainable resurrection. Unimaginably expensive resurrection. Graciously purchased and freely given resurrection. Resurrection detailed near the end of that best-selling book which chronicles the relationship of Holy God with walking dust. Revelation 20:4 says that faithful, obedient piles of dust will be resurrected, reunited with the breath of God, and privileged to rule with the Messiah in the Millennial Kingdom.

With perfect symmetry, Ezekiel’s vision unites creation and resurrection. His valley of bones was nothing more or less than irrefutable evidence of dust that once walked and talked. Under divine imperative, he spoke the Word of God to all that dust, and an immeasurable army of corpses reassembled before his eyes. Once again they looked human, but they were still lifeless dust. They lacked life’s crucial element. “I prophesied just as He commanded me. The Spirit came into them, and they lived. They stood up on their feet, a vast army.”

At this point, God does a marvelous thing. He tells Ezekiel—and us—the identity of this army. “These bones are the whole house of Israel.... Prophecy and say to them..., ‘I will bring you up out of your graves, My people. I will bring you back to the land of Israel.’” I was taught from the cradle that when Messiah died, God abandoned Israel and His promises to them. This is a lie from perdition. If God can renege on any promise, what is to stop Him from lying about every promise.

But the Holy One never lies. He assures us often that He will raise His chosen nation from their graves and bring them back to the land they squandered through disobedience. When Messiah died, the penalty for that disobedience was paid. We who were not born into Israel were granted adoption through faith and obedience. The problem we still face, however, is that our dust so often constrains our spirit. The dryness of our bones inhibits our ability to fulfill the destiny for which we were created: glorifying God Almighty.

Our nature is to cling to dry bones. We latch onto tradition rather than divine communication. We exalt man-made doctrine over God-breathed instruction. We desperately grasp some imagined notion of “freedom in Christ” instead of His clear call: “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” The root of much of this misplaced allegiance is ignorance and apathy regarding God’s Word. Many believers attend Church meetings to hear from some pastor or minister or teacher what they are expected to believe. This is the anthesis of “study to show thyself approved.”

Temporarily animated dust cannot afford complacency. No amount of emotionally gratifying “praise and worship,” no repeated exposure to talented musicians and singers, no accumulation of “lessons” from the most gifted Bible teachers can take the place of picking up The Book and reading it from the beginning. Only then do we discover what it says. What little Bible reading most of us do is merely to shore up what we’ve been taught. We should rather imitate the noble Bereans and discover if what we have been taught is true.

An even dryer bone than willful ignorance is intentional disobedience. The Bible teaches that everyone will be resurrected. Some will be told, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” Others will hear, “Depart from me for I never knew you.” He will never know us as long as we insist that “grace” allows us to ignore the terms of His offer of salvation.

When the Bible says that Abraham “knew” Sarah, it refers to vastly more than intercourse. Yada is Hebrew for entering a covenant. The situation described in Matthew 7:23 gives Jesus no option but to say, “I never knew you.” He addresses those who have chosen to not fulfill the blood-bought covenant He offers. 1 John 2:3-4 spells out our responsibility, “By this do we know that we know Him if we keep His commandments. If we say that we know Him and do not keep His commandments, we are liars, and the truth is not in us.” Those who will hear “I never knew you” will wish that their dry bones had stayed in the dust.

Jim & Beverly Huskins are members of Obedient Heart Fellowship.



Constance Malone

By Harietta Turner  
Mitchell County

My son Matthew's 2nd cousin's testimony. She was born with Type 1 Diabetes and was on the verge of having to have kidney dialysis when she was given a Kidney and a Pancreas transplant. The kidney transplant succeeded but not the pancreas transplant. Her father, Dwight, now is on dialysis treatments and prayers are appreciated.

My little lady and I am watching God TV... this wasn’t even a scripture mentioned but I guess the Lord just spoke to me... it’s been a while.

So, this scripture (Isaiah 41:10) was my text ringtone when I went under for my transplant. For weeks beforehand too. My brother stayed the night with me in the ICU so Shaun could be at home with Zeke. This scripture played RIGHT BEFORE I sat up from unconsciousness and said “my pancreas” and fell back into unconsciousness! Then my brother grabbed a nurse and asked to check my pancreas and my sugar... that was God himself saying “Dwight Jr. Grab a nurse” I was rushed back into surgery for the organ that I had to wait so long for.. something that could have changed my life... no more insulin, no more finger pricks, no more watching what I ate, freedom. It would improve my “life quality” significantly! Well, I was clueless DAYS after... it’s like I woke up and it was a week later... had no idea but everyone was so sad. I was so happy! I finally got my transplant... but the organ they kept sending me home over (pancreas) failed. I was still on shots, on a diabetic diet... it should’ve made me upset but I just was ecstatic I had a kidney and I could see my ankles besides the severe vomiting and even worse pain from all the chemo and antivirals rushing through my body... but this scripture says “FEAR NOT for I am with you, do not be dismayed.. (dismayed means distressed, frantic).” Do y’all understand that? Don’t fear. God is with us! He was with me then. He is with me now. No matter what goes on... my daddy does not stress. He doesn’t care what’s going on at all anywhere... he smiles and will remind us all God is in control! I hope this helps someone today... it helped me! I do not have to be in fear or distress! God is with me and you!! He is giving us strength!

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



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The Two Natures

By Alan Griffin

We believe and are saved when we accept the Word of God as Truth. We hear the Word spoken, through faith we accept that it is true, and instantly we receive a new nature. Everything goes well with our soul until we realize our old nature is still there. It lurks around inside of us popping out when we least expect it. So many of us fall back into our old habits because we have never the realization that inside of us is two different natures. The first instinct of the new Christian is to completely get rid of the old nature. It is possible to starve the flesh, but the presence of our old ways will be implanted in our mind until death. The Bible calls this presence, the old man. *“That you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.”* Ephesians 4:22 NKJV. Another way to describe our old self is the natural man. *“But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know, they are spiritually discerned.”* 1 Corinthians 2: 14 NKJV. When we are in a lost condition it is impossible for us to comprehend spiritual instruction. Until we turn towards God in faith and accept that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, we are blind to the truth.



The old nature is against the law of God. Paul the apostle tells us, *“For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.”* Romans 7:18 NIV. The heart is wicked above all things. It is a misconception to believe that sin comes from without. The truth is sin arises from within us. God gave up on the flesh of mankind when Adam and Eve sinned. He condemned the body to death so that the soul and the spirit could continue through eternity. *“And to dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.”* Ecclesiastes 12:7 NIV. The heart of man is wicked above all things. We are supposed to be more intelligent than the animals, however, we do things that animals would never do. *“What comes out of a person is what defiles them. For it is from within, out of a person’s heart, that evil thoughts come - sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and defile a person.”* Mark 7:20-23 NIV.

When we accept Christ as our Savior, we receive a new nature, the nature of the spirit. We are told we must be born again, and this birth is given by God through His Word and the Holy Spirit. This new nature of the Spirit is “Christ within you.” In the Bible, this nature is called life. *“And this is the testimony: God in me that does it. So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me.in my inner being delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me.”* Romans 7:18-23 NIV. Paul cries out to God, *“What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?”* Romans 7:24 NIV. And in the next verse he answers, *“Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, in my sinful nature slave to the law of sin.”* Romans 7:25 NIV.

After we receive the new birth we will still struggle with sin. I do not want you to become discouraged, *“because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.”* 1 John 4:4 NKJV. It is at this time of temptation that we struggle and lose sight of our spiritual birthright. It is a sad day when we, being a new creation, fall to the wiles of Satan and participate in sin. Would it surprise you to know we are tempted more after our new birth than ever before? I know Christians who lost everything but their salvation because they fell back into sin. They lost their joy and reward. Because we have so many weak Christians today, countless thousands are lost because of poor example they set for others. The weak Christian may manage to save their soul, but because of their careless living, many others will fall into hell. The flesh wages war against the spirit. *“For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.”* Galatians 5:17 NKJV.

Sin will not have control over you. Just like newborn babies we are to desire the sincere milk of the Word of God so that we may grow spiritually and be able to ward off Satan’s attacks. *“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”* Matthew 4:4 NKJV. There is only one good diet a new Christian should be on, and that is the diet of the Word of God.

Don’t just read it. Consume it like there is no tomorrow! Let it be absorbed into every part of our mind, senses, and emotions. Take hold of it and never let it go. It will be with you always, even after death. No one can take it from you. It is yours to cherish for all eternity. *“The words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; For I am called by Your name, O Lord God of hosts.”* Jeremiah 15:16 NKJV.

Faith walks where it cannot see. Faith hears what others cannot hear. *“Now faith the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”* Hebrews 11:1 NKJV. Whoever is born of God overcomes the world, and this victory comes through faith. Faith comes from reading the Bible. It comes from listening to your pastor at Church. It comes from reading articles on the Millennial Christian. *“So, then faith hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”* Romans 10:17 NKJV. We hide the Word in our hearts so that we do not sin against Him. We delight in the Law of the Lord, and we meditate on His Word daily. God clothes the grass in the fields. He provides for the birds in the air, the animals, and the fish in the sea. Just think if we only had the faith of a mustard seed, we would be able to move mountains and have a wonderful relationship with God.

Do not let sin reign in your mortal body, so that you will not obey its lusts. *“And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin. But present ourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and our members as instruments of righteousness to God.”* Romans 6:12-13 NKJV. We are to starve the flesh, the sinful desires of our heart. We put to death the old nature by keeping our bodies under control and bringing it into subjection to the Word of God. We consider ourselves dead to sin and spend our time feeding the spirit until we become a spiritually mature child of God. We depend entirely on Jesus. We mortify the members of our body. *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”* Romans 12:1-2.

My dear friend this is not something that happens overnight. It is the most wonderful walk in life where we grow in faith daily. To walk along with our glorious Savior means nothing is too great for us to overcome. The trials and tribulations of this life are minuscule compared to the power of Christ within us. Sure, we must deal with the tragedies and hardships of life, but we have tremendous faith, that in the end, Jesus Christ will make all things right. *“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”* John 16:33 NKJV. *“And this is the testimony; God has given us eternal life, this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.”* 1 John 5: 11-12 NIV. Through faith in the Word of God we are given life. *“Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, that through them you may participate in the divine nature, escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.”* 2 Peter 14 NIV. We are not capable of doing these things on our own. No matter how hard we try to do what is right we will always fall short of the glory of God. The Holy Spirit acts on behalf of God, and the Bible is the tool that gives new birth to the soul. He saved us *“not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”* Titus 3:5-7 NIV.

We are not born Christians. It is a decision, a step we make to take to receive the Holy Spirit. Until we commit our faith in Christ and make a conscious effort to study the Bible, the Holy Spirit cannot operate within us. He very well may be there in our mind, but His hands are tied until we commit to daily Bible study and prayer. Then the Holy Spirit begins; the task of cleansing our mind of corruption. *“Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth... from the heart. For you have been born again not by perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring Word of God.”* 1 Peter 1:22-23 NIV. The truth as described by Jesus in John 14:6 is, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes unto the Father but by me.”* Through the sacrificial death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit is made available to us. The Spirit brings to life the Word of God, and through the Spirit and the Word of God, we receive divine nature.

We are constantly at war with the flesh. In our minds, there is a daily struggle with the desires of the old nature. The natural man seeks out the things that are of this earth. The spiritual person seeks out the things of God. Even Paul the Apostle struggled with his old nature and he was given an extra dose of the Spirit. He could heal the sick, casting out demons, and raising the dead. He tells us of his plight in Romans 7:18-23, *“For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living.”*

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

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An Apology, A D-Minus,  
and God’s Forgiveness

By Tracy Jessup

“Praise is due to you, O God, in Zion; and to you shall vows be performed, O you who answer prayer! To you all flesh shall come. When deeds of iniquity overwhelm us, you forgive our transgressions. Happy are those whom you choose and bring near to live in your courts. We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, your holy temple.” --- Psalm 65:1-3



A few years ago, I read a news story in The Washington Post about a college student who received an apology letter from his ex-girlfriend. Nick Lutz said the four-page note, handwritten on lined white notebook paper, appeared under the windshield wiper of his truck in the winter of 2017. It came from an ex-girlfriend whom he had blocked by phone and on social media. According to the article, “she wanted to say she was sorry, and she took some liberties with spelling and grammar in the process.”

Lutz, who was still feeling betrayed by the breakup, marked up the letter. “Like a teacher grading a paper, he took a bright red pen and savaged it, correcting mistakes and leaving comments in the voice of a perturbed copy editor.” He also gave her a grade, a D-minus, and wrote that he would accept “revision for half credit.”

Then he posted a picture of it to Twitter and captioned the tweet, “When your ex writes you an apology letter so you grade it to send it back.” It went viral, shared 121,000 times and liked 337,000 times, “and spurred a swarm of journalists from across the globe to write about his ‘savage’ words.

The University of Central Florida, where Lutz was a rising senior, suspended him over the viral tweet because, the school said, “it violated the student code of conduct for being ‘disruptive’ and ‘harmful’ (Katie Mettler, “A student graded his ex’s apology note - D-minus - then tweeted it. He got suspended.” 7/19/17). Lutz appealed the decision and eventually, the charges were dropped.

In today’s passage, the Psalmist praises God for answering prayer and offering forgiveness. He understands the experience we all share in that our sins overwhelm us and separate us from God. We know what it is to experience life and we know ourselves to be sinners. And if God were a God who kept a record of our wrongdoings or graded us according to our performance, none of us would stand a chance. Even the temple, which was to be a meeting place between God and his people, was a continual reminder that the people met God there on the basis, not of their merit, but of his grace. Everyone, including the high priest, was a sinner in need of forgiveness, and “without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness” (Hebrews 9:22). Ultimately, God brings us near through the shed blood of Jesus Christ, who when lifted up (John 12:32-33), draws us near to live in God’s presence.

Prayer: Lord, we all arrive at your doorstep sooner or later, loaded with guilt. Our sins are too much for us. Thank you for getting rid of them once and for all (adapted from The Message, Psalm 65:3).

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.

Trailer a Boat

By Michael Stephanides  
Burke County



Trailer a boat, or anything for that matter can be challenging – as well as quite comical. I went fishing with my sons the other day and watched as someone attempted to back their new boat down the ramp. Stifling laughter I watched the boat go left, go right, and for the most part never in the direction intended. Left is right, right is left, pull forward, back up again and again, finally landing said boat in the water albeit on a 45\* angle. On the other hand, I saw many boaters leaving as well. The boats peacefully following the exact path of the car in a seamless and peacefully path, directly connected to a small 2” ball-coupling.

For some, our walk with Christ can have a similar appearance. How many of us see religion as a way of living our life for Christ and resting in Him? We get so caught up in the law, the do’s and don’ts; so busy with the ‘doing’ we completely forget who we are to be coupled with. God must get a chuckle as we frantically attempt to ‘back our religious selves’ through life much like the boater at the ramp. In the gospel of Mark (10:17-22), there is a parable of a rich young ruler who runs to Christ asking Him what more he can do to inherit eternal life. Christ tells him to keep the last six of ten commandments on ‘human to human’ relationships. To which the young ruler quickly responds that he has kept these since youth. And Christ looks on him with love and states, ‘you lack one thing, go and sell all your possessions and follow me’. The young ruler goes away sad for he had many possessions. This young ruler had perfected the ‘art of backing up his trailer’, the letter of the law, yet missed the spirit of the law, which is our relationship to Christ. Just as in the Ten Commandments, the first four are our relationship with Him, followed by our relationship with our fellow man. In a similar story in the gospel of Luke we see a lawyer asking Jesus what he needs to do to inherit eternal life; And a lawyer stood up and put Him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” And He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?” And he answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” Luke 10:25-27

The relationship with God comes first and is the small coupling to the ‘trailer’ that follows-- our service to our neighbor. It is so easy to get lost in the ‘doing’ that we lose sight of Him whom we serve. Our works should be a by-product of our relationship to Christ, not something we do to earn eternal life like the young ruler, or the lawyer who was seeking God’s grace. It is a gift. It is free, although it comes with a tremendous cost. It is free to all who will believe. I believe that God gives us the commandments to remind us of our insatiable need for His grace and mercy, as well as a reminder of the order we are to follow. His yoke is easy, and He will give us rest, and life in Him will be like a boat leaving the ramp at the end of a beautiful day.

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart  
And do not lean on your own understanding.  
In all your ways acknowledge Him,  
And He will make your paths straight.”  
(Proverbs 3:5,6)

Michael Stephanides is a resident of Morganton NC, and has lived there with his wife of 30 years. They have had the privilege of raising 3 biological children, and one adopted child, ages 24-29. Their daughters are married to great men, and they have 2 beautiful grandchildren. Michael and his wife are members of Summit Community Church in Morganton.



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# The Orchard at Altapass

## Apple Fun At The Orchard

By Kate Groff  
Mitchell County

Once again, changes abound at the Orchard at Altapass. Doors of the red barn will now be open from Thursday through Sunday, giving folks another day to spend in the sunshine and along the trails that wind through now colorful, trees laden with not quite ripe apples. From the 400 in our nursery, not more than two feet tall, to the grand, 100-year old “father trees,” with just enough life in them to keep going and green.

This past weekend, the Orchard was filled (keeping the required physical distance) with folks coming for our first ripe apple of the season, the Yellow Transparent, now completely gone for this year. Also called a Lodi, this heirloom apple may not a great eating apple, but it is great in applesauce. As most orchards don’t open until fall, the pome was a great summer treat to hold and to be reminded that it grew just a stone’s throw away, down that grassy road. Add in the views, the walking trails, the beautiful weather, and not to forget the homemade fudge, hot apple pie, and the ice cream—it was great fun for all.

The Orchard is located at 1025 Orchard Road near Spruce Pine at mm 328.3 on the Blue Ridge Parkway and is a not-for-profit, 501(c)(3), working orchard, music, and educational venue. Hours are 10 AM to 5 PM, now open Thursday-Sunday. Family- and pet-friendly. Wheelchair accessible. For information, please visit [altapassorchard.org](http://altapassorchard.org) or call 828-765-9531.

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



# Marlene’s Meditations

## Off-Road Dump Trucks

by Marlene Houk  
Burke County



The pleasant afternoon erupted with cries of surprise and pain as my four-year-old son wobbled to his feet and stumbled to my comfy chair in the shade. His copper-colored hair glinted in the sunlight as he neared me, crocodile tears flowing down his chubby cheeks. He intended to show me his scraped knee with its crumbs of dirt and reddened skin. But, when he was just twelve inches short of arriving, a strange expression flitted across his face. He stopped, abruptly turned, and, without further ado, returned to his miniature off-road dump truck and its load of dirt.

Twenty-seven years later, I still smile at this tiny memory of parenting, but I’m amazed at its spiritual parallel in today’s confused and wounded world. My son’s intense immersion in his fascination with all things construction distracted him from his pain. He forsook a band-aid, a kiss from mom, and perhaps even a popsicle to return to his first love: his trucks.

I’ve often followed his lead when I fell and hurt myself on this world’s sharp edges. As my heart cried tears of genuine and justified hurt, I ran to the typical first-aid stations of life such as lamenting my pain to friends. That is a good choice if the friend is wise and experienced in God’s ways. But, ultimately, I realized that being immersed in my relationship with Jesus and fascinated by all things Christian, I could be distracted from the crumbs of the world’s dirt embedded in my wounded soul and return to a fascination with the Lover of my soul: my Redeemer and Friend, Jesus.

I enter His Presence, and the world’s hurts fade as I hear Him; the King of kings singing over me! (Zephaniah 3:17) And I feel comforted and close to Him when I realize how much He thinks about me as shown by Psalm 139:17-18 which says, “How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee.”

The Gospel enfolds me and draws me into praise for my Redeemer. The stories He tells in His Word rebalance my perspectives and the companionship we share refreshes, my weary grief-filled soul.

When we become so immersed in seeing Jesus face to face, in talking with him every day, in concentrating on our relationship and His Word, we can often be distracted from our hurt. The more serious the hurt, the longer it may take, but, eventually, tiny wisps of time with the one Who “hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows” (Isaiah 53:4) can bring hope and healing.

Underneath our grief flows the current of the Holy Spirit’s comfort; the hope of future joy, others’ prayers for us, and the healing passage of time.

My four-year-old taught me how to operate a spiritual off-road dump truck to haul off the negative emotions from life’s storms on that long-ago sunlit moment in his play. Try following this biblical map to help you offload the world’s hurts.

- Meditate on Scripture
- Articulate and define your experience, setting it apart from yourself
- Pray Psalm 51:10
- Sing a praise song
- Let me know how it goes. Drop a note through my Facebook page, [www.facebook.com/MarleneHouk167](https://www.facebook.com/MarleneHouk167), or email me through my website, [www.marlene-houk.com/](http://www.marlene-houk.com/). Happy trails!



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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](mailto:marlenehouk@bellsouth.net). Learn more about women in the Bible at Marlene's website: [www.MarleneHouk.com](http://www.MarleneHouk.com)



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# Morganton Seventh Day Adventist

## The Greatest Sorry On Paper

By Steve Bietz  
Burke County

Historians have fittingly nicknamed her the Nine Day Queen. The royal bloodline of England has had a fair amount of backbiting and backstabbing, especially when the throne was occupied by the Tudor family. And as if the Tudor family were not bloody enough on their own, throw in the mix the Protestant Reformation and England's executioners put in a lot of overtime. The Nine Day Queen would be a young lady named Jane Grey. Her title was Lady Jane and she was the cousin of King Edward, who was dying. But King Edward's illness had been kept a secret. He was dying of what we call today, tuberculosis. King Edward was fiercely protestant. And when Edward died, since he had no children, the throne would have automatically gone to his half-sister, Mary. That would have been the natural succession. But there was a problem. Mary was a staunch Roman Catholic. While at the same time, Lady Jane was protestant.

On his deathbed, King Edward, guided by his royal court officials who were all protestant and followers of the Church of England, bequeathed in his last will and testament, the throne to his cousin, Jane Grey. The king dies and still the news is kept secret. Parliament is told that Edward has bequeathed the crown to his cousin and Jane Grey is quickly brought to the palace where she hears for the first time, Edward is dead and that he had left the throne to her. Jane at first flatly refuses to accept. Jane knows that others in the royal bloodline are ahead of her as far as occupying the throne. But with the overwhelming influence of King Edwards palace staff officials who are wanting to keep the church-state, the Church of England instead of going back to the Roman Catholic Church, they twist Jane Grey's arm hard enough that she finally agrees to be Queen of England.

Mary, Edward's half-sister, along with the rest of England are only told that Edward had died after Lady Jane had been crowned Queen. Mary immediately calls on the Roman Church to rally behind her and to gather the support of the military. After acquiring the backing of the military, the military comes marching into London and Queen Jane has no choice but to surrender the throne. Jane had been Queen of England for nine days.

Mary is crowned Queen and she would have Jane arrested for treason and she would be given a sentence of death. And so, on February 12th, 1554, Jane was brought to the scaffold where she would be given the opportunity to speak. Jane knelt down and proceeded to quote from memory, Psalm 51. Why was Psalm 51 chosen by Jane?

The Bible informs us that David was the author of Psalm 51. And we are even told when David wrote it. David wrote the song after he had been exposed as an adulterer and a murderer.

The celebrated English minister and preacher, best remembered as the author of the Christian allegory The Pilgrim's Progress, John Bunyan, would make this statement about Psalm 51. John Bunyan would write that Psalm 51 is the "greatest sorry" the world has ever witnessed. I agree with John Bunyan. David's repentance on display in Psalm 51 is truly a stunning sorry. *"For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me...Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow...Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me."* Indeed, a stunning sorry! How's my sorry and how's your sorry? Intellectual religion is not enough. Only a repentant heart can be cleansed. May you and I deal truly with our own soul. Be as earnest, as persistent, as you would be if your mortal life were at stake. The Nine Day Queen, Lady Jane, would choose Psalm 51 as the words she would say with her last breath. She was 17 years old. John Bunyan wrote that Psalm 51 is the "greatest sorry" the world has ever witnessed. May we all, make the prayer of David our own.

Steve Bietz, Pastor, Morganton Seventh day Adventist Church.



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Sudoku Solution

5	2	7	1	8	3	9	4	6
1	3	4	7	6	9	2	5	8
9	8	6	4	5	2	1	3	7
4	1	2	8	7	6	5	9	3
6	5	8	3	9	1	7	2	4
7	9	3	2	4	5	6	8	1
2	7	1	9	3	8	4	6	5
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No Regrets Family -  
Coronavirus and the Christian  
By Dean Honeycutt  
Mitchell County



Is God able to preserve me?  
I would like to draw your attention to 2 Timothy 4:18 (KJV 1900)  
18 “And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

The Apostle Paul is doing the talking here, and he says God “will preserve me.” The word preserve here is the same word we use to describe salvation, to rescue, or to deliver. In this context, the word preserve is future active indicative meaning not only has God saved Paul today, but will continue to preserve Paul’s life until he goes to heaven. Paul could endure the hardships of serving Christ because his life is in God’s hand. Do you believe your life is in God’s hand?

In other words, when we are saved God rescues our life. While on the cross the mob yelled at Jesus “He saved others, but He cannot save Himself.” Jesus did not rescue His life from the cross, so He could rescue my life.

So, I cannot save my life and I cannot preserve my life. Jesus has already done that. If I cannot save my life the only thing, I can do is lose my life for Christ. Right now, our instructions or directives are Stay apart 6 feet, wear a face covering, stay at home, do not be in crowds of ten or more. And we know that people who are in contact with someone who has coronavirus may get sick.

These are not bad directives, but are they always necessary for a Christian and could they possibly cause anxiety and fear?

God’s word tells us to minister to people, pray with people, lay hands on people, fellowship with people, gather with people, and witness to people. Am I to temporarily suspend my Christian directives for a time to comply with what institutions are telling me to do?

This has been very conflicting for me as a pastor and I have not been able to fully comply with our state mandates. Does this mean I do not have wisdom, or lack intelligence or tempting God?

If you think about wisdom in that way David would have never fought Goliath, Moses would not have crossed the Red Sea, Peter would have never walked on water, and Paul would have never been a missionary.

An eighteen-year-old girl from Georgia jumps out of a plane in a tandem parachute attempt. The parachute does not open properly and spins out of control the reserve parachute is deployed too late. And both young girls and 35-year-old instructor die.

Both the teenage girl and instructor were taking a known risk jumping out of an airplane. The instructor had probably made hundreds of successful jumps. Many people have died from failed parachute attempts. The young lady probably signed some type of waiver releasing the parachute company of any liability. Knowing the risks did not stop either of them from making the jump.

Trusting God during this pandemic is not like jumping out of an airplane with an instructor taking a risk trusting everything goes well. With a possibility, there may be a problem. That is not faith, but this is the way many Christians are living in this pandemic. We are afraid something is going to happen to us outside of God’s control. And that causes fear.

Look at a couple of examples. First Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in Daniel 3:16. They are living for the Lord and their faith is put to the test. They are thrown into a fire.

Second Stephen also a man doing the Lord’s work in Acts 7:56. Stephen is stoned to death. Answer the following questions about these two events.

1. Are both men living for the Lord?
2. Are both men’s lives put at risk of death?
3. Does God love one less than the other?
4. Do both men see Jesus?
5. Are both men willing to die for their faith?
6. Does God receive the Glory in both events?
7. Can I trust God through this pandemic with my Life?

I want to show you something about the word preserve and save or rescue.  
1. The Lord Jesus did not save Himself so He could save you.  
Luke 23:35 (KJV 1900)

35 “And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God.”

2. Jesus Christ saves people from sickness.  
Matthew 9:22 (KJV 1900)  
22 “But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.”

3. Jesus Christ will preserve me.  
2 Timothy 4:18 (KJV 1900)  
18 “And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

The God who saved your soul is the God who heals you when you are sick and manifests Himself in your life for His glory. Just like the people in the Bible. Continuing to be the church is not about bravery or courage on my part, it is how-ever about trusting God.

If God brings you to it, He will get you through it.

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

And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive. Matthew 21:22



The Rest of The Story

Doug Harrell

I have to laugh as I remember the evening Clint is talking about. One of the pleasures of working with Clint was his innocence and gullibility. I was as tired in the evenings as he was, well maybe not quite, but it was always fun to joke around with him. I enjoyed the Gaither hour as much as he and Barbara, but it was always good for a response when I would egg them on about getting more work done. Oh, to be able to sit back down with Clint in the living room and enjoy another hour of good gospel music and conversation!

Sunset at Harrell Hill

Dear Friends,

I receive letters, email, phone calls, and personal visits from many, thanking me for recounting my close encounters and near-death experiences at Harrell Hill Farms. I confess that I often wonder how it is that Christian brothers and sisters can derive such perverse pleasure from Farmer Clint's near misses with eternity ☺. You may be surprised to learn that such occurrences are commonplace throughout my lifetime, even pre-farming days. For example, one day I will recount for you how I was run over by an outboard motor after falling into one of Alaska's most frigid and dangerous rivers. Or perhaps you'd like to hear about the night I was attacked by a moose? But not now, let's stay closer to home for the time being.

One summer's eve, Doug, Barbara, and I were resting in the kitchen at their farmhouse at Harrell Hill. I was celebrating the fact that we actually had a short workday, by Doug standards anyway, a mere 12 hours. As we visited around the dinner table Doug surmised that he had "been thinking...", always a scary scenario. Usually, this meant we would soon embark on a wild and crazy venture of some sort and I would go along kicking and screaming, my body and life hanging in the balance.

As Barbara and I digested her fine home-cookin', Doug offered me a second piece of Hawaiian Sunset cake...a sure sign of impending doom for me! This dessert, a Barbara specialty, had become my overwhelming favorite. And I knew that if Doug offered me a second slice something terrible was about to happen to me. He began, "You know, there is so much to do around here, and it seems there are too few hours in the day". (I was feeling more confident than usual as I knew Doug could do a lot of things but even, he couldn't MAKE more time happen!) "So," I queried, "how do you propose that we get more done? Perhaps I could wear a miner's hat, with the lights on top, and work all night long. Just think, Doug, I can dig, plant, weed-eat, spread fertilizer, during the day; then crawl around on my hands and knees and dig potatoes, pull corn, and other veggies at night. I could take a 5-minute nap at the end of each corn row...or maybe rest beside the green lake beans...or perhaps snooze, ever so briefly, in the sorghum patch. By sunrise, I would already have chosen the over-ripened cabbage and tomatoes for the piggies' breakfast. That way you can work me around the clock. Would that make you happy?"

Shaking his head and closing his eyes, the way Doug does when he really would like to shoot me, my friend replied, "You know, Pollard, you just don't have a vision. You're a great worker and willing to do just about anything, but you need to look beyond the walls." Uh oh, here it comes! "We've usually finished dinner by 7:30 or so, and then we watch The Gaither Homecoming shows on TV, or sometimes we eat watermelon on dad's front porch. I'm thinking we should make good use of that hour, after dinner, to do more chores. Just think, an hour a day six days a week, it would be like having another day."

Believe me, friends, I enjoy hard work. Although inexperienced, I had grown to love farm chores as each day is filled with exciting, back-breaking, dangerous projects. I even became accustomed to getting out of bed at 4:30 AM to Doug's bellowing from the foot of the stairs, "Pollard, pancakes are ready. We're burning daylight!" I would spring from my bed, don my Farmer Clint attire, and descend for buckwheat cakes and another harrowing adventure on the farm. And, always,



I would note my friend's Bible, open to his daily devotions, resting on the end table. I accepted the notion of being mired in the dirt by 5:30 AM because that's what farmers do. Prayer, pancakes, and projects...can it get any better than this? But now, NOW this obsessed Farmer Doug, the Paul Bunyan of Harrell Hill, wants to take away the ONE HOUR I have each day to do nothing. I think not!

When you are a guest in one's home, as I was at Harrell Hill farmhouse, it is important to study and discern the "power structure", i.e., who is in charge. Well, having been Doug's indentured servant for several months I'd discovered that Barbara is the boss of him when we're inside that house. It only made sense, therefore, that whenever Doug proffered one of his cockamamie schemes, I would take a step back, hide behind Barbara, and see how the early skirmish would end. (Notice that I did not say, "...see who would win the early skirmish!")

Now Barbara is a very loving, dutiful, hard-working partner to Douglas. But there are some things she will not compromise. I've witnessed her drop everything she's doing to help her husband at a mere call. But hear me now, YOU DO NOT MESS AROUND WITH GAITHER HOMECOMING! As I cowered in the background, speechless and flabbergasted by Doug's "suggestion", I watched the lady of the house raise her head...look up at her husband (WAY up 'cause he's about 9' tall), and those tiny little eyes shot terrifying laser beams right into his skull. And the BIG man quivered, and his knees knocked and buckled...and he collapsed like an umbrella in a hurricane! And I knew, GAME OVER!

The three of us chuckled at this fiery exchange, and I wondered if Doug knew just how close he came to being annihilated (he of course did). I reminded Doug that God stopped the sun once, Joshua 10:12-14:

12 On the day the LORD gave the Amorites over to Israel, Joshua said to the LORD in the presence of Israel: "Sun, stand still over Gibeon, and you, moon, over the Valley of Aijalon." 13 So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, till the nation avenged itself on[a] its enemies, as it is written in the Book of Jashar. The sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed going down about a full day. 14 There has never been a day like it before or since, a day when the LORD listened to a human being.

Happy to be chiding him, I said, "Note verse 14...I'm pretty sure the Lord won't stop the sun for you!"

Barbara departed to her bedroom to watch Gaither Homecoming. I looked at my friend, with that "gotcha" grin, and said, "Think I'll go down to Daddy D's and have a little watermelon, wanna go? I love eating watermelon in the daylight." Doug shook his head, closed his eyes, "Pollard, one of these days..." Yeah, I know...but I'd won this battle on the Funny Farm (or at least got to enjoy the spoils) ...no extra workday for me. And that doggone watermelon was so good. Praise the Lord!

Humbled in the hills,  
Farmer Clint





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By Terry Cheek Th.D.  
McDowell County



2 Corinthians 1:3-4 *“Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; (4) Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.”*

If we step back and take a look at the world we live in it will horrify us; especially if we allow only what we see to shape our viewpoint. After all, there is anger, violence, terrorism, corruption, greed, and selfishness just to mention a few human behaviors. However, if we allow the Word of God, our Bible, to provide our viewpoint we still see all the bad stuff but we also receive comfort. The reality of God's comfort is what I want to give you this month. As the Lord led Paul to pen this letter to the Corinthian church, he began with a prayer. Paul began his prayer with a deeply focused description of God. Paul reminds us that God should be blessed; in other words, God is to be given praise and honor by all. We are not reading about any god, we are reading about “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” the Son of God and God the Son, mankind’s only redeemer and salvation from sin. Jesus came to live and die among us and His death was not any normal experience of human suffering. The death of Jesus upon Calvary’s Cross is the means God uses to make forgiveness available to stubborn, rebellious humans. This makes God “the Father of mercies” and the source of compassionate forgiveness.

God could have stopped there and it would have been more than any of us would have deserved, but He didn’t, God's concern goes beyond His forgiving mercy. He is “the God of all comfort.” God in heaven knows that His people experience physical, emotional, and, spiritual discouragement, suffering, and setbacks. We know from experience that God does not deal with the issues of life as we would, often God deals with the issues of life among His people by encouraging us and providing the sustaining strength we need to endure. Remember, whatever problem you are facing or will face, in the long run, God’s comfort is greater.

Do you realize the word comfort, or a form of that word, is used in our passage five times? God's comfort is a central theme of Paul’s prayer for the people of Corinth and likewise should be for the church as we minister today. Notice the God of comfort ministers to His people during every “tribulation” (trouble) large or small they are met with heavenly sustenance. Romans 8:32 reminds the born again Christian that God will not abandon His people during times of trouble.

We who have received God's comfort have also become agents to provide that comfort to others. Later in second Corinthians Paul reminds us how the presence of other Christians encouraged him as he endured life’s tribulations. Today, God's comfort comes to the world we live in through the Church; those who belong to God through Christ. I hope you can see that we as the Church have the ability and responsibility to share with others during their time of need; for example, we should share our experience, encouragement, assurance, and resources. Being the hands of Jesus creates a connection that is empowered by the Holy Spirit and provides empathy, encouragement, and reassurance that God’s love and comfort are made real and tangible as His people become vessels that carry to others what God has already given to us. Of course, as we share, we should never forget to share the soul-saving power of Jesus Christ. We have not just a commission but a Great Commission to reach everyone within our influence with the witness and testimony of Jesus Christ. Until we meet again in print or person, may God 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](mailto:theinspiringword@gmail.com) Or by visiting [www.theinspiringword.org](http://www.theinspiringword.org)*



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Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD)

By Lawrence Traylor  
Jacksonville Beach, Florida



How do you know?  
We are sober alcoholics. We are a paradox.  
It was an icy-cold, winter Sunday afternoon in January 1992. We were living in New England when my wife gave me an ultimatum: “Quit drinking or move out!!!”  
Opening the kitchen refrigerator door, I withdrew the remaining bottle of beer and hurled it as hard as I could into our backyard woods. The bottle made a violent, smashing sound as it collided with an old birch tree, tiny shards of glass splintering as they fell to the fresh snow below.  
A paradox, as I had to surrender to win my battle against my cunning foe, Alcohol.  
Alcohol-induced loneliness, despair, and depression which had become unbearable, and I became aware of my dark thoughts of suicide. I was at my bottom! I was physically, mentally, and spiritually bankrupt-and realized that continuing to drink meant certain death, jail, or being institutionalized.  
As a young person, I, like many of my friends, “enjoyed” drinking; but how much is too much? For me, there was no such thing as “just having a drink.” How could anybody drink “just one?”  
It is not uncommon for people to deny that they have a drinking problem. Denial (“deNile”) is not just a river that flows through Egypt!  
Technically speaking, what is a “drink?” One standard drink, according to the American Medical Association (AMA) is a 12 oz. can of beer, a 5 oz. a glass of wine or a 1.5 oz. the measure of any liquor. For men, low-risk alcohol consumption is considered drinking four or fewer drinks on any single day and fewer than 14 drinks during a given week.  
The guidelines for low-risk drinking for women are lower. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) guidelines suggest low-risk drinking for women is having three or fewer standard drinks per day and no more than seven drinks per week. Heavy alcohol use is defined by the AMA as drinking five or more drinks for men and four or more drinks for women on the same day on each of five or more days within a given month. I have spilled more than this! Alcoholism is a chronic, progressive disease with varying symptoms including an insatiable desire to drink despite negative consequences with work or relationships and health-related problems. Alcoholism is oftentimes referred to as a family disease as it is frequently passed genetically among extended family members. For years, I did not, and you may not, recognize the signs of alcohol abuse in yourself or someone else. If you have to ask, “Is my drinking a problem?” it probably is a problem.  
Even the description of the disease of alcoholism has become subject to political correctness. It is now being referred to as Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD).  
AUD is considered by mental health experts to be a chronic, relapsing, brain disease characterized by an impaired ability to stop or control alcohol use despite adverse social, occupational, or health consequences, i.e. death, jail, and/or institutions.  
Following the American Psychiatric Association (APA), if a person exhibits two or more symptoms from a list of eleven criteria, he or she is diagnosed as having AUD, which includes degree classifications of mild, moderate, and severe. My family doctor never questioned my alcohol intake amount or frequency and, if he had, I would have lied.  
The statistics regarding AUD are not encouraging. Research originating with the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD) reports 17.6 million people in the U.S. to suffer from alcohol abuse or dependence. This equates to one in every thirteen adults.  
The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that annually 88,000 people, approximately 62,000 men, and 26,000 women, die from alcohol-related causes. This makes alcohol the third leading preventable cause of death in the United States, the first being tobacco use and the second, poor diet and physical inactivity.  
How do you know if you are an alcoholic or AUD positive? There is no disposable, COVID-19-type test that provides same-day, positive or negative results. I was painfully aware I was an alcoholic long before my January 1992 sobriety date. It was a dark and lonely secret I kept from my family and Christian friends for years.  
How did I know I was an alcoholic? Perhaps, you too can identify with some of my earliest symptoms.  
For years, I told myself I could stop drinking any time I so desired. However, I discovered at an early age there was no such thing as “just one” glass, shot, bottle, or can of anything containing alcohol and once I started, I could not stop. My self-discipline and ability to manage my alcohol intake had essentially evaporated. On too many occasions to count, I promised myself and others I would have just one drink. However, I ignored these promises, failing miserably in my attempts to keep them, every time.  
Trying to be funny and popular among my peers, I would announce to anyone listening, “I only have a drinking problem when there is nothing around to drink.” I secretly wished well-meaning family members and friends would mind their own business, not tell me what to do, and stay in their lane when discussing my drinking. I was completely unaware of experiencing the alcohol-related personality changes I was accused of. My drinking had progressively become more important to me than my job, my wife, my children, my Christian family, and friends. My alcohol-induced behavior included attending only those events that allowed me to drink and socialize with others who drank as I did. I began to not trust people who did not drink. My repeated attempts to stop drinking lasted over a weekend or two, but sobriety never lasted more than a couple of days.  
When I did stop abruptly, “cold turkey,” I noticed mental and physical symp-

toms including insomnia, tremors, mood swings, and depression. Occasionally, I would just drink beer or wine, steadfast in my belief that nobody could be an alcoholic if he or she just drank beer or wine.  
It was not unusual behavior for me to obtain “extra” drinks methodically and skillfully at “open-bar events” for fear they would run out. Also, to eliminate my anxiety, I routinely consumed several drinks “prior” to attending any event. I carefully calculated the distance to be traveled and always measured the number of beers I would need to bring and drink on the way. Once at a party, I would refrain from eating anything that might jeopardize my sought-after “buzz.”  
A trip to pick-up a pizza or run a local errand included the same routine of bringing a designated number of beers with me to correlate to the length and time of the round-trip drive. I never considered this behavior reckless as my children in the back seat were always safely buckled into their seatbelts. Yikes!!!  
I continued to use alcohol despite negative emotional effects such as depression, anxiety, and memory lapses. It never occurred to me that alcohol itself was a depressant and that depression coincided with my alcohol abuse. Guilty of missing days at work due to calling in sick, aka, hangovers, had become far too frequent. The weekend mornings were riddled with dry-mouth and throbbing headaches.  
Toward the end of my drinking career, I was living to drink and drinking to live and had become sick and tired of being sick and tired. My abusive drinking eliminated any chance of what I believed to be well-deserved work promotions. This resulted instead infrequent job performance failures and numerous involuntary terminations.  
My activity caused painful financial strife and difficulties for my family, creating stress that was seemingly unbearable and initiating yet darker and increased episodes of depression. My self-esteem deteriorated. I noticed simple things like my hands shaking and difficulty making direct eye contact with others in social and business settings.  
I became increasingly aware of the many mornings I met the bathroom mirror staring back at bloodshot eyes and broken capillaries beginning to appear on my nose and face. My continued inability to show up for scheduled meetings on time and my loss of focus and concentration in social and business settings got progressively worse.  
I began making excuses for not attending social and family gatherings, as I was spending more time self-isolating and drinking alone at home. I noticed it took me increasingly longer to capture my elusive alcohol “buzz.” I constantly compared my drinking to others. I noted, with congratulatory pride, that many of my friends drank considerably more than I did. I envied people who could drink without ever getting into trouble.  
Something had to change! That day in 1992, when given the ultimatum, triggered the change. I began attending my local Church’s 12-Step meetings and taking the advice of a former prep-school classmate who suggested attending ninety 12-Step meetings in ninety days.  
In hindsight, attending ninety 12-Step meetings in ninety days saved my life. I am now sober twenty-eight years (10,220 days and counting) and live a happy, healthy life, second to none. I was able to find a way to like myself again.  
If you, a family member, or a friend can relate to any of my described symptoms and story and would like to talk, please call me. And if you do not reach out to me, reach out to someone. There are countless resources available in your community through 12-Step groups, clergy, hotlines, and those who care about you. You do not have to go through what I did alone.  
Thank you in advance for allowing me to share my story which helps me stay sober for another day.

---

*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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# Morganton Baptist Church

## Salvation: A Marvelous Work of God's Grace

By Dan Qurollo  
Burke County



Beginning in Colossians 1:10 and continuing through verse 12, Paul described four dimensions of a worthy walk: continuous fruit (vs. 10a), increasing knowledge (vs. 10b), increased power (vs 11), and increased praise (vs. 12). It is this latter dimension of praise that forms the basis of this article. As believers, we should respond with thanks to God the Father for the salvation He has given, for the work of salvation will occupy the praises of all believers for all eternity. The salvation that believers have today is a work for which God is responsible; therefore, it is a work for which God is to be praised.

The first work that God has done is “made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” A foundational element of salvation is understanding our condition prior to salvation. Romans 3:23 teaches, *“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”* Mankind is hopelessly lost and unable to save himself. Thank God for Romans 5:8, *“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”* In our state of sinful and rebellious individuals, God publicly demonstrated His love towards those who are undeserving to provide a way of salvation. That way of salvation is found only by placing one’s faith in Jesus Christ. At that very moment, Colossians 1:12 teaches God has “made us meet.” In other words, God caused us to be sufficient – not because of ourselves, but because of the work done by Jesus Christ. We are given the “power [right, authority] to become the sons of God.” We are declared by God to be fitting to have a share in the inheritance that belongs to all believers. At the very moment, we placed our trust in Jesus Christ, we were made adequate and sufficient.

The second work God has done is He “hath delivered us from the power of darkness.” Ephesians 2:1-3 describes the state of every unbeliever by teaching, *“And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; 2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air; the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: 3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.”* At the moment of salvation, God rescued us and freed us from the imprisonment of the power of darkness. Once again, we are unable to do this. This is a work that belongs to God alone. We have been rescued out of the domain of darkness. We have been rescued out of the sphere in which Satan’s power is exercised, the realm of spiritual darkness. Understand that the moment you were saved, you were delivered from the domain and rule of spiritual darkness. Therefore, you do not have to sin; you choose to sin.

The third work God has done is He “hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.” As unsaved individuals, we operated in the realm of spiritual darkness. The moment that we placed our trust in Jesus Christ, God the Father transferred us from the domain and rule of spiritual darkness and placed us into the kingdom of His dear Son. Therefore, He is the One under whose rule we are now under. No longer in Adam, the believer has been placed in Jesus Christ. It is a position of absolute security from which we can never be taken, regardless of what we may experience or what we may do. John 10:27-30 teaches, *“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: 28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. 29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand. 30 I and my Father are one.”*

It is in Jesus Christ that we discover the fourth work of salvation: “redemption through his blood.” The term redemption is a theological term that pictures an individual standing on the auction block to be auctioned to the highest bidder. When the bids are cast, those who have placed their trust in Jesus Christ have been purchased by Him. Therefore, they have been released from sin and the bondage that it entails. No longer under the slave master of sin and death, the believer is forever a servant of Jesus Christ. He is redeemed and set free from sin. The means through which this is done is the blood of Jesus Christ. Those who place their complete trust in the finished work of Jesus Christ are saved. Romans 10:13 promises the individual who calls to Him in faith, “thou shalt be saved.” This saved person is now set free from the bondage of Satan, sin, and death. Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it!

Finally, the fifth work of salvation is “the forgiveness of sins.” For some, forgiveness is a difficult reality to accept because we often base it on feelings. Forgiveness is the act of freeing from an obligation, guilt, or punishment. As difficult as this is to comprehend, forgiveness is the complete pardon and cancellation of sin. When God forgives, God forgives completely. The moment a person is saved, he experiences God’s forgiveness of all sin – past, present, and future. Psalm 103:12 teaches, *“As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.”* Psalm 32:1-2 teaches, *“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. 2 Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.”* Hebrews 10:17 states, *“And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.”* God wills to remember them no more. God never recalls to mind that which He already forgave. The recall is either Satan, self, or both.

Rejoice in the salvation that you have been given. If you are a believer, embrace who you are in Jesus Christ. Each of us will quickly acknowledge that we are completely unworthy; remember it is not what you have done; it is what God did. You only need to trust Him.

*Pastor Dan Qurollo is pastor Morganton Baptist Church. Check us out on our website [www.morgantonbaptist.net](http://www.morgantonbaptist.net) or find us on Facebook and YouTube.*

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# Enjoying Everyday Life

## Understanding Faith and How It Works

By Joyce Meyer

What is faith? And what does it look like to actually live by faith?

These are important questions because we receive and experience the blessings God has for us through faith.

Hebrews 11:1 says, “Faith is the assurance (title deed, confirmation) of things hoped for (divinely guaranteed), and the evidence of things not seen [the conviction of their reality – faith comprehends as fact what cannot be experienced by the physical senses]” (AMP).

I like to define faith as the hand that reaches out and receives what God has for us. By faith, we believe what God says in His Word is true, that it’s for us, and that we will receive everything He wants to give us. We believe we have His promises before we get them or experience them.

Everyone has faith, but not everyone puts their faith in God. For example, when a person sits in a chair, they have faith that the chair will hold them. People drive to work because they have faith in the traffic laws that make it possible to travel on the roads.

But first and foremost, we need to put our faith in God and the truth of the Bible.

Romans 1:17 says, “For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed, both springing from faith and leading to faith [disclosed in a way that awakens more faith]. As it is written... ‘The just and upright shall live by faith.’”

This verse reveals that we’re saved by faith and we are created to live by faith. In order to live by faith, we have to release it, and there are three ways we do that: praying, saying, and doing.

### The Privilege of Prayer

Prayer is the greatest privilege we have! Amazingly, we can personally communicate with Almighty God, the Creator of the Universe. That means we can talk to Him and He hears us, and He wants to talk to us.

One of the main ways we hear God’s voice is through His Word, which is why it’s critically important for us to study the Bible. When we diligently study the Word, we get a revelation of who God is, how He loves us, and what His will is for our lives. We learn how to pray for the things He wants to give us...the kind of life Jesus died for us to have.

James 4 says that people live in strife, quarreling, and fighting because they try to get what they want and they’re jealous of what others have, but they can’t make it happen for themselves. Verses 2-3 say, “You covet but cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures” (NIV).

Have you been trying to get something or make something happen and you’re frustrated because you can’t achieve it? Maybe you’re struggling because you’re striving to do it in your own strength or you’re going after things that aren’t right for you or in God’s plan for your life.

We need to pray and ask God for what we want, but we need to ask for the blessings He wants to give us. I often pray like this: “God, I’m going to ask You for everything I want, but if I ask for something that’s not right for me, please don’t give it to me. I really only want what YOU want for me because You know what’s best for me.”

### Praying for the Promises of God

There are some situations where we may not know for sure what God’s will is, and that’s when we need to trust that if we don’t get what we think we want, it’s because He has something better for us. But there are many things we can ask for with assurance and confident expectation that God will give them because He promises them to us in His Word. Here are a few...

- You don’t have to be lonely because God is always with you (Psalm 73:23; Hebrews 13:50).
- You can have peace in every situation (John 14:27; Philippians 4:6-7).
- You can have God’s wisdom for every decision (James 1:5).
- You have the strength, in Christ, to do whatever you need to do (Philippians 4:13).
- God loves you and He has an amazing plan for your life (John 3:16; 1 John 4:9-10; Jeremiah 29:11).



God has so much more for you than what you have experienced so far in your life. Make it your number one priority to spend time with Him every day in prayer and Bible study, and begin boldly asking Him to give you every good thing He’s planned for you.

Put your faith in God in every area of your life and everything you do, and you’ll discover how living by faith really is an amazing adventure!

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](http://www.joycemeyer.org).

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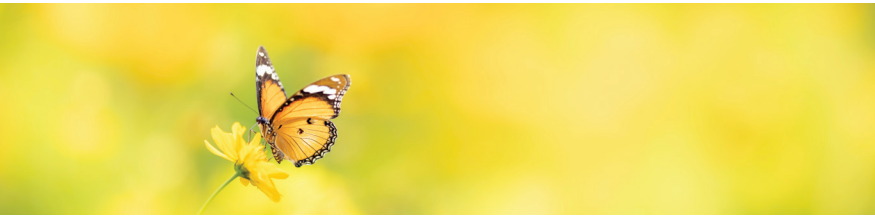
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Stand Fast In The Lord –  
Philippians 4: 1

By Patricia Jackson  
McDowell County



The book of Philippians is a letter from Paul to the Philippians, thanking them for the gift they sent him, after learning of his detention in Rome.

In V.1, Paul’s words to “Stand fast in the Lord” are encouragement, but it is more than that. It is actually a commandment from Paul. He knew they also faced struggles, persecution and urged them to rejoice, regardless of their present circumstances. They must also stand fast against false teachings, such as the Judaizes mentioned in Ch. 3. Paul spoke those words from his own experiences and how his life had been an extraordinary journey of not only serving God but standing fast in the Lord while enduring extreme hardships. In 2 Corinthians 11:23-28, Paul recounts his numerous beatings, his imprisonment, receiving lashes, being stoned, shipwrecked, facing hunger and thirst. He was in constant danger from Gentile robbers and his own brethren, the Jews. Yet Paul continued to stand, not in his own self, but only “in the Lord”.

There are many other notables in the bible who continued to “stand fast in the Lord”. When young David determined to stand against the giant Goliath, he “hastened and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine”. This courageous act was only possible by “standing fast in the Lord”. Daniel is another great man in the bible, who was also willing to die for his faith. He knew he worshiped a living God and refused to worship another god, even when his life was threatened. Words of strength often fail when faced with reality. When Daniel was taken to the lion’s den, he was faced with what would be considered certain death. Daniel had committed that he would die instead of worshiping a false god. As he stood fast in the Lord, he was delivered.

Who would you include among the list of great men who “Stood fast in the Lord”? Moses, Abraham, Stephen, Sampson, Apostle Peter? How did these men stand fast – by realizing they were not standing alone but “in the Lord”. The word “stand” appears in 669 instances in the bible. We cannot show a position of strength or determination if we are sitting or lying down. Our standing must always be combined with “in the Lord” for we cannot do it alone. We first stood fast in the Lord when we surrendered our life to Jesus Christ and trusted him for salvation. When we feel weary and want to give up, remember the scriptures and the examples in the bible of those who stood fast. As with Paul and men of old, Jesus, our defender, is always available to us; we never stand alone.

What do we need to stand fast from? From the workings of the devil, as he brings temptation, conflict, persecution, worries, or doubts to us. By standing fast in the Lord, we can rejoice in our circumstances and overcome them. We will gain strength and courage as we go forth in the work of the ministry.

Most of you are familiar with a Christian hymnal entitled “Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus. As a child in bible school, we would march around the auditorium, carrying the American, State, and Christian flag banners, as we sang this song. In 1858, George Duffield, Jr. assisted a fellow minister (Dudley Tyng) in a revival of evangelicalism in Pennsylvania. Over 5,000 men attended with over 1,000 converts resulting. Tyng died the following month in a farming accident. Duffield wrote the song, based on the previous revival message of “Go now ye that are men, and serve the Lord”. He recited the new hymn, at the memorial, as a tribute to his friend.

**Stand up, Stand up for Jesus,  
Ye soldiers of the cross.  
Lift high his royal banner,  
It must not suffer loss....**

When we face difficulties, let’s remember they are nothing compared to Paul and others in the bible, as we Stand Fast in the Lord.

*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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# Medical Mission Trip

## Kenyan Missionaries From NC Feed Thousands During COVID Crisis

By Melissa Taylor  
Burke County



Travis and Laura Sawyer have welcomed visitors to their Kenyan mission station for the past 15 years. Moving from Robbinsville, NC, serving a large Massai bush village in Sekenani, Kenya has been their passion. The Sawyers, along with their four girls, are integrated into the community in almost every aspect of village life. The sights and sounds of the village are surprisingly breathtaking.

A larger than life sunset blazes above the grasslands of the Massai Mara. Cowbells ring like music as boys lead the long lines of goats and cattle back to the home pen for the night. Women can be seen still sitting in circles, finishing up their elaborate beading projects. Children are chasing each other around the family mud huts, while the fires inside are heating up for the evening meal. Men are gathered around a large tree for an evening chat and if you look hard, the zebra and gazelle are in for their evening graze. Simple, happy.

....until COVID.

Kenyan authorities reacted as did many other countries and placed quarantine guidelines and a lock-down for businesses and gatherings. Bush life is inevitably hard, due to the remoteness, but now there is no trading of those goats and cattle for income. The women are unable to sell that elaborate beadwork to tourists or shops. Children are unable to go to school, not having the meal normally provided for them there. Men have no way to make money due to quarantine guidelines and no markets are available to purchase food.

.....People are starving.

Laura said, "It is almost unbearable to see your friends going hungry" and of course, they did something about it. Straight Up Missions, the Sawyers independent mission survives on donations. Travis said, "We did not know in the beginning how many we could feed, but we had to try".

In the first week of April, the Sawyers began to distribute food bags and were excited to feed a total of 25 families in week one. Each bag costing \$5, contains enough food for a family of eight for three days. The Sawyer's efforts have grown exponentially with God's grace! They quickly grew within weeks to feeding over 400 families twice weekly and have expanded into other nearby villages that are in desperate need as well. The food distribution has been so expansive, the Kenyan government has recognized the Sawyer family. Even with these amazing efforts, this is still not enough! Travis says "Despite Kenya beginning to relax some guidelines, it may take months to impact the bush". A video from their Facebook site, The Sawyers In Kenya, shows villagers in such need for food, they happily take leftover rotten cabbage. The videos which they post weekly, show lines of villagers almost as far as the eye can see, waiting for their bag of food. Unfortunately, some do walk away unfed due to the demand and lack of funding. Laura said, "We will not stop as long as God gives us strength".

The Sawyers have no intent on slowing their efforts. Galatians 6:2 tells us "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ". Their mission exemplifies selfless love and carrying the burden, as the entire family spends countless hours preparing and packaging food each week for distribution. To continue with food distribution, donations must continue to support the efforts.

If you would like to donate to help feed Kenya, go to [straightupmissions.com](http://straightupmissions.com)

*Melissa is a Family Nurse Practitioner who organizes medical mission trips to the bush of Kenya. I am the proud wife of Jason and mother of Keagan. I am also a proud member of the Zion Baptist Church Family in Morganton.*

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Burke County Public Schools Opens  
Burke County Virtual Academy

By Cheryl Shuffler  
Burke County



Burke County Public Schools will open Burke County Virtual Academy in the fall for students and parents seeking a longer-term, flexible remote learning option. The academy will be open to any K-12 student whether currently enrolled with Burke County Public Schools or in homeschool, private school, or charter school anywhere in the state.

Dr. Christie Abernathy, director of Advance Learning, explained that this tuition-free option offers personalized education to students who want more flexibility in their school day or a blended model partnership between the home and public school. Abernathy said, “The Burke County Virtual Academy is optimal for students who learn best working independently in an online environment. While a traditional school has a more formal structure and schedule, our virtual academy allows students and parents to organize their daily school work routine. The flexible schedule alleviates conflicts between school and other commitments students may have. The Burke County Virtual Academy also offers a personalized learning program that is tailored to a student’s needs, and provides parents the opportunity to guide and facilitate their child’s education in the home environment.”

Burke County Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Larry Putnam said talented, local teachers who are licensed and highly qualified will design the Burke County Virtual Academy courses and provide students engaging and interactive instruction.

Putnam explained how the Burke County Virtual Academy came about and why it would be appealing to homeschoolers. He said, “This virtual academy has been in the works for a while now - even before COVID-19 hit. We saw this as a great opportunity to accelerate its opening and provide families interested in a true virtual academy the option to take advantage of it now. Maybe families have been homeschooling and are looking for something different, something more. The Burke County Virtual Academy is ideal for students in a homeschool setting because they receive additional academic support while maintaining a flexible schedule and personalized learning. Since our academy does not charge tuition, enrolling will eliminate the cost associated with purchasing online content for your children. As for our students already enrolled in Burke County Public Schools, we understand there are uncertainties with how the regular school year will open in August -- face-to-face versus remote or a combination -- but this Burke County Virtual Academy is separate and will not be affected by mandated school openings and closings based on the COVID-19 pandemic.”

Abernathy said the ideal student for Burke Virtual Academy is one who demonstrates that he or she can be successful in a virtual learning environment. Students will need access to a computer and a reliable, high-speed internet. She said several examples of students who may be interested in the Burke County Virtual Academy include high school students who are dual-enrolled in college courses and want the flexibility to fully develop a schedule conducive to taking college courses, completing required high school courses and/or working jobs simultaneously. Or students who may be pursuing other interests in areas such as elite athletics, equestrian and similar competitions, or the fine arts.

All Burke County Virtual Academy classes are aligned with the North Carolina Standard Course of Study and include all core content areas: English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. Some elective classes will be offered as well. The Burke County Virtual Academy follows the Burke County Schools academic calendar. While students have flexibility about where and when to complete assignments, they are expected to login and work every school day, and to follow course deadlines established by their teacher. Burke County Virtual Academy students are required to take all end-of-course exams face-to-face at a central location with other virtual students.

For those interested in the Burke County Virtual Academy, there is at least a semester-long commitment. Abernathy said, “Students who start school in August enrolled in the Burke County Virtual Academy are expected to maintain enroll-

*continued on page 39*



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God is Bigger

By John F. Howard, Jr  
Avery County



When my brothers and I were growing up, Veggie Tales was one of our favorite video series. Each episode of Veggie Tales included talking vegetables who taught children common Bible stories and basic Christian values. In one particular episode, which I think was the very first one titled “Where’s God When I’m S-Scared?” Junior Asparagus watches a scary movie before going to bed. After his parents took him to bed and turned off the lights, he began to see monsters and dark shadows in his bedroom and became frightened. The video cuts to Larry the Cucumber and Bob the Tomato, who then started to teach Junior Asparagus that he didn’t need to be afraid because God is bigger than the boogie man. As the Veggies talk about the problem, they break out into a song called, “God is bigger than the boogie man”. I have never forgotten the chorus of the song which goes like this, “God is bigger than the boogie man. He’s bigger than Godzilla, or the monsters on TV. Oh, God is bigger than the boogie man. And He’s watching out for you and me.”

We all have times when we are scared of something. Some of us are scared of snakes and spiders. Some of us are scared of flying. Some of us are scared of trying new things, like new foods because what if it doesn’t taste good or going to new places because we’ve never been there and we don’t know what it’s like. Being scared, being afraid of something can sometimes paralyze us where we are. Fear is a real emotion that warns us of danger but too often we allow fear too much space in our lives, like being afraid of boogie men under the bed, monsters on tv, and Godzilla.

During the time that Moses was leading the people out of bondage, he sent representatives from each of the 12 tribes of Israel to explore the Promised Land. After 40 days they returned with some of the fruit of the land and this report: “They gave Moses this account: *“We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit”* (Numbers 13:27). So far, so good! But then the fear bomb drops! *“But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large. We even saw descendants of Anak there. 29 The Amalekites live in the Negev; the Hittites, Jebusites, and Amorites live in the hill country; and the Canaanites live near the sea and along with the Jordan”* (Numbers 13: 28-29).

Some of the men who went and viewed the land began to make excuses for why they couldn’t and shouldn’t go into the Promised Land. We can’t do this because people are more powerful than us. We can’t do this because the cities are fortified and too big. We can’t do this because we would be surrounded by our enemies and they are a lot stronger than we are. They kept on and on about the problems in the land so much so that the bad news was beginning to overshadow the good news about the land. All they could see was what they were afraid of.

Caleb took a bold stand and silenced the people. He proclaimed, *“We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it”* (Numbers 13: 30). He was the one who looked around in faith and said we can do this. Caleb has the right attitude because he was grounded in faith in the Almighty God. He had a different spirit about him than the other men. Caleb followed God wholeheartedly and was not going to cower in fear or back away with a lack of courage. He knew this was the right time and he knew they needed to act in obedience to God. But as we continue on, we find that negativity, gossip, and fear are a powerful combination. The rest of the men were consumed by fear of the giant people living in the land. They felt like grasshoppers in comparison. They became hysterical and tried to stop the mission (Numbers 13:31-33).

Finally, Joshua spoke up and said, *“The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. 8 If the Lord is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. 9 Only do not rebel against the Lord. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will devour them. Their protection is gone, but the Lord is with us. Do not be afraid of them”* (Numbers 14:7-9).

In grief over the lack of faith of his friends, Joshua tore his clothes and pleaded with the people.

He knew that God was with them. Out of the 12 men who went to explore the land that God was promising to them, only the two of them, Joshua, and Caleb, had the faith to move ahead. To the others, it seemed impossible. Fear was the dominant emotion and negativity fed the fear. But the two young men knew that just because the majority seems to agree doesn’t mean that it’s true. What the Israelites had forgotten was that God is bigger than the problems we face.

Has there ever been a time in your life when you were scared to try something? Maybe you were thinking about going back to school, but you were scared because everyone was younger or more tech-savvy than you. Maybe you were offered a new job opportunity but were scared because you would have to move somewhere new and unfamiliar. Maybe you were feeling led to volunteer for something, but you were scared that you didn’t have anything to offer.

If God is leading us somewhere, we don’t have to be afraid. And in those times when we are afraid when the problems seem giant-sized and impossible and we are just feeling small, like grasshoppers compared to giants in the field. We have the opportunity to lean on God and to trust him. God is calling us and compelling us to something new and God will provide for us.

Maybe you are facing financial, health or other kinds of personal problems and you’re just frozen because you don’t know what to do. Friends let me tell you something, God is bigger than the problems we face.

You might be asking what happened to the Israelites. Well in a nutshell the rest of chapter 14 tells us that the Israelites decided not to go into the Promised Land. And because they had given in to fear they spent the next 40 years wandering around in the desert. They spent one year in the desert for every day they explored

the Promised Land. And of the 12 that explored the Promised Land, only Joshua and Caleb got to go and live in it 40 years later. An entire generation of Israelites missed out on going into the Promised Land because they let their fear get the best of them. They didn’t trust in God. We must remember, God is bigger than the problems we face.

Let’s not miss out on what God may be doing in our lives and our midst because we can’t see what the future holds. Let’s not let fear stop us from where God is leading us. Let’s not let our fear cause us to wander around in the wilderness. We may have problems, but we have a God who understands our problems and is bigger than all the problems we face all put together!

Friends the good news for us today is that God is bigger than the problems we face. And we can take comfort knowing that no matter what we face in life God is with us. As we continue to live in the face of the invisible enemy of COVID-19 and the uncertainty it brings in all our lives today. We can’t let fear rob us of the joy of living. It cannot steal our joy and peace with God. We do not need to fear our position with God because no matter what you’re facing today, God is bigger than the problems we face. “God is bigger than the boogie man. And He’s watching out for you and me.”

---

*Rev. John F. Howard, Jr is the Pastor at Pine Grove United Methodist Church and Mount Zion United Methodist Church in Spruce Pine, NC. He graduated from Pfeiffer University with a B.A in Christian Education and earned his M. Div. degree at Duke Divinity School. He also has an M.A in Leadership from Asbury Theological Seminary.*

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Changes

By Bruce Cannon  
Mitchell County



Matthew 24:12 “*And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.*”

If you are like me you are dumbfounded at the changes that have taken place in our country over the past few years. More change has taken place in this short period than what changed over the past several decades. We are heading somewhere in society and it appears to be very dark. There is a force behind it all; and that force is powerful, wicked, united, and determined to undermine all that is good. It is the spirit of the antichrist which has always been at work in our world but is gaining strength quickly as Jesus said it would in the last days.

A few days ago my wife and I were walking in our yard and Wendy asked me, “Can you feel it?” I did not know what she was referring to. I didn’t know how to answer so I responded with a question, “What are you sensing?” She replied, “Change, and it’s not good.” She is very preceptive and felt in her spirit that trouble was afoot; that something was quickly changing in our county/state/nation. As you and I listen to the news, as we see what is taking place on our streets and in other areas across our country, we are seeing this change. Lawlessness is rampant; respect for persons and property has waned. And that is exactly what our Lord prophesied would happen before His return. The word translated “iniquity” in Matthew 24:12 is actually “lawlessness” in the original language. And we are seeing it daily.

Consider some of the more recent lawless activities taking place in America and see if this is so:

\*Statues honoring American heroes vandalized and/or torn down completely in the following cities: Albany NY, Albuquerque NM, Alexandria VA, Birmingham AL, Boston MA, Chicago IL, College Station TX, Dallas TX, Dearborn MI, El Paso TX, Fredricksburg VA, Huntersville TX, Indianapolis IN, Jacksonville FL, Louisville KY, Madison County AL, Miami FL and a literal host of other cities including ones right here in North Carolina. A replica of the Vietnam Wall was defaced in Los Angeles.

\*The attack upon law enforcement in America and the attempt to defund the police. My heart goes out to those who protect us and my prayers are with them daily for safety, strength, and encouragement. I cannot imagine our streets without their presence.

Mark Creech, director of the Christian Action League of North Carolina, stated this about law enforcement, “Law enforcement is the keystone of our civilization; it is what holds society together. Defunding or eliminating police agencies is simply ridiculous and is an agenda being pushed by many of the very so-called leaders who expect special treatment and protection when it comes to their own person and property.”

\*Political Action Groups and others who are demanding rights and privileges for special interest groups other American citizens do not have. How much preferential treatment is being given or considered for transgendered persons, homosexuals, and others that are not being given to other Americans?

\*How many more people are going to be offended in America? Mrs. Butterworth’s Syryp, Uncle Ben’s Rice, and Aunt Jemimah Pancake Mix are all having name changes along with any sports team that has a team logo or name that pertains to native Americans. There will be no more Washington Redskins after this month even though that name is held in high regard by so many.

Yet, the Bible prophesied all this would take place before the Lord came back for His Church. Imagine, you and I could very well be taken to Heaven in what is known as the Rapture of the Church VERY SOON. In Luke 21:28, Jesus stated, “*And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.*”

What must we do? Draw close to God personally and corporately. Teach our children right from wrong. Stand, in love, for those things the Word approves of and against those things the Word condemns. Vote! Pray for God’s mercy and forgiveness upon our nation. Beg Him! Plead with Him through the blood of Christ for help. And, get ready for the Lord’s Return. Amen!

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

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# Berry Chapel Baptist Church

## It’s Time to Wake Up Christians

By Steve Williams  
Mitchell County

Howdy folks, it’s time for the children of God and the soldiers in God’s army to wake up. In the United States Army, they have what is known as a bugler that sounds off Reveille in the morning. It’s a call around sunrise signaling for the first military formation of the day meaning its time for them to wake up. The morning is here Christians, the Son is fixing to burst open through the eastern sky. Christians the trumpet has been sounded and it's time to roll out of your comfortable beds and get ready to march onto the battlefield that is before us. We have laid in our beds and slept long enough. It's time for Christians to man their battle stations, for the battle that is before us. The end is very near. We need to be telling people that the End Is Near.

I read where a Priest and Pastor were standing by the side of the road holding up a sign that read, "The End is near! Turn around before it's too late!" One speeding motorist yelled out his window, “Leave us alone, you religious nuts!” as he flew by. From around the curve, they heard screeching tires and a big splash. And the Priest said to the Pastor “Do you think, we should just put up a sign that says ‘Bridge Out’ instead of “The End Is Near.”

People, the day we are living in is so serious, it is not a joke. It looks like so many Christians are just not getting it, in the day we are living. Too many believers are slumbering and paying no attention to what is going on in the world; too many are not watching, and too many are not observing the signs of the time. Too many are complacent and slothful, and lazily passing through life with little commitment to serving Christ. Too few are meeting the needs of the suffering and lost and dying people of this world. It’s time "to awaken" out of that deep sleep: time to wake up, to be aroused and stirred. It is time to get up and to move and act—now—before it is too late.

The Bible says in Romans 13:11-14 “*And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. 12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. 13 Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. 14 But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.*”

This exhortation is strong here, and there are two reasons for its forcefulness. 1st Our Salvation is nearer than when we believed. The word "salvation" is being used in a future sense, referring to the glorious day when we will go to heaven. It is the day when our salvation will be consummated, and we will be delivered from this present evil world and perfected forever to live in the presence of God. 2nd Judgment is at hand. The night is far spent; the day is at hand. What day do you ask? The day when we will meet God face to face, either through death or through the return of the Lord Jesus. Time is fleeting, passing ever so rapidly—so prepare.

We are constantly fighting a battle within our souls. There’s a story of an Indian father telling his son about the two wolves that lie inside of each of us: The 1st wolf representing your Good and wholesome self, the part of you that seeks to treat others honorably, to encourage, to build up, to love. The 2nd wolf represents your destructive, evil self, the part of you that bites out with sarcasm and resentment and gossip, that tears down others and satisfies your own needs alone. The Indian boy asked his father, “Which wolf will get stronger and overpower the other in the battle for my life?” And the father said, “Son, that’s simple: the one that you feed.” As Christians, we need to be sure that we are feeding on the Word of God because it is our defense when the old wolf in sheep’s clothing comes our way. Don’t lose the battle because you have gone to sleep, WAKE UP!

### Words Of Wisdom:

- I’m not perfect. And who knows how many times I've fallen short. We all fall short. That's the amazing thing about the grace of God. Tim Tebow
- The mark of the man is how he responds to situations. You're not going to avoid tough times. We're all over the barrel some of the time. What are you going to do about it? Martin Short
- We all need God, you know. And I certainly fall short in a lot of categories. And it's at those times that I need him most. N/A
- We many times sell ourselves short in our relationships, with God throughout our lives. Hopefully, we come around at some point thanking Him for His Grace and Mercy. N/A

### Something To Think About:

- Do You Think We Would: Wake Up, Clean Up & Change-Up, that Our Lives would be different?

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



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# Evergreen Church

## Unashamed of Our Identity

By Rev John McCoury  
Roan Mountain, Tennessee

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

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



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# First Baptist of Marshall

## Humor

By Buddy Freeman  
Madison County

A bulletin in a charismatic church had an announcement that read: “No healing service today, due to the pastor’s illness.”

An Army soldier was filling out a questionnaire for a bank loan and had to answer the question, “How long has your present employer been in business?” He thought for a minute and then wrote, “Since 1776.”



A panicked mother screamed at her husband, “Harry, come quick! Little Johnny swallowed a quarter!” The father replied, “We ought to send for the minister. He can get money out of anybody.”

A misprint in a church bulletin read, “The choir will sing, ‘I Heard the Bills on Christmas Day.’”

A preacher asked, “Does anyone know someone who is perfect?” A little man in the back of the church raised his hand. The preacher asked, “Who do you know that is perfect?” The little man said, “My wife’s first husband.”

A girl said, “I’m sorry. I don’t kiss on the first date.” The boy said, “How about on the last one?”

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

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

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

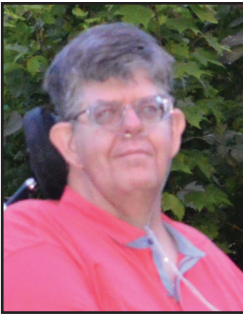
A Sunday School teacher asked, “Now, Harold, what can you tell me about Goliath?” Harold said, “He was the man, David rocked to sleep.”

*Dr Buddy Freeman is the former pastor of the First Baptist Church of Marshall, NC.*

# Allen’s Offerings

By Allen Buchanan  
Mitchell County

Growing up in church I remember the Superintendent reading the announcements for the coming week. Many would request prayer for exams, surgeries, or for a family losing a loved one. It would be wonderful if when a new disease is exposed that all the others disappear forever. As long as we live in this world of sin that isn't going to happen.



I was at a Carman concert in Asheville one evening when he asked those who could stand to do so. He also asked for them to pray for those who couldn't stand. I felt a couple of hands-on my shoulder and found myself talking with God about my life. My prayer was God, if you can better use me in this chair, then I will be okay. I've never been bitter or blamed God for any problems in my life. When thinking of all that is hurting me, it's nothing compared to what Jesus did for us on that old rugged cross. Praise to Jesus!! I don't have spike marks in my hands to show you. Nor are there marks where my feet were crossed and nailed to cross. I agree with many of you that kidney stones are terrible, but imagine the opening in his side where the Roman soldier pierced him. (“Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.” John 20:27)

One of these days, I will stand on heaven's shore, and hug my Master, my Lord Jesus Christ. No memories of this pain and loss. "Thank you" just doesn't seem like it's enough.

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



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NCBAM Connects with Retired Pastors through Servant Care

By Carol Layton

In late March, when many churches stopped meeting and senior adults were advised to self-isolate, regional directors at North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry (NCBAM) immediately heightened efforts to communicate with all Servant Care participants—making 200 contacts in the first month. NCBAM’s Servant Care outreach provides priority access to ministry services to pastors, music ministers, and missionaries (65+), including their spouses or surviving spouses. The outreach also offers fellowship and educational opportunities for participants through ENCORE programs and regional events.

“It’s such a blessing to connect with Servant Care participants,” said Charity Johnson who serves the southeast region. “It makes me feel God placed me in this ministry for a purpose. He’s equipped me with skills that I can give back and help take care of His pastors and His ministers who have dedicated their lives to God’s people. They have always put others first and now it’s time for us to put them first.”

Rev. H. is a Servant Care participant whom Johnson calls regularly. After serving as a Baptist pastor for more than 50 years, Rev. H. was widowed in 2014. Now at age 87, failing eyesight makes cooking for himself difficult. In addition to providing friendly calls and cards, Johnson also connected Rev. H. with a ministry at her church and now three homecooked meals are delivered each week to his home. “It’s a blessing to help meet his needs,” said Johnson. “He is so grateful.”

Another of Johnson’s Servant Care participants is Rev. M., a retired pastor, and director of missions. “In addition to calling, I also send notes. Rev. M. called me back in tears. He said the Bible verse I had included in my note was a blessing to him as he was just starting chemo treatments. It blessed me that God used me in that way. It wasn’t me. It was God using me to encourage someone.”

Johnson says that social isolation imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic greatly heightened the loneliness many Servant Care participants were already experiencing. “With not being able to attend church or even see family, their only human contact each week might be wearing a mask and going to the grocery store at 6:00 am. Many need prayer right now and of someone just to talk to. It’s such a blessing to connect with these people of God.”

Samantha Allred, north-central regional director, sees a common thread among the Servant Care participants she connects with. “I’m so glad we’re reaching out to them because I feel it is ten times harder for pastors and ministers to talk about their needs. They’re used to serving others; it takes pressing to discover what their needs might be.”

Allred says that blessing is hers when connecting with Servant Care participants. “Rev. B. was very grateful for my call but told me right away, ‘Don’t bother with me; call someone who needs it more.’ Now, he is most likely to initiate a call; he is graciously mentoring me as a young person in my first years of ministry work. He’s very encouraging and I appreciate the advice he’s offered me.”

Allred has also befriended Mrs. F., an 86-year-old widow. “She is newly isolated because of the pandemic and takes seriously the recommendations to self-isolate. Her son delivers groceries and apart from doctor visits, she doesn’t leave home. We’ve bonded over sewing and quilting. She tells me about her projects and encourages me to take it up as a hobby. Every time we hang up she thanks me and says, ‘Please keep calling.’”

Allred had made regular visits to the home of Rev. and Mrs. P. since 2018 and now they communicate through cards and phone calls. “She recently told me, ‘Please keep your cards and letters coming. We get so excited when we see them.’”

Allred is grateful for the special relationships she has with Servant Care participants. “During times like this, small things can have the biggest impact. It blesses me to know I can make a difference through a simple phone call.”

Angie Gregg, west regional director, has been especially touched by widows she has connected with during the pandemic. “Mrs. C. is in her 90s and although still active, she’s very appreciative of the calls and loves to talk about her late husband’s pastorate and their lives in ministry. When I mentioned one of his accomplishments, she was so pleased and said, ‘Oh, you know about that?!’

Gregg had an especially poignant conversation with another widow, 91-year old Mrs. K. “When I asked about her current church, she replied that she still attended the one where she had grown up and where her husband had served. She said that since they had stopped holding services due to the pandemic, she had not heard from anyone there.”

More than 700 individuals are included in NCBAM’s Servant Care outreach—with 64 new retired ministers added in June. Participation is not based on financial need. Servant Care participants receive regular phone calls and birthday cards. Frail participants receive assessments by an NCBAM regional director. (In-home assessments are currently handled remotely.) NCBAM regional directors work with Baptist Associations to confirm and share updated contact information for retired ministers.

NCBAM’s ministry director, Dr. Sandy Gregory, sees Servant Care as one of NCBAM’s most important outreaches. “Many pastors join a new church when they retire and so the strong connections to the people who would be most eager to minister to them are lost. NCBAM is helping to fill the gap by giving Servant Care participants the love, honor, and care they so richly deserve.”

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

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Romans 10:17



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The Doldrums of COVID

By Timothy W. Tron  
Burke County



The feeling of being stuck in the doldrums has slowly washed over me lately.

My body floated in the water effortlessly. Like a being upon the sea, only the clear blue morning skies above. Here and there were wisps of clouds barely enough moisture to collect to form a whiteness, yet they were there. It was as if time had stopped. My mind drifted to those ancient mariners who relied on the ocean winds to propel their sailing ships. A calm day was not a blessing. A robust sea with gathering storm clouds and gusts of ocean spray were signs of life.

Likewise, our walk-in faith is like those ancient sailing vessels. When we are facing a headwind, we know we are going in the right direction. *“Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.”* As the Apostle Paul would remind us, *“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.”* It is when the winds cease, those opposing forces suddenly stop, that we should be concerned. For it is then, when you are no longer finding the world against you, that you should take stock and see if you are not going along with the whims and will of the evils that surround you. *“And be not conformed to this world:..”* *“Be sober; be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:”*

Floating there in the pool, my mind’s eye could see the glistening mirrors of glass surrounding their vessel as the sun beat down on them like a mighty drum. This absolute stillness was their valley of death. The very breath of life hung in the balance. The maritime sailors of old, even in their mighty sailing ships, were at the mercy of the prevailing winds. It was as if without the hand of God pushing them, they were helpless. Their vessels might sit for days or even weeks in the area known today as the Intertropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ). It stretches from 5 degrees above to 5 degrees below the equator. As the broiling heat beat down upon them, their sails hung limp, lifeless – mirroring the direction their lives seemed to be heading.

When there is nothing to occupy the mind, it becomes like a fertile field where our sinful fleshly desires and thoughts begin to take root. We’ve all heard the phrase, *“An idle mind is the devil’s playground.”* It is here, in the empty void of life that our wanton, wayward thoughts begin to fill the space where once an occupation, a job, or a study once filled. The news media, if we allow it, is happy to provide us more than enough constant chatter to overwhelm even the most ardent theologian. Then there is the social media, where a thread of distrust can become the next great conspiracy to add to the overflowing closet of skeletons in our mind. Those empty, lifeless ocean experiences were not only deadly because of the physical limitations. Here where the mind became one’s worst enemy, the mutinies were formed and men began to doubt not only themselves but their creator as well.

One description held by nautical experts is as follows, *“Doldrums holds a distinct place in maritime history, having developed a reputation as a potentially deadly zone which could strand ships for weeks on end, causing them to run out of food and drinking water. In those days, with supplies running low, and scurvy setting in, delirium, starvation, and cabin fever could all set in – and getting through this mysterious patch of Atlantic Ocean quickly wasn’t just a matter of first or last place, but life and death.”*

Today, we seem to be in a similar predicament. Many of your friends, neighbors, and even family are facing perils that remain hidden until it’s too late. The isolation created by this perceived pandemic has in a sense, made us all drift into the doldrums – some say, the effect being more deadly than the cause. The ship in our world can take on various forms: our country, our daily lives, and even our soul.

Our nation has become mired in turmoil and panic, held captive by those that want to seemingly halt our way of life using the foil of a pandemic with which to incite fear – cause it to stall until the point it falters, and some might even say, fail. In this epic of ever-growing restrictions and confinements, the feeling of being held captive in our society begins to seep into our psyche. With each growing day, we find a new restriction dictated by “science” forcing us to obey or else. We find fear beginning to seep into the most educated minds to the point they seem consumed to follow the rules, whereas; heretofore, they were some of the most liberal types seeking rebellion of societal norms at every turn. Those that are held in esteemed positions begin to spread the fear in their implication of pursuing the “science” while disregarding those who might find a different mindset all together; one of fearing not. For many, they do not know what it is to find comfort in the arms of a Savior. Their lives, like so many who remain lost until the day of judgment, find themselves glued to the media, like a junkie waiting for the next hit, looking for the next “aha sound bite” that will send shockwaves through our culture, sending yet another wave of fear over our nation.

It is in these moments of doom and gloom we should seek the calm and peacefulness of the Comforter, the Word of God. Sadly, many find the darkness growing stronger rather than the day of jubilation when Christ’s return sounds the final trumpet. The torment permeates their being until it becomes real.

The dread doesn’t stop there, at the curb of society, rather it penetrates our very nature.

The imposed isolation has revealed cracks in even the most perceived solid of relationships. Some may feel that they are trapped in marriages whereby they have no recourse. For whatever reason, the days of intimacy have evaporated like

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The Shield of Faith

By Caron Cline  
Burke County



Life has continued to bring new challenges each day as we navigate through perilous times. If we ever needed to put on the whole armor of God, it is now! In the last few months, we have examined our belt of truth, which is our foundation for living; our breastplate of righteousness, which is our right standing before God, our Father. We have shod our feet with the readiness of the gospel of peace so that we can carry the good news of reconciliation between God and man. We learned that we can have peace with God and possess the peace of God, regardless of the circumstances of life. Interestingly, the pieces of the armor of God have already been described in detail throughout this letter by the Apostle Paul. As the letter reaches its conclusion, we see an abbreviated list set in the context of a Roman soldier’s uniform. What a creative and unique word picture to ensure that readers could remember these important principles! Now we move to the next piece of armor listed in Ephesians 6; the shield of faith. Paul commands all believers to take up this shield for we will surely need it in this evil day. Looking back at Ephesians 2:8-9, we read these words: *“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast”*.

We are saved by grace through faith. It was God’s grace that provided a means for salvation, but we had to choose to believe, or in other words, exercise faith. Ephesians 3:12 and 17 also speak of faith. *“In whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in Him”*. *“...So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith...”*.

Verse 12 adds another benefit of faith; our access and confident boldness to the God of the Universe through Christ and verse 17 reminds us that through faith, Christ, Himself is dwelling in our hearts.

Ephesians 4:5 and 13 include more references to faith. Verse 5 reminds us that we have one Lord, one faith and one baptism while verse 13 continues this thought, *‘until we all attain to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ’*.

Paul calls for unity in the body of Christ by reminding us that every believer is connected by one faith, one Lord, one baptism, one hope, and one God and Father who is over all, through all and in all. The goal for all believers is to attain unity in the faith and knowledge of Jesus.

We should now have a picture of the faith that Paul is asking us to take up as a shield. It is a faith that saves eternally, provides access to the throne room of God, and connects every believer as one. Yet faith is considered something mysterious and unexplainable and without intelligent definition. Have you found yourself struggling to define faith?

Hebrews 11:1 tells us that *‘faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen’*. The Greek word for ‘faith’ is ‘pistis’. It is defined as ‘the kind of belief that leads to a personal conviction, especially reliance upon Christ for salvation.’ ‘A firm persuasion’. Many translations of the Bible use the word ‘substance’, which is a better translation. The Greek word for ‘assurance’ or ‘substance’ is the word ‘hupostasis’ and it means ‘the ground of confidence, assurance, guarantee of proof’.

“‘ Substance” in Roman times was a legal term referring to the sum of all documents concerning a person who owned property and possessions secured in an archive that provided proof of ownership. Some suggest the translation could read, ‘Faith is the title-deed for things hoped for’”. Our faith, when mixed with action, is a title-deed or guarantee for what has not yet been seen. The writer of the book of Hebrews describes faith-filled followers based on their actions. Faith is what moved them to believe God and do what He asked them to do.

For example, Hebrews 11:7 says *‘By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith’*. This is one of many examples outlined in this chapter.

Hebrews 11:6 is the most convicting verse. *“For without faith, it is impossible to please God, for whoever comes to Him must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who earnestly seek Him”*.

If we plan to please God, we must take up our shield of faith. Why does Paul liken faith to a shield? What does a shield provide? Protection!

The Roman army used large, slightly curved rectangular shields, generally made of two layers of wooden strips laid at right angles to each other and heated in order to be pressed into a curved shape. They were then covered by 6 layers of animal hide. Such a shield could become dry so the soldiers carried olive oil for rubbing the surface of the shield. The Roman shields were about 4 ½ feet high and about 3 to 4 feet wide and looked like a door. These shields could be joined together so that the soldiers formed something like a wall during battle. Many times, the soldiers in the middle lifted the shields over their heads, and the ones on the outside squatted behind their shields. This was known as the ‘tortoise’. Paul could have been referencing Ephesians 2:18-22 when he considered this use of their shields. Believers are to operate as one unit in order to provide maximum protection from the enemy.

We need serious protection against the schemes of the devil and Paul warns us in this verse that Satan is shooting flaming arrows at us constantly. During the first century, the Roman soldiers used 3 types of arrows. One was a normal arrow with a pointed, metalhead. The second arrow had a metal tip covered with a pitch-tar-like substance, which could be lit and released. The third kind of arrow had a stem filled with a combustible substance. When the tip of this arrow was lit and hit its target the impact of the strike split the stem of the arrow and caused the fire

to spread. Soldiers also had ‘fire darts’ which were long spears with 3-foot iron heads, which when set on fire could penetrate through the armor. Paul is warning us that Satan will throw some dangerous thoughts into our minds. Thoughts set on fire by hell. He wants to distract us from our main purpose as believers. Remember what the soldiers carried? (Olive oil) They consistently oiled their shields to keep them from becoming dry and brittle. Interestingly, Isaiah 21:5 commands the princes to ‘oil or anoint’ their shields to prepare for battle.

In the OT, the oil was symbolic of the Holy Spirit and once a priest, king, or any spiritual leader was anointed with oil, the Holy Spirit would come upon them (1 Samuel 16:13). We must be very intentional about seeking the filling of the Spirit so that we might walk by faith. A believer controlled by the Spirit will be empowered to use their faith as a shield of protection which will extinguish the flaming darts of the devil.

What are these flaming darts? Thoughts of doubt concerning God’s goodness and His mercy are at the top of the enemy’s list. Remember, without faith, it is IMPOSSIBLE to please God. What causes people to stop believing God? Many times, it is the death of a loved one; disappointment in a relationship; chronic pain; loss of a job; divorce; etc. There are endless possibilities. Remember, in all circumstances, hold up the shield of faith.

Satan has one goal in mind: to steal, kill, and destroy and our faith is his greatest target. He cannot have our soul but he can render us useless in the kingdom of God. If we do not believe God, we will miss His perfect will and never believe the hope to which He has called us, the riches of His glorious inheritance within us, and His immeasurably great power toward us. (Ephesians 1:18-19)

Romans 8:28 is one verse that every believer should memorize. *“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose”*.

Faith believes this verse. God is always working all things together for good to those who love Him.

Habakkuk 2:4 and Romans 1:17 remind us that the just shall live by faith. Everything was falling apart in Israel during Habakkuk’s time. God was bringing judgment on His people for their disobedience, but the righteous were going to suffer along with the unrighteous. Yet God expected His people to trust Him and keep their eyes on Him even amid the struggles. Paul preached the gospel and everywhere he went all hell broke loose, yet He said that he was not ashamed of the good news of Jesus. He repeated this verse from Habakkuk that said he would live by faith in the God who had called him. He had been shipwrecked, stoned, cursed, jailed, and everything else imaginable but Paul never lost sight of the love and grace of God.

We must keep the same attitude.

How do we develop great faith? Let’s go back a bit. Romans 10:13-17 connects the good news of the gospel to faith. Faith comes first to those who hear the gospel, believe the gospel, and receive the gospel. God gives us a measure of faith to be able to believe. The Bible mentions 2 types of faith; little faith and great faith. Little faith: Matthew 8:23-27 The disciples had seen Jesus perform amazing miracles and they had heard Him preach amazing sermons, yet, these things weren’t quite as personal to them as the threat of death. These men knew Jesus before, but they knew Him in a completely different way after personally experiencing a near tragedy. His Word to the storm brought a new understanding of Who He really was and the power He really possessed. But fast forward just a bit. Read Matthew 14:22-33. Another similar incident, except this time, Jesus was not in the boat with them. He was giving them a chance to exercise their faith in another frightening situation yet their faith was still considered ‘little’. Jesus had told them to go to the other side which meant they were going to make it. As the storm increased, Jesus showed up, walking on the water. Peter’s faith must have been stronger than the first time because he asked Jesus to let him come out on the water. But it dipped about the time he looked away and began to sink. Jesus reached out and took Peter’s hand. Again, Jesus asked him why he still had ‘little’ faith. Jesus and Peter entered the boat and immediately, the wind stopped. Both of these incidents led to a greater revelation of Jesus and a new level of worship from the disciples.

Little faith was still enough to rescue them from disaster.

Great faith: Matthew 8:5-13 is the story of a Roman centurion who came to Jesus begging Him to heal his paralyzed servant. Jesus said, ‘I will come’, but this man did not consider himself worthy of such honor. However, he wholeheartedly believed that Jesus needed only to speak a word and his servant would be healed. Keep in mind, this was a Gentile, a man considered a pagan by the religious people of the day and yet Jesus called his faith greater than the faith of His followers. Matthew 15:21-28

Here is another example of a Canaanite woman, again someone considered a foreigner, coming to Jesus for help. Her daughter was possessed by a demon but for a bit, it appeared that Jesus would not grant her request. He told this woman that He was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel. This did not deter her from continuing to seek a miracle, and she didn’t leave until she received one. Once more, Jesus called her faith greater than the faith of His disciples.

Faith is simply taking God at His Word, believing that with Him all things are possible.

Matthew 17:20-21 is Jesus’ response to the failure of the disciples to cast a demon out of a young boy. These men who had been given authority to heal the sick and cast out demonic spirits could not understand what had happened this time. Jesus explained that it was because of their ‘little’ faith.

The disciples wanted great faith, but Jesus said it only takes faith the size of the smallest mustard seed to grow to gigantic proportions. The bottom line is simply believing that Jesus can do what He says He can do. The Roman centurion and the Canaanite woman simply believed that Jesus could do anything. They believed that His power was greater than the power of the devil. Once we believe as much, we will see Jesus move in our lives as never before. Every word He speaks into

*continued on page 33*



Using Scripture for Evangelism

By Rev. John B. Sorensen

The Word of God is powerful. In Hebrews 4:12, Paul says it is “*sharper than any double-edged sword.*” As believers, we should depend on the Bible to help us grow, mature, and become more like Jesus Christ.

The Scripture is also a critical tool for us to use when we share our faith. Think about it. We cannot share the Gospel without pointing to the Gospel. The Word of God shows us the path to eternal life. All we have to do is share it with others.

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

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

“*All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*” (Romans 3:23)

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

God “*does not leave the guilty unpunished.*” (Exodus 34:7)

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

“*For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son...*” (John 3:16) God sent us a solution: Jesus Christ. Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sin...and rose from the dead to prove He had purchased a place in Heaven for us.

“*Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved.*” (Acts 16:31)

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

Remember, each verse, alone, maybe a lot for someone to process, especially for someone who has never read the Bible. Quoting Scripture can come across as overbearing. While as Christians, we should know each reference, we don’t need to show off our knowledge of the Bible. Simply say, “the Bible says,” or “We read in the Bible,” and then quote the verse. Let the words of the Scripture sink in. The Holy Spirit will speak to the person who is hearing the words.

Be patient. Sometimes, it takes time for the meaning of the Word of God to absorb. If they are not ready to decide to follow Jesus, allow them time to think over what you shared. Plan to meet with them again to ask questions or share how God is speaking to them personally.

Continue to pray that they will come to know the truth that will set them free.

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



those prevailing winds on the ocean. They quit counting the days of quarantine – the novelty lost at sea. Now, their relationship is distant, cold, and anything but bliss. For some, these are the “worse” parts of the vow. Unrelenting to yield to divorce, praying that God will find a way to replace their spouse’s heart of stone, they remain – trapped and disheartened – their life has become nothing more than a dead sea, upon which no breath of wind dare cast a ripple of hope.

Afflictions of the flesh can come in all shapes and sizes - drugs, alcohol, or sex. Each person has their own inner struggles. Once, when there was a society of normalcy, one might compare their daily grind to others. Yet, now, kept to themselves, the questions begin to creep inside the dark confines of the heart. The darkness feeds upon these. Allowed to grow, they become more than thoughts. They begin to manifest themselves into actions that might otherwise have abated had the flow of life been allow to continue. It is in the trials that we discover who we really are. For those without faith, it is as if all hope is lost. If we allow Satan to enter in, giving in to temptations, we deepen the despair by which those afflictions feed – like sharks circling our languishing ship, watching, waiting to whom they may devour, so is the devil.

Others find that their spiritual lives have become stagnate as if God is not listening. They pray and seek Him day after day, but it’s as if they’ve been abandoned. What they miss is from where they are praying. Rather than fully relying on God, they are seeking help from the very thing that they have given into, “*Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.*”

When there is no answer we must wait. Yet, there is learning in the waiting. While we seek immediate answers, God’s timing is not our own. In the trials and tribulations, we are made stronger in our faith, whether we like it or not. It is much like when a baby chick is born. When it first begins to pip out of the shell, it is difficult to sit and watch. When you can’t take it any longer and begin to help the newborn by pulling the shell away. You suddenly find a wet, damp miserable little creature. Although your instinct was to simply help, part of the birthing process is to make it struggle through the shell which creates the muscles that it will need later to survive. Meanwhile, the chick you just “saved” begins to weaken, and in most cases, will die from fatigue for lack of muscle tissue. If we are left to never struggle in life, our spiritual muscle will become atrophied to the point, it is unable to support our being – it is then we too find a spiritual weakening unto the point of death.

When mankind faces the end, as in being distraught within the doldrums, it is then most often they finally seek God – when it is too late. Life passes before one’s eye in the blink of an eye. While an eternity may seem to pass when the flesh is suffering, it is a mere momentary heartbeat when the end arrives. The once seemingly immortality of youth gives way to the reality of age, and with it, time begins to race. As the heart yearns for those days of youth, that are gone forever, it is then too late many realize their choices were in vain. The rust and tarnished life has led them only to a bitter end to where they cannot escape. It is then they realize, their doldrums began long before any pandemic started.

Yet, we can find hope beyond the ITCZ, and this time of COVID. Our hope is in the one that gives us spiritual strength. Our hope is in the one that gives light to the darkness. Our hope is in the one that can free us from all earthly desires and shackles of the flesh. Yes, our hope is in Jesus Christ, our Lord, and Savior.

Where once there was delirium and despair, there can be life once more. The breath of life, the winds of change are coming and soon, the trumpet will sound. Soon the creaking of the ancient ship’s masts will begin to bend under the gales that will take us to that far distant shore.

“*Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you...*”  
Thanks be to God.

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





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Habits of the Heart: A Study of the Spiritual Disciplines - "Service"

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



In this monthly series of articles, I have chosen to survey twelve (one each month) spiritual habits of the heart or spiritual disciplines that we must pursue in our faith journey to maturity in Christ. Richard Foster, in his book Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth (Harper & Row, 1978), divides these twelve into three categories: Inward disciplines; Outward disciplines; and Corporate disciplines. This month, let’s take a look at the spiritual discipline of “service,” which is the final of four outward disciplines. Keep in mind that an “outward” spiritual discipline seeks to take us from the immediate presence of the Lord and present us as living witnesses of Jesus to the world around us.

Moses, shortly before he handed over leadership to Joshua, addressed the new generation of Israelites who were destined to possess the land of promise. As he began his farewell speech, he reminded them, as he had done so many times before, of what the Lord God both desired and required from His people. In Deuteronomy 10:12, Moses declared, “Now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.” The prophet Samuel would later repeat this same recipe for humble obedience and committed service, writing in 1 Samuel 12:24, “Only fear the LORD and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you.”

Many years ago I read Charles Swindoll’s wonderful book on Christian service entitled, Improving Your Serve. What really grabbed my attention was the subtitle: The Art of Unselfish Living. At the heart of the spiritual discipline of service is self-denial. Jesus said (Mark 10:45; also Matt. 20:28) that He did not come to be served but to serve. “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” Jesus explained that the reason that He was here on earth was to serve and to give. Not to be served or to gain the spotlight or notoriety. He wasn’t interested in fame or success. He didn’t want to draw a crowd to show His eloquence, intelligence, or charisma. He went out looking for those who were lost, alone, and confused to serve them and then offered them something that would save their lives—a personal relationship with God’s Son. Jesus invested His whole self, being, energies, and focus on serving and giving.

It makes absolute sense that God, having offered us redemption and reconciliation and a new relationship with Him in Christ (salvation), would begin to build into us the same quality that was displayed in His Son, Jesus. God’s intent and purpose were to build in us the same character, the same purposes, and the same heart that was in Christ Jesus—we are to serve and to give!

What a stark contrast Jesus’ philosophy of servanthood is with the world’s! Jesus saw the difference just as much as we see it. In fact, His declaration of servanthood came on the heels of responding to a request made by the mother of James and John in Matthew 20:20-28 (also in Mark 10:35-45), Mrs. Zebedee came to Jesus, bowed down before Him and asked what seemed to be a simple request. She said to Him, “Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit one on Your right and one on Your left.”

One might note that in Matthew’s account, he specifies that the mother of James and John asked the question; while Mark has it that James and John themselves made the request. Could it have been that James and John put their mother up to it? Or could their mother have seen that her sons, who are referred to as the “sons of thunder,” were afraid to ask Jesus the question directly? Frank Stagg (Broadman Commentary) points out that both Matthew and Mark indicate “that the disciples themselves were responsible for the selfish and benighted request,” for it is clear that Jesus directed His reply to the two disciples. He saw through their smokescreen and He answered them (in verse 21) with biting conviction, “But Jesus answered, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?” They said to Him, “We are able.”

Jesus immediately responded to the boys, “But Jesus called them to Himself and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

Take a deeper look at Jesus’ last statement, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” Jesus refers to Himself as the Son of man (hwtos too anthropoo—υἱός τοῦ ἀνθρώπου). Frank Stagg notes that in this verse, which is one of the most important in all of Matthew, Jesus is interpreting his role as “Son of Man” in terms of sacrificial service. Drawing upon the Suffering Servant passages in Isaiah (cf. Is. 53), Jesus blended the dual roles; that is, God—to whom dominion, glory, and a universal and everlasting kingdom were given; and man—a lowly form of a servant who would give his life a ransom for many.

Jesus states that He did not come to be served (diakonēthēnai—διακονηθῆναι). That Greek form is in the passive tense, meaning “being acted upon.” It is also significant to note that this particular Greek word is used rather than several other Greek words which were commonly used in that time to convey the idea of servant/servanthood. Paul often used these different Greek words to express different aspects of servanthood. Among them are doulos (δοῦλος)—“servant or bondservant;” oiketes (οἰκέτης)—“a house or household servant;” Hupēretēs (ὑπηρέτης)—“an officer or minister” (i.e., under higher authority); and misthios (μισθίος)—“a hired servant.”

Jesus declared, “I came to serve!” I am not a household or a hired servant. I am

God who serves! The tense of the Greek word changes to present, active, indicative (diakonēsai—διακονήσαι), indicating a present and continuous action—“I am serving.” The second declaration that follows is the Greek word dounai (δοῦναι), that is, “I am giving my life a ransom.” The word “ransom” only appears in this verse (and Matthew’s parallel verse) in all of the gospels. A ransom was the price paid for the manumission (release) of a slave.

The Apostle Paul understood the mission of his Lord and Savior. He writes about the theme, motivation, and purpose of the act and discipline of service in Romans 12:1, “Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.” The spiritual discipline and act of service is the free choice of presenting ourselves in obedient, humble, transparent, honest, and genuine service to our Lord Jesus Christ.

- We could say that there are three types or kinds of service that are available to the follower of Christ:
1. Forced service—I will give and sacrifice because either I have no other choice and/or I will get something out of it.
  2. Self-righteous service—I will give and sacrifice to satisfy my own self, my own needs, and my own fleshly desires and drives.
  3. Christ-like service—I will give and sacrifice and offer true service which honors and glorifies the Lord and accomplishes His plans and purposes. Any Christ-like service is motivated by humility, honesty, transparency, and generosity.

Drawing upon Richard Foster’s description of true Christ-like service, we see that genuine Christ-like spiritual service comes from a relationship with our Savior who dwells within. It finds it difficult to distinguish between small or large service (which are one and the same) and rests contented in hiddenness. It does not fear attention but doesn’t seek it either. Divine approval is all that matters. True service is free from the need to achieve results. It delights only in service. Real spiritual service ministers indiscriminately, simply, and faithfully because there is a need. It listens tenderly and patiently before acting. It waits upon the Lord and moves at His prompting. Ultimately, a genuine Christ-like service helps build God’s community of faith, builds relationships, and seeks to honor and glorify God above everything.



Practicing the spiritual discipline of service allows God’s children to shine with the light of Jesus in a world that is hopelessly lost, deeply confused, and perilously alone. In serving God and others, we become Christ’s heart, mind, hands, voice, ears, and feet.

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.

And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. Mark 11:22-24

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# Your Government Page

## NC Senate District 47



Sen. Ralph Hise  
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At the end of June, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) issued science-based guidance regarding fall school reopening:

- “All policy considerations for the coming school year should start with the goal of having students physically present in school.”

• “The importance of in-person learning is well-documented, and there is already evidence of negative impacts on children because of school closures in the spring of 2020. . . Although many questions remain, the preponderance of evidence indicates that children and adolescents are less likely to be symptomatic and less likely to have severe disease resulting from SARS-CoV-2 infection. Also, children may be less likely to become infected and spread infection.”

Gov. Cooper ignored the advice of medical professionals who know the most about children’s health and went forward with a plan that allows schools to remain completely closed to in-person instruction. The Governor also ignored that the North Carolina Constitution sets forth that the public-school system exists to provide every student with a sound, basic education for equal opportunities to be successful. At-risk children of low-income families will bear the brunt of his plan. Without daily, in-person classroom instruction many of these children will fail.

A Wall Street Journal article, “Are They Setting My Children Up for Failure?” delves into the downward educational spiral of children when schools are closed for in-person classroom instruction. Following are some excerpts from the story:

• “Preliminary research suggests students nationwide will return to school in the fall with roughly 70% of learning gains in reading relative to a typical school year, and less than 50% in math, according to projections by NWEA, an Oregon-based nonprofit education-services firm. It expects a greater learning loss for minority and low-income children, who have less access to technology and whose families are more likely to be affected by the economic downturn.

• “Missing those months will leave some children across the country, especially those already behind, struggling to catch up, educators said. ‘I think of it as an academic death spiral,’ said Robin Lake, director of the Center on Reinventing Public Education at the University of Washington Bothell. ‘I don’t know how you do algebra without pre-algebra.’

• “Falling behind academically is a top reason why students drop out of school, according to the National Dropout Prevention Center, based in South Carolina.

With low-income families not having the resources to provide supplemental educational tools and experiences for their out-of-classroom children, the very least Gov. Cooper should do is require school districts to provide full in-classroom instruction to children whose parents request it.

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

## NC House District 86



Rep. Hugh Blackwell  
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North Carolina’s state auditor, Democrat Beth Woods, has the responsibility of trying to bring fiscal discipline to North Carolina’s state agencies. Over the years, state auditors have exposed financial mismanagement and saved North Carolina taxpayers hundreds of millions

of dollars. State Auditor Woods has found one of the worst offenders with both financial incompetence and mismanagement has been NCDOT.

Wood’s most recent audit found that NCDOT had overspent its budget by 12% or \$742 million. To add insult to injury, she further found that the NCDOT improperly doled out \$40 million in taxpayer money for raises to select employees. This, in spite of the fact that NCDOT has a staff of 24 internal auditors. Couple this with the extreme revenue losses in the gas tax and motor vehicle fees due to the pandemic and NCDOT finds itself short of cash to complete projects and carry out its maintenance work. Thus, the result of the financial mismanagement and the pandemic is hundreds of project delays. Just look at the incomplete projects in our part of the state.

By failing to put strong, competent leadership at NCDOT, Governor Cooper has put our road system in awful shape. The legislature has worked hard to authorize fiscally responsible management policies and to provide North Carolina with budget surpluses and the financial resources to weather disasters such as we now face. North Carolina used to be known as the “good roads state.” The vitality of our economy depends on the superior transportation infrastructure. North Carolina’s infrastructure is at risk. Governor Cooper needs to step up and provide the real leadership needed both by him and those he has chosen to run NCDOT.

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our situation and every prayer that He answers will grow our faith. Will we vacillate between little faith and great faith? We probably will from time to time, but Jesus has shown us that regardless, He loves us and will take our hand and, like Peter, lead us into the boat, still the storm, give us another opportunity to see His majesty and then worship Him in spirit and truth.

One of the difficult realities for Christians is that throughout our journey in this world, Jesus will send tests. Let’s take a look at how Peter’s faith changed from small to great.

Luke 22:31-34 records Jesus’ warning to Peter that Satan was asking to sift him as wheat. Although Jesus plainly said that Peter would deny Him three times before the rooster crowed, Peter boldly declared that it would never happen. Peter learned a hard lesson for the word of God always proves true. The good news was that Jesus also said he would recover and strengthen the others. Certainly, that is exactly what happened and Peter earned the right to encourage others whose faith was weak.

1 Peter 1:6-9 are verses of hope for suffering. *“In this, you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you may not have seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls”.*

The enemy is seeking to steal our faith. We must hold up our shield of faith by meditating on the promises of God and being fully persuaded that He is a covenant-keeping God, faithful to do all that He has promised to His beloved children. We have access 24/7 to our Father and we have an amazing support group of brothers and sisters unified through faith. Keep looking to Jesus, the author, and finisher of our faith. Faith that keeps its eyes upon Jesus is a faith that will protect us from all the flaming darts of the evil one.

*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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# Pause . . . and Consider

## What Atmosphere Are We Cultivating?

By Ken and Jan Merop  
Avery County



As a single Mom many years ago, it was important to me to give my young son all the positive input I possibly could. There was enough negative that he had to deal with from day to day.

We didn't shy away from reality. We faced it with prayer and courage from the Lord. And, often that courage came through learning God's Word together and through music.

Each morning, I would fill our home with uplifting music. One of our favorites spoke of being a promise with wonderful possibilities. It encouraged the potentiality in each person...especially children.

And, so, an atmosphere of faith and hope with endless possibilities developed. I once heard someone say that they only allowed people of faith to speak into their lives...particularly during troubling times. Therefore, that atmosphere of faith and hope was not shot down with negativity and fear.

Reality can have us focusing on the circumstances or issues that are hovering and creating fear and uncertainty. They are real...greeting us each morning and staying uninvited.

Reality is very REAL.

But God...

He is the TRUE REALITY.

Acknowledging God's presence continually creates an atmosphere of faith and hope that holds us up under the most difficult circumstances. After all, it says of Jesus Christ in Hebrews 13: 5 NKJV, *"I will never leave you nor forsake you."* Further on it says that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Not only is He ever-present, but is changeless.

So, in situations that toss you like a toy boat on a rough sea, you can cling to the dependable presence of the One who promised.

How is that done? By abiding and cultivating a presence of mind that immediately goes to Him first.

Hebrews 13:8 continues saying, *"For it is good that the heart be established by grace."*

In other words, when we plant our feet of faith firmly on the truth of Scripture and the beliefs expressed above, we begin to cultivate life-giving thoughts and attitudes.

The more we acknowledge that true REALITY of His presence...not only our consciousness of His presence...but the actuality of it, the atmosphere in your home and life will be infused with confidence and joy.

I recall a time when we were driving along on a rainy day when suddenly the car in front of us stopped and our car smashed into it releasing the airbags. In the moments before, I had been thinking about a story that described the rapture and for a moment...disoriented...thought it had occurred!

Keep his REALITY that real! Selah

### LIVING ABOVE THE CLOUDS

*Observe the ever-moving clouds.*

*Their formations don't stay the same for long.*

*Clinging to circumstantially cloudy days  
is to ride a non-supportive vapor.*

*But to let God's joy lift us above the clouds,  
is to look down upon them from His perspective...  
living above the clouds.*

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

Isaiah 55: 8 & 9, NKJV



Ken and Jan love residing in the mountains of Avery County. Visit Jan's new blog @[pauseandconsider.net](http://pauseandconsider.net), *Journeying with Jan*. Ken's photos can be seen at [kenmeroppphotography.com](http://kenmeroppphotography.com).

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# New Dimensions School

## Summer Vacation

By David Burleson  
*Burke County*



It is hard to believe that summer vacation is here, and we are making plans at New Dimensions to hopefully welcome our students back to school on September 1. One of the most pressing questions we are all asking is “will we come back to school in the fall and if we do, what will school look like?”

We do know that all schools in North Carolina will need to develop 3 plans for possible reopening:

- 1-minimal social distancing
- 2-moderate social distancing
- 3-complete remote learning

New Dimensions is fortunate that the size of our classrooms in conjunction with our reduced class size in grades K-5 (1:16) would allow us to operate at 50% capacity and still accommodate all students who are currently projected to be enrolled. This, along with additional guidelines, allows us to fully comply with plan 1 or plan 2.

The New Dimensions Reopening Task Force is working on the most appropriate and safest way to return to in-school instruction in the fall without our school resembling a prison. This task force is made up of board members, parents, community members, and staff. Many great ideas and suggestions have been generated by this group.

The 2020-2021 school year at New Dimensions will look a little different than what it did in past years. The most significant adjustment will be the opportunity for parents to choose between face to face instruction and remote instruction. This hybrid model will allow families to select which method best serves the needs of their families. The hybrid instruction model at New Dimensions will provide for the following:

- The plan will be different from the remote learning that was done in the spring.
- Students would be required to follow along with the teacher. Students would get breaks and specials with students who are physically in the class.
- Students would be in the class but virtually.
- Attendance will be counted remotely just as it would in a seated class.
- Assignments will be provided and returned in Google Classroom (Grades 2-8) or Seesaw (Grades K-1).

To make our school as safe as possible for students, staff, and guests the following guidelines will be implemented:

- Face masks will be optional for students.
- Students and staff will have temperature checks when entering the school as well as reviewing the symptoms checklist.
- Plans will be in place to strategically place vulnerable populations away or distanced from others.
- Visitors and guests will be screened and a special area for guests to eat with students will be designated.
- Students will go to the cafeteria with only their grade level to have lunch.
- Students will go to recess by class. Classes will rotate between the athletic field, blacktop, and playground.
- Each classroom will have a touchless thermometer as well as the receptionist area and student entry areas.

The following changes will be made to the school building and classrooms:

- A special disinfecting and sanitizing system will be applied before students and staff return.
- Our custodial staff will continue to frequently clean with an approved cleaner. Our cleaners meet the requirements of the NCDHHS. High touch/high traffic areas will be cleaned more often.
- Touchless water dispensers to fill individual water bottles have been installed.
- Individual desks have been purchased so we can social distance in the classroom.
- Floor decals for social distancing will be utilized.
- Plexiglas barriers will be installed on the sink areas in the restrooms.

This summer, New Dimensions has had the good fortune to partner with the YMCA to provide a Day Camp for students in our community. Students may enroll weekly and there are still open slots for any interested family. Just give us a call at the school at 828-437-5753.

Next year, New Dimensions is anticipating over 375 students to be enrolled in our school. I want to take this time to thank our entire community for their support of our school and each student we serve. When we recruit teachers to our school, we share with them the support we receive from parents, businesses, and the community.

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

My hope and prayer are that this school year will be the best for our school and for each student we serve. If we, as a school, can help you, we want to hear from you. We have an open-door policy, and we encourage you to visit us at your convenience. If you are unable to stop by our office, please feel free to call me. I would love to discuss your concerns and suggestions regarding our school. We are always open to ideas on how we can better serve our community. Thank you for your support of our school and our children. I am honored to serve as your school director.

With everything all of us have been faced with in terms of COVID-19 restric-

tions, economic downturns, budget cuts, budget uncertainty, and school closure, we have experienced incredible accomplishments and it is due to dedicated people, positive attitudes, and community support.

Please accept a thank you from me on behalf of the New Dimensions School for all you do to help make our school successful. I am looking forward to the new year and working with the greatest educational team ever as well as our community partners.

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

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*But without faith [it is] impossible to please [him]: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and [that] he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. Hebrews 11:6*



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## Highest Honors Graduate

By Teresa Young  
Mitchell County

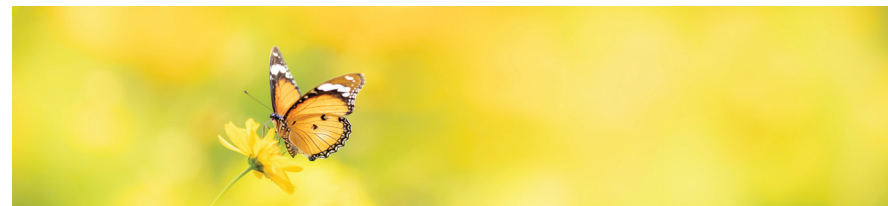


Benjamin Micah McKinney, son of Michael & Mollie McKinney of Avery County, graduated with Highest Honors at Tri-County Christian School of Spruce Pine. A celebration in his honor was held following the graduation ceremony on Friday evening, June 26, 2020. Ben was also dually enrolled in the Career & College Promise program at Mayland Community College, completing 22 credit hours, and is planning to continue his studies at MCC in the fall. He is inducted into the National Society of Leadership & Success. Ben has served in the "Volunteer Program" at Blue Ridge Community Hospital and has also volunteered, along with his TCCS peers, at Mitchell House and a local food bank. He has been an academic tutor to several younger students at TCCS, along with involving them in "hands-on" projects through his hobby farm. Congratulations, Ben, from Tri-County Christian School! We are so proud of you and your accomplishments and thank you for being a servant leader and godly role model in our school & community.

1 Timothy 4:12: "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."



Teresa Young is the Principal At Tri-County Christian School in Spruce Pine.



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# Crossword

Crossword 257 and Solution  
ACROSS  
1 like the merchant ships, bringing her food from \_\_\_\_ (Prov 31:14)  
5 The diameter of each wheel was a \_\_\_\_ and a half (1 Kings 7:32)  
9 Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth \_\_\_\_ (Josh 7:2)  
13 If someone forces you to go one \_\_\_\_, go with him two (Matt 5:41-42)  
14 The merchant \_\_\_\_ dishonest scales; he loves to defraud (Hos 12:7)  
15 banish (1 Chr 6:15)  
16 \_\_\_\_ and Dumah, and Eshean (Joshua 15:52)  
17 Daniel, close up and \_\_\_\_ the words of the scroll (Dan 12:4)  
18 God will meet all your \_\_\_\_ according to his glorious riches (Phil 4:19)  
19 A voice of one calling in the \_\_\_\_ (Matt 3:3)  
21 commanders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of \_\_\_\_ (Deut 1:15)  
23 she began to \_\_\_\_ his feet with her tears (Luke 7:38)  
24 walking in the garden in the \_\_\_\_ of the day (Gen 3:8)  
26 He restoreth my \_\_\_\_: he leadeth me in the paths of (Ps 23:3) KJV  
28 if he comes to you, \_\_\_\_ him (Col 4:10)  
31 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me \_\_\_\_ (Matt 25:35) KJV  
34 You are bringing some strange \_\_\_\_ to our ears (Acts 17:20)  
35 he said, \_\_\_\_, Father, all things are possible unto thee (Mark 14:36) KJV  
38 which is gone down in the sun \_\_\_\_ of Ahaz (Isa 38:8) KJV  
40 is there any taste in the white of an \_\_\_\_? (Job 6:6)  
41 he snapped the ropes off his arms as if they were \_\_\_\_ (Judg 16:12)  
44 the king told the attendants, \_\_\_\_ him hand and foot, and throw him (Matt 22:13)  
45 Jacob's first wife (Gen 29:16-18)  
47 there was one \_\_\_\_, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel (Luke 2:36)  
48 wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the \_\_\_\_ (Amos 9:13)  
50 found that he was already dead, they did not break his \_\_\_\_ (John 19:33-34)  
52 Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a \_\_\_\_ (Gen 49:9)  
55 write it before them in a table, and \_\_\_\_ it in a book (Isaiah 30:8)  
57 white like wool, as white as \_\_\_\_ (Rev 1:14)  
58 Christ, who \_\_\_\_ been appointed for you even

Jesus (Acts 3:20)  
60 off the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we landed at \_\_\_\_ in Lycia (Acts 27:5)  
62 Solomon had four thousand \_\_\_\_ for chariot horses (1 Kings 4:26)  
66 unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is \_\_\_\_ (1,4) (Heb 5:13) KJV  
68 Awake, and \_\_\_\_ to my defense! Contend for me, my God (Ps 35:23)  
70 that anointing is \_\_\_\_, not counterfeit (1 John 2:27)  
71 How long will you \_\_\_\_ between two opinions? (1 Kings 18:21)  
72 dead man, "by this time there is a bad \_\_\_\_ (John 11:39)  
73 to give notice of the \_\_\_\_ when the days of purification (Acts 21:26)  
74 at the name of Jesus every \_\_\_\_ should bow (Phil 2:10)  
75 there are certain men \_\_\_\_ in unawares (Jude 1:4)  
76 and make him \_\_\_\_ out what he has swallowed (Jer 51:44)  
DOWN  
1 As \_\_\_\_ man who casteth firebrands (1,3) (Prov 26:18) KJV  
2 upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and \_\_\_\_ (Gen 19:24)  
3 \_\_\_\_ for the day! for the day of the LORD is at hand (Joel 1:15)  
4 wife of Isaac (Rom 9:10) KJV  
5 As his \_\_\_\_ was, Paul went into the synagogue (Acts 17:2)  
6 do not \_\_\_\_ your freedom as a cover-up for evil (1 Peter 2:16)  
7 \_\_\_\_ your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into \_\_\_\_ (Joel 3:10) KJV  
8 Now shall the \_\_\_\_ tremble in the day of thy fall (Ezek 26:18) KJV  
9 a stroke with the \_\_\_\_ to cut down the tree (Deut 19:5) KJV  
10 fire to come down from heaven to earth in full \_\_\_\_ of men (Rev 13:13)  
11 An \_\_\_\_ must be blameless, the husband of but one wife (Titus 1:6)  
12 If a bird's \_\_\_\_ chance to be before thee (Deut 22:6) KJV  
15 and do good; let him seek peace, and \_\_\_\_ it (1 Peter 3:11) KJV  
20 the screech owl will \_\_\_\_ on her columns (Zeph 2:14)  
22 roamer, wanderer (Jer 3:2)  
25 Now \_\_\_\_ this lesson from the fig tree (Matt 24:32)  
27 There is a \_\_\_\_ here, which hath five barley loaves (John 6:9) KJV  
28 As if a rod were to \_\_\_\_ him who lifts it up (Isa 10:15)  
29 the ax is dull and its \_\_\_\_

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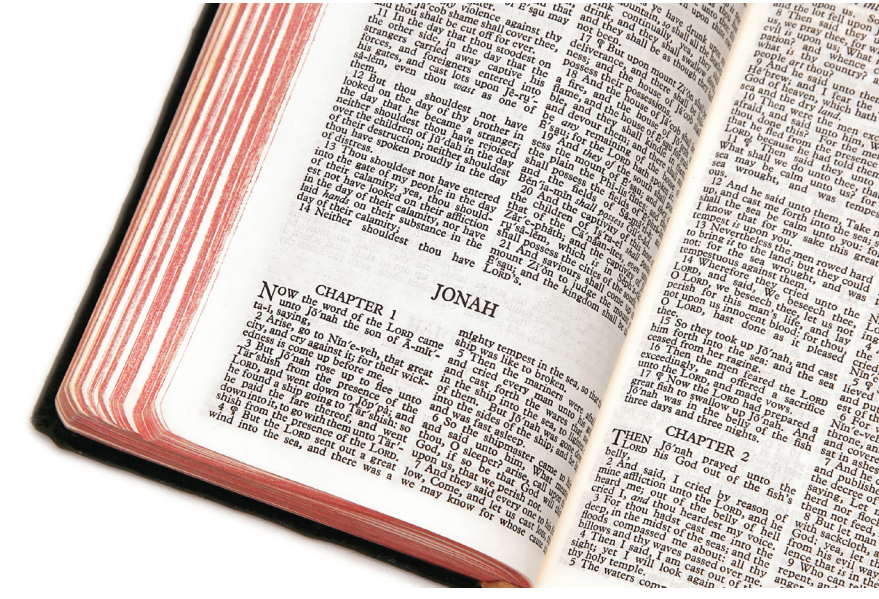
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unsharpened (Eccl 10:10)  
30 Is it \_\_\_\_ for you to flog a Roman citizen (Acts 22:25)  
32 This \_\_\_\_ was written on her forehead: MYSTERY BABYLON (Rev 17:5)  
33 he will \_\_\_\_ those who fear the LORD (Ps 115:13)  
36 Hebrew for "son of "  
37 So the Israelites put away their \_\_\_\_ and Ashtoreths (1 Sam 7:4)  
39 What \_\_\_\_ you that you keep on arguing? (Job 16:3)  
42 do not be \_\_\_\_ in your heart to utter anything before God (Eccl 5:2)  
43 But God will \_\_\_\_ them with arrows (Ps 64:7)  
46 even as a \_\_\_\_ gathereth her chickens under her wings (Matt 23:37) KJV  
49 cut the ram in pieces, and wash the \_\_\_\_ of him (Ex 29:17) KJV  
51 The sons of Japheth: \_\_\_\_, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal (Gen 10:2)  
53 \_\_\_\_ the poles into the rings on the sides of the chest (Ex 25:14)  
54 Jacob said unto \_\_\_\_, Give me my wife (Gen 29:21)

56 ran greedily after the \_\_\_\_ of Balaam for reward (Jude 1:11)  
58 the owl, and the night \_\_\_\_, and the cuckow (Lev 11:16)  
59 Christ Jesus came into the world to \_\_\_\_ sinners (1 Tim 1:15)  
61 Joshua son of Nun, who had been Moses' \_\_\_\_ (Num 11:28)  
63 "Rejoice in that day and \_\_\_\_ for joy (Luke 6:23)  
64 vain for you to rise up early, to sit up \_\_\_\_ (Ps 127:2)  
65 raised up Jesus, whom ye \_\_\_\_ and hanged on a tree (Acts 5:30) KJV  
67 and for the \_\_\_\_ that is in the land of Assyria. (Isaiah 7:18)  
69 Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a \_\_\_\_ (John 13:26) (KJV)

Solution on page 14





What Are You Hungry For?

By Christy Young  
Mitchell County



Often in the hectic world that we live in, we find ourselves rushing through the drive-thru at a fast-food restaurant to satisfy the emptiness in our stomach. But, does that fast-food hamburger satisfy our hunger, or are we looking for something more fulfilling? I myself would rather have a home-cooked meal with the meat, potato, and vegetable. What are you hungry for in your spiritual walk? Are you satisfied with the drive-thru version or are you longing for a full course portion of God? In Matthew 5:6, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.” How satisfied are you with your life? Do you long for a life of fullness, blessings, and happiness? A life of that magnitude only comes from a daily relationship with God. To have a daily relationship with our Father, we must first communicate with Him. How do we speak with our Heavenly Father? Prayer! He wants us to talk to Him, tell Him how we feel, tell Him our troubles, and rejoice with Him in our blessings. Through the power of prayer, we have a direct line to our Heavenly Father. We need direction on the crazy journey that we call life. He has equipped us with a manual, the Bible. When we dig into God’s word, He gives us direction on how to face our problems and how to overcome the adversary. Through prayer and seeking God’s word, we will find the satisfaction that we desire. In John 6:35, “Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life, he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.” Are you hungry, are you thirsty? If so, the answer is Jesus. Any man that comes to the Father.... will hunger and thirst no more! How hungry are you? Do you desire a drive-thru portion or a feast prepared by the Master?

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.


ment until the end of the semester in December. Similarly, if you begin the spring semester in January, you are expected to maintain enrollment until the end of the spring semester in May.”

Abernathy asks those who are interested in the Burke County Virtual Academy to complete this survey. For more information, email Abernathy at cabernathy@burke.k12.nc.us.

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



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BAPTIST ASSOCIATION



### Christmas in August

We are excited about this year’s Toy Store Ministry as we will be celebrating 26 years of ministering to families in need using toys at Christmas to share the Good News of Jesus. This year we are celebrating Christmas in August, encouraging churches and individuals to collect toys in August to be distributed to families during annual Toy Store event in December. If you would like a collection box to be delivered to your church (or business) please give us a call at 828-437-0137. Collection boxes with the Toy Store Logo are also available for pickup at our CRBA office in Morganton. Or, feel free to bring donations (new toys costing between \$12-\$15) to our CRBA office. For toy ideas go to <https://www.crbanc.org/crba-needs/>





2020 GMC Sierra Crew 4X4  
X31 Off-Road Pkg. ONLY \$44,359!



2020 GMC Sierra 3500HD Diesel 4X4  
Convenience Pkg. Internet Price - \$48,560!



2020 Chevrolet 1500 Silverado Crew 4X4  
All-Star Edition. MSRP \$52,650, Huge Savings!



2020 Chevy Trax AWD LT, Turbo  
MSRP \$26,145...Buy For Only \$22,195!



2020 GMC Terrain SLT 4X4, 18K Miles  
Turbo, NOW ONLY \$29,900!



2020 Buick Encore 4X4, PCW Package  
Remote Start Unheard of Pricing!!



2020 Chevy 1500 Silverado Crew 4X4  
LT, 13K Miles, V-8...Just \$39,900



2020 Chevy Colorado Crew 4X4  
15K Miles, V-6, Auto... Buy For \$29,900



2020 Chevy Blazer LT 4X4, 15K Miles  
Sweet Ride For Just \$31,900!



2019 Toyota RAV4 XLE AWD  
Was 26,900...NOW ONLY \$25,900!



2019 GMC Acadia SLT-2 AWD, 12K Miles  
LIKE NEW – GREAT DEAL at just \$34,900!!



2019 Nissan Pathfinder SV 4X4  
3-Row Seating...\$24,900



2017 Toyota Tacoma TRD 4X4, 6 Speed  
Manual, Super Sharp \$34,900



2017 Hyundai Elantra Limited, Nav.  
Sunroof, Loaded! \$13,900!



2019 Cadillac Escalade Luxury  
Leather, Navigation, LOADED! \$56,900



2016 Nissan Maxima 3.5 S  
LOADED FOR JUST \$14,900



# Thank You to our Hometown Heroes!



**PruittHealth @ Home - Toe River  
and PruittHealth Home First - Yancey  
would like to thank each and every one  
of our partners during these challenging times.  
You are the backbone, the front line, and the people  
that truly demonstrate what it is like to be  
"Committed to Caring".**



**(828) 682-7825**

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