



BLUE RIDGE CHRISTIAN NEWS

And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. Revelation 14:15



Mine Creek Baptist Church

Stringing and Breaking Beans

By Chris Rathbone
Mitchell County



By now, most of the garden harvest has been canned or frozen. So many folks were quite busy with all the harvest work this year. Seems with the shortages back in the spring many have chosen to raise a garden and preserve a lot of food this year. Many pictures have been shared of bountiful harvests and successful canning. Jars and lids have been in short supply in the late summer for sure. Fortunately, we had some already stocked up that supplied our needs. God really blessed our little garden here in Bakersville. Despite the late freeze in the spring, our potatoes bounced back pretty healthy. The half-runner beans produced great along with the prettiest corn we've ever raised. We spent many hours stringing and breaking beans then canning them. Corn shucks were thick this year but the corn was delicious! We shucked it, cut it off, and put it in the freezer. You need to understand that I sure don't have a "green thumb" as the ol' saying goes. So for our garden to produce so well it has to be the Lord blessing it for sure!

Picking beans is my least favorite part. Bending over in the bean patch is rough on an old man's back. However, many wonderful memories were brought back to my mind this summer when the beans were harvested. While Michelle was at work, I tried to get as many of the beans strung and broke so they would be ready for her to can when she got home. Shucks, I even canned a few myself! (Following her instructions of course.) The sound of those beans "snapping" took me back many years.

Growing up, raising a garden wasn't a hobby but a labor of necessity. For the most part, we grew the majority of our vegetables in our garden. Nowadays, most folks depend on the local produce stand or grocery store. I dare to say that a vast majority of people would have no clue how to even begin gardening. For us, it was a yearly family undertaking. No questions asked it was just understood that we would work in the garden from preparing the ground to harvesting and preserving the bounty. My grandmother, "Mammie" was ol' school when it came to gardening. She did not waste anything that the Lord had provided. Everything she raised was either eaten, canned, frozen, dried, or given away to someone who could use it. Nothing, and I mean nothing, was wasted.

One of my fondest memories of time spent with her was sitting on the porch

stringing and breaking green beans. After the beans were picked, she would sit in her rocking chair on the porch. There were two paper "pokes" in front of her. One was for the strings and the other for the beans. She always wore an apron. She would place a pile of the unstrung beans in her lap, then throw the strings and beans in the paper "pokes". I can just see her rocking back and forth, stringing and breaking those beans, sometimes whistling or singing, oftentimes for hours to get all the beans ready for canning. There was a small paring knife she kept handy to cut off any specks she found on the beans. Trust me when I say, she cut off every single one for she would not waste a single green bean.

Many times we sat in the cool of the late evenings on that porch working those beans and talk of many things. At the time, I certainly didn't realize how much those conversations would mean to me later in life. As a boy, all I could think about was getting finished so I could go do something else. Now as I sit on my own porch stringing and breaking beans, all those precious conversations come flooding back.

We talked about the weather. When the train horn was pretty clear off in the distance, she would say that rain was on the way. Sure enough, in a day or two, there always seemed to be rain! There was laughter talking about funny things that had happened over the years in our family. She shared memories of how she used to cook three meals a day for the sawmill camp where she and my grandpa worked. She always shared about times when the Lord answered prayers for her and the family. "Don't ever be doing something you wouldn't want to be doing when the Lord comes." she would say. Always, always, she would encourage me, "Live for Jesus, Chris, you'll never regret it."

Seems like every year when I'm working my own beans, there's always something else about our conversations that will be brought to my memory. Often times a sad feeling comes over my heart because I'd like to go back and sit on that porch again with Mammie. Maybe I wouldn't take it for granted as much as I did back then. For sure there would be a whole lot more listening and taking in what she said during those conversations. While sometimes those memories of days gone by make me feel a little sad because I miss them, there is a hope that keeps me going. The same Jesus she served is the same one I serve. Because of Him, we have the hope of being reunited one day with our saved loved ones. Most importantly, we get to see Him, the one who has made it all possible.

Jesus is always there to remind us and bless us with hope, even while stringing and breaking beans.

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

How Firm is Your Foundation?

By Christy Young
Mitchell County



Many of you are familiar with the parable about the wise man and the foolish man. Of course, we know the wise man found solid ground (rock) to build his house. Knowing that the storms would rage and the wind would blow; he wanted to be sure his home would continue to stand. The foolish man instead, decided to build his house in the sand allowing the foundation to wash out from under him. What is God’s instruction in this parable? I think He is trying to teach us that we all need a firm spiritual foundation to withstand the storms of life. We all know that we face financial, emotional, and relational storms daily. Where does this firm spiritual foundation come from? A firm foundation comes from having a relationship with Jesus Christ. I believe it is essential to have prayer, praise, and worship, and the word of God to strengthen and build a firm spiritual foundation. A foundation that can weather the storms! When embracing these essentials into your daily walk with Christ, you will feel the presence and power of God sustaining you. We are facing uncertain times with an abundance of storms surrounding us, but we have unstoppable strength and power with God as our fortress. The world wants us to feel defeated and hopeless. But we have hope...despite the deception of this world. God is still saving, moving, and preparing to take His church home soon. The Bible teaches us in Psalms 11:3, *“If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?”* Satan prides himself in destroying the foundations of Christians. If our strength is sustained in Christ, Satan has no power. We want Christ to rule our lives and direct our paths. Strengthen your spiritual foundation daily! Don’t allow the events of this crazy world and the lies of the adversary destroy your foundation. Stay close to the Savior seeking His righteousness and favor in your life. How strong is your foundation? Does it consist of Jesus Christ, His teachings, His blessings, and the presence of the Holy Spirit? Is your foundation firm enough to weather the storm and await the coming of the Master? 1 Corinthians 3:11 says, *“For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ”*.

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.

And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. John 4:36

Walking in the Prosperity of God

By Ken Day
McDowell County



“Beloved, I wish above all things thou mayest prosper and be in good health, even as thy soul prospereth.” (3 John 1:2)

Many today within the body of Christ are walking in financial despair. COVID-19 has come into our world stopping or delaying work as we know it. Incomes have stopped and homes are on the verge of foreclosure. Businesses are failing and believers are desperate for answers. The answers are already before us in God’s word in what we call the Bible. In the above-mentioned verse, the Apostle John writes a letter to a faithful believer Gaius. Gaius had been faithfully supporting traveling missionaries spreading the Gospel. John tells him that he wishes above everything else that he becomes a prosperous man. The word prosperous means to succeed. God told his people in the Old Testament that if they obeyed and were faithful to him that he would bless their work, health, and family. We today are part of that covenant blessing given to the children of Israel by God through Abraham. Certainly, some preachers today within the body of Christ have twisted God’s word for their personal benefit. Yet, should we ignore God’s key for financial blessings because of a few? No, not at all but to the contrary now is the time to be obedient and step out in faith. (See Joshua 1; 7-8) God’s plan from the very beginning has been to bless and prosper His people. Before we as believers can experience financial breakthrough we must believe and act upon the key principle of faith and take action. When we do we are promised the supernatural blessing only God can give. (Read Deut 28:1) Now is the time to believe and act upon God’s purpose for us to prosper.

Ken Day is an Agency Manager with Farm Bureau Insurance in McDowell County, and an Elder at Victory Church in Morganton.



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Contents

In Every Issue

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

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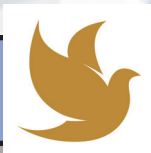
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“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace: that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation: that saith unto Zion. Thy God reigneth!”

Isaiah 52:7 KJV



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Church Directory

Landis Orthodox Presbyterian Church

4975 US 221
Marion NC 28972
(828)-756-7470
www.landischurch.org

Elder Mike Cloy
opcmmikecloy@gmail.com

Sunday School 10:00 AM
Worship Service 11:00 AM
Fellowship Meal Following Worship
Thursday Bible Study & Prayer 6:30pm

*Come Celebrate the Glory of God in Reverent
Worship Ps. 96:3; John 17:1*

Bear Creek Baptist Church

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

Reverend Bruce Cannon

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

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

The Bridge Church of WNC

207 Pinebridge Avenue
Spruce Pine, NC 28777
www.bridgewnc.org

Pastors - Tom & Tammy Anglin

Sunday Service 10:30AM
Wednesday Service 7:00PM
Church Office M-F
9:00AM-3:00PM

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

Berry Chapel Baptist Church

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

Pastor - Steve Williams

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

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The Rock Church

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

Pastor - Billy Chapman

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

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Grassy Creek Baptist Church

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

Sunday School 10:00am
Morning Worship 11:00am
Sunday evening 6:30pm
Wednesday:
J.A.M. (Jesus and Me) 6:30pm
Mid-week worship 7:00pm
"That Mitchell County
may know Christ"

Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church

2187 Jamestown Road
Morganton, NC
828-584-8212

Pastor Steve Beitz

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

Altapass Baptist Church

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

Dr. Marcus R. Benfield

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

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Plumtree Presbyterian Church

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

Pastor Ryan Bridgeo
pastor@plumtreechurch.com

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

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

Pleasant Hill Baptist Church

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

**Senior Pastor
Dr. Jack Hodges**

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

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

West Burnsville Baptist Church

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

Pastor: Terry Long

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

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

Burkemont Baptist Church

4668 Burkemont Rd.
Morganton, NC 28655
828-437-2357
For more information,
please visit
www.burkemontbaptist.org

Dr. Luke A. Lane

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

Marion Seventh-day Adventist Church

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

Pastor Tim Sheridan

Sabbath (Saturday)
Bible Study - 9:15 am
Sabbath Worship – 10:50 am
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www.marionnc.adventistchurch.org

First Baptist Church of Spruce Pine

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

**Dr. Rocky Branch
Senior Pastor**

Sunday School - 9:30 am
Sunday Worship - 10:45 am
Sunday Evening - 6:00 pm
Wednesday Evening - 6:30 pm
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God, Submitting to God!*

Great Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church

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

Pastor Barry MaHorney

Sabbath (Saturday)
Bible Study-10:00am
Sabbath Worship - 11:30am
Vegetarian Buffet after church
Wednesday - Praise, Prayer &
Proclaim - 7:00pm
www.greathopesda.com

Pine Branch Baptist Church

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

Reverend Bobby Joe Greene

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

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Spruce Pine United Methodist Church

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

Pastor Rick Schilling

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

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

Newland Christian Church

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

Pastor - Phillip Greene

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

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Billy Graham Evangelistic Association

The Love That Conquers Racism

By Franklin Graham

The tragic death of George Floyd in Minneapolis shocked and outraged our entire nation as well as other countries around the world. This was a repulsive act of evil that should have never happened. Racial discrimination of any kind is wrong, and police brutality must never be tolerated.

And George Floyd isn't the only one to meet such a fate. It is heart-wrenching that many, many others have suffered similar injustices over the decades. And, while we know that the vast majority of police officers are courageous and dedicated servants of their communities who were as horrified by the actions of Officer Derek Chauvin as we were, it is scandalous that so many people of color have to go through their day wondering whether they or their children are going to be next.

Racism has caused deep wounds in our nation. But regret is not enough. We must make corrections, we must improve, we must act to bring positive change. The Bible is very clear that all people are created in God's image (see Genesis 1:27). No skin color is more or less important to Him. The Bible teaches us to love others as we would love ourselves. We should treat others the way we want to be treated. And even more, we are to treat others as God has already treated us in Christ—with grace and mercy.

Jesus dealt with issues of racial discrimination when He told the parable of the Good Samaritan. He pointed out to his listeners that a man of ethnicity they looked down on, even despised, was the hero, doing the right thing in helping a victim of violence and injustice. And Jesus told us, *"You go, and do likewise"* (Luke 10:37).

I personally remember segregation. As a young boy, I went to a segregated school. Restaurants were segregated, bathrooms were segregated. I didn't understand it, and it bothered me, saddened me, even repulsed me. As a nation, we have come a long way since then, but we have a long way to go.

Unfortunately, until Christ returns, we will continue to see acts of violence, prejudice, and injustice because we live in a broken and fallen world that is under the evil influence of Satan. The Bible calls Satan *"the prince of the power of the air; the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience"* (Ephesians 2:2). He wants to steal, kill, and destroy, and all around us, we see the horrific results of his activity.

But there is an answer: The love of God that comes through Jesus Christ. Throughout the ages, Christ's followers have experienced the wonder of Christian love and fellowship that obliterates hostility, whether it's between individuals or between races. The Apostle Paul explained it this way: *"For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. ... There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus"* (Galatians 3:26, 28).

Our job as followers of Christ is to make our Savior's Name known. We are to tell a hurting world that Jesus shed His blood and died for our sins. He was despised and rejected by men. He was falsely accused and beaten beyond recognition. The Bible tells us, *"by His stripes we are healed"* (Isaiah 53:5, NKJV). He took the punishment for sin that we deserve, and if we will turn away from sin and put our trust in Him, He will forgive us, save us and fill us with the love that conquers racism and hatred.

Jesus has called us to go into the world and make disciples of all nations. This is what all of us as Christians should be doing, and it is what we are going to continue doing at the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association—calling people to be reconciled to God through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ.

In proclaiming the message of reconciliation, we must remember that prayer is our most powerful weapon. We need to pray for peace, because *"the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God"* (James 1:20). Pray also for perspective, because *"the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere"* (James 3:17). Pray for patience, because of God's *"kindness and forbearance and patience"* toward us all (Romans 2:4).

And the Bible commands us to pray for our leaders. They need our prayers especially now, as our nation faces not only the effects of longstanding racism but also the global COVID-19 pandemic that has killed hundreds of thousands and put millions out of work.

Paul instructed Timothy: *"First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth"* (1 Timothy 2:1-4).

When we pray like this, we're not just praying for a trouble-free world. We are praying for a world where the truth will prevail and many will come to Christ in repentance and faith—a world transformed by the relentless love of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are taken from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version. The Scripture quotation marked NKJV is taken from the Holy Bible, New King James Version.

Reverend Franklin Graham is President and CEO of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and of Samaritan's Purse, an international Christian relief organization.



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September 2020 - Blue Ridge Christian News page 5



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By Starli Phillips
Mitchell County



“Love your neighbor as yourself”. The guiding principle of Neighbors Feeding Neighbors. Founders Alan and Amy Hoilman are from Mitchell County. They know the people they serve, which is why they honor their mission so well, “to reach out to those who have food insecurity with love and respect and serving those in need without judgment.” They started the food ministry Neighbors Feeding Neighbors in 2018 and the ministry has grown to serve over 9000 people last year. Alan said that many of those served, “feel like they have been forgotten. People with no friends or family, no transportation or in poor health.” That is what matters to Alan and Amy. Where there is a need they are ready to help. WAMY Community Action, through the Cares Act, has partnered with them to help them reach those that need it most. Through this partnership, Neighbors Feeding Neighbors will be able to further expand their food delivery to homes in Avery, Mitchell, and Yancey County. “We are excited to work with Neighbors Feeding Neighbors, their outreach and ministry is incredible and they can reach people that we can’t”, says Melissa Soto, Executive Director of WAMY Community Action. Neighbors Feeding Neighbor’s work depends on volunteers to help cook, pack food boxes, or deliver food boxes to homes with no transportation. One of the best programs they offer is Kids 4 Christ, getting youth involved in serving their community. “Kids are a shining light. When kids show up to help it makes people happier because they show love and kindness to others.”

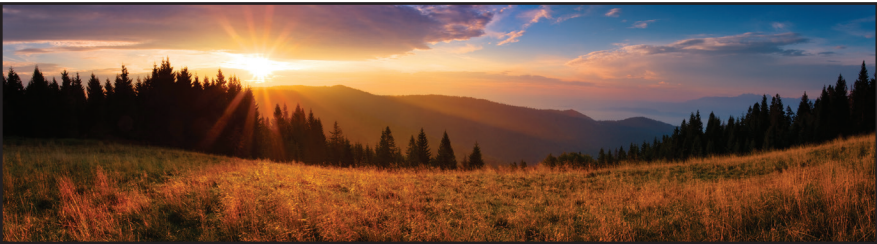
Teaching the next generation the importance of volunteering is critical because our volunteer base is aging out and are stretched across many organizations meeting many different needs in Avery, Mitchell, and Yancey counties. We need the kids and young people to get involved now to become the future volunteer base. Alan stated “We all have to work together to end hunger, homelessness and help those that need it. No matter how young or old you are, sow that seed of hope and let’s forget judgment.”

WAMY became involved with Neighbors Feeding Neighbors through their involvement in the Community Housing Coalition. WAMY depends on volunteers like Alan and Amy Hoilman, who know firsthand the condition of some of the homes they deliver to. There are often many needs in a local household, from food assistance to major home repairs. The Community Housing Coalition is tasked to undertake the problems of housing repairs, as well as affordability and availability. There is not enough decent housing for rent in Avery, Mitchell or Yancey counties. There is also a shortage of affordable homes for sale. I just had a conversation with a full time working mother of three that was describing the rental she paid \$600 a month to live in. I was horrified by her story! To me, \$600 a month is a significant part of anyone’s budget and should afford hard-working people at minimum shelter against the weather and outdoor pests. WAMY Community Action is working with partners like Neighbors Feeding Neighbors and volunteers like the Hoilman’s to address some of the issues facing the tri-county area.

To quote Pastor Rick Schilling, UMC Spruce Pine, another volunteer serving on the Housing Coalition, “God wants us to be the answer to people’s prayers. God’s primary way of acting in this world is through people.” Neighbors helping neighbors. Please get involved or donate by calling Neighbors Feeding Neighbors at 828-592-4089 or WAMY Housing Coalition at 828-766-9150.

Our mission at the Neighbors Feeding Neighbors Food Ministry is to reach out to those who have food insecurity with love and those in need without judgement.

Works for WAMY Community Action administering the Cares Act in Watauga, Avery, Mitchell, and Yancey counties.



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THE ANSWER'S ON HIS WAY
By Joy Baldwin

I think that in the darkest skies
God's eye is a searching light
So in the brightest heavens
He has me in his sight.

His ear is ever listening
To hear my deepest plea
When storms of life are raging
His big hand is hiding me.

The heart of God is yearning
To draw me close in love
He waits to hear my voice in song
He's smiling from above.

God's Son can warm the coldest soul
He's left his word to say
Somewhere from all of heaven
The answer's on His way.



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.



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By Jody Griffin
Avery and Mitchell County

6 Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: 7 Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, 8 provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest." (Proverbs 6:6-8 KJV)

Typically, around this time of year, this column is used to give witness to the incredible miracles of God that have taken place through the One Day With God Camps sponsored by Forgiven Ministry. Since I have been privileged to serve as Chaplain here at Avery Mitchell Correctional Institution we have rejoiced in holding this event annually and in seeing some incarcerated men and their children spend an entire day together within the walls. It is always a day filled with nonstop laughter, fun, a delicious meal, but MOST importantly with the wonderful message of the Love of our Heavenly Father expressed in Jesus Christ.

Due to the pandemic, this year we have not been able to have a Camp. But we are NOT giving up on 2021! Instead, we are taking this opportunity to prepare and to gather resources so that whenever the time arrives that we are allowed, we will be ahead of the game!

YOU can help us by sponsoring a child (\$175.00 for the day) or by making any sized donation to:
Forgiven Ministry (c/o AMCI Camp Fund)
200 Macedonia Church Road
Taylorsville NC 28681

They are on Facebook if you want to look them up!

(Donations can also be sent to Chaplain Jody Griffin, 600 Amity Park Road, Spruce Pine, NC 28777. Again, please put AMCI ODWG Camp Fund in the Memo section!)

Please understand that this appeal is being made in response to God's inspiration of the proverbial wisdom above. With life somewhat slowed by restricted movement and access for the usual hustle and bustle of ministry, Chaplains are still faithfully working daily to provide for the spiritual needs of offenders and staff but we are also seeking to use any additional time to build up resources for our special ministries provided to our population throughout the year.

Hopefully, whenever the day comes that we can welcome volunteers back into our institutions, we will be able to have a FULLY funded Camp! If we can achieve this goal, then we will not have to wait until funding is solicited because we will be already able to begin the coordination needed to make this incredible day happen!

Children will have time to play, sing, and celebrate the gift of a day filled with the Blessings of God and share that day with their incarcerated father! Dads spend time preparing for the day by getting a class on Biblical Fatherhood and are challenged to plan for the day in ways that will help them make the most of it.

Please prayerfully consider making a tax refundable contribution as outlined above! It will truly be a day filled with joy as lives are touched and changed! And it will be a Day of Blessings for the most vulnerable little ones, those who through no fault of their own are navigating the trials of life without their Daddy. God Bless You for helping to make this Day possible, and especially for helping us fund our Camp fully before we ever even get it scheduled! And thank you for helping these difficult days of pandemic be productive ones as we plan for the earliest possible time we can to host a Camp again!

(Estimated total cost of the Camp is \$9000.00 which includes gifts for the children, all of the food and snacks, craft supplies, games, special entertainment like clowns, sports demonstrations by real professionals, a backpack with school supplies and much, much more!)

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



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By Doug Harrell
Mitchell County

Last month I wrote Life Lessons on the events taking place here in America. This month I want to continue in somewhat the same vein but look at what is taking place in our homes and businesses. We are all dealing with such unknowns: the virus, the protests, the looting and destroying of property, the removal of any reference to Christ from our hallowed halls, attempts to remove the words “Under God” from our pledge and it goes on and on. It seems as if we have learned nothing from history. I studied Social Sciences and Phycology in college years ago and was fascinated by Roman and Greek history. It seems as if we in America are treading on the same path at breakneck speed. The debauchery and things taking place today would make our founders turn over in their graves. It seems as if scripture is playing out before our very eyes, good is being called evil and evil is being called good! What it boils down to is the fact that we as individuals must stand firm in our Christian commitment. It needs to show in our demeanor, and it needs to be obvious to anyone that we meet what our beliefs are. I am going to include in this life lesson a devotion that I wrote not too long ago about being recognized as a Christian.

Have you ever met someone that you just knew was a Christian just by talking with them for a few minutes? I think most of us have. What makes the difference? What things make it evident that the person is in a true relationship with their Lord and Savior? Is it their smile, is it a necklace they are wearing, is it the gleam in their eye, the words they are saying, or their loving nature? Think about these things this morning and ask yourself if you are recognizable as a Christian. What do others see in you when they meet you on the street?

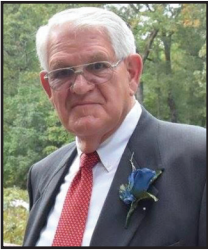
We all need to strive to be that personal witness to those around us by our personal demeanor, our actions, and our language. Our entire being needs to shout out that we have a risen Savior that is our friend and confidant. When you start your day, look in a mirror and say to yourself, I am a child of the King, I am going to make sure that the light of Christ makes me recognizable to others around me today and that I might be a beacon that shows the way to salvation through the faith and belief in Jesus Christ.

Put on a happy face, a smiling face, and be the first to offer a hand and a hug. Listen rather than talk. Show concern for your fellow man with a true interest in the other person. Guard your tongue, watch your mouth, and be uplifting in your conversation. Be that person that others are drawn to, not shied away from.

“Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” Matthew 5:15-16 KJV

Make sure you and I are doing what is right and teaching our children and families right from wrong. We each have a manual, a manuscript, and a set of directions to go by. Make sure you are building on those solid foundations stones of truth that never change.

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



“Something to Think About”
- Sam Houston’s Wet Wallet

By Dennis Love
McDowell County



Sam Houston became the sixth governor of the state of Texas in 1859. Life on the Texas frontier was rough and rugged. Men molded by the frontier knew how to fight, gamble, drink, curse, and kill. Sam Houston fits that lifestyle comfortably. His reputation as one of the boys earned him the nickname, “Big Drunk.”

Houston married a devout Baptist wife, who prayed for years that he would be saved and join the church. The Texas hero had long claimed to be a believer, but baptism and church membership were not easy for him to accept. Late in life, he surrendered his life to Christ, vowing to go all the way with God and join the Baptist church. Houston was baptized on November 19, 1854, in Brushy Creek. Word of his baptism spread throughout the country and over 250 people came to witness it.

When the pastor brought Sam up out of the water, he wanted to say something significant to him, so he said, “Now, Sam, your sins are all washed away.” Sam replied, “God help all the fishes.” Just before the pastor baptized Sam, he said, “Sam I suggest you take off that watch and chain. You’ll ruin it if you get it wet.” “Thank you, I will,” Sam said, handing the piece to a friend. The pastor also said, “Sam, you may want to hand him your wallet too.” “NO, I think not pastor. I’m afraid it needs baptizing, too.”

And indeed it was, for thereafter Sam Houston paid one-half the pastor’s salary at his church. And, he faithfully gave financial assistance to ministerial students at Baylor University as long as he lived. Sam Houston’s wet wallet, his baptized billfold, became a part of the witness to Sam’s new dedication to God. It testified to the fact that when God touched his heart, He touched his money also!

That’s the way salvation should be! It should affect not only our eternal destiny but our worldly possessions. It should touch not only our soul but also our wallet. Take a moment and ask yourself this one very important question. Has my billfold been baptized? Now that’s really something to think about.

Dr. Dennis Love is the Senior Pastor at Glenwood Baptist Church in Marion, NC. He and his wife Vicki have been married for 40 years, and they have lived in Marion for six years. They have two sons and four grandchildren and two step-grandchildren.

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Desperately Calling

By Christy Lowman
Burke County



Ancient Egyptians loved to have cats for pets. They even worshiped a half-cat goddess named Bastet. The Egyptian's law for killing a cat was death. They loved their cats so much that they would even shave off their eyebrows to show mourning when their beloved pet cat passed away.

House cats have almost the same genetic make-up as tigers. They can run up to 30mph which is fast enough to get a ticket for speeding in a school zone!

Cats can jump up to five times their height with ease. Cats don't always fall on their feet but most of the time they do. This is because the cat can twist his backbone while falling to position it where his feet will land first. Along with being able to balance themselves while up high cats also have a walking sequence. They walk moving both right feet at once followed by both left feet. Giraffes and elephants are the only other animals that can do this. Most cats do not like water but occasionally some enjoy swimming or a shower.

Cats love to be clean. They spend 30-50% of their time grooming. This act also tones down their scent to keep from being smelled by predators. It helps cool them down, improves blood flow, and distributes their natural oils evenly on their body that helps keep them warm and dry. A cat's saliva is also a natural antibiotic.

Some Vets think that purring can promote the cat's healing and improve bone density. Cats also purr when they are happy, sick, stressed out, or giving birth.

Merlin holds the record for the loudest purr at a whopping 67.8db(A)! This would be about the same volume as the bathroom shower being on. Most cats only purr at 25db.

Not all cats love catnip, but for the ones that do, it makes them act crazy and hyper! Sort of like how you feel when you eat too many sweets or have too many caffeinated soft drinks. Just like cats, some people aren't affected by sugar or caffeine either! Did you know that cats can't taste anything sweet! They are missing out!

People have only had 206 bones but cats have 244 bones. Cats also sweat like us but only through their paws. They will also pant like dogs do when they are overheated. Some Maine coon cats are born with an extra toe.

You would think the Sphynx cat came from Egypt since Egyptians built a Sphinx statue. But an actual Sphynx cat came from Canada and is named after the Sphinx. They are hairless so you would think they would freeze all the time not having any fur. However, their body temperature is 4 degrees warmer than a regular house cat! Thank goodness, because it gets really cold in Canada! Is it not amazing that God made this particular cat's internal temperature hotter since they don't have any hair! God thought of everything, and has made provisions for animals just like He does for us!

A few months ago, we were about to have a really bad storm. All of us along with the dogs were hunkered down in the house. I called for Thomas, our cat, to come inside. I wanted him to be safe too. Thomas came inside the fenced-in dog lot and was getting ready to come inside when a moth got his attention. He then played with the moth and ignored my calls to come inside.

I called, "Thomas! Thomas! Come inside quickly!" I yelled until I almost lost my voice.

The wind had got up and it was starting to drizzle. It was going to be a downpour any second. The weatherman was calling for a terrible storm and winds. I really wanted him to come inside so I would be assured he would be safe with the rest of my little family.

I frantically kept calling for him. He kept ignoring me and kept playing with the moth. The thought came over me that I bet this was how Noah felt when he begged and desperately pleaded for people to come into the ark. He was desperate and wanted what was best for everyone, for everyone to be safe with his family. But they ignored him just like Thomas ignored me.

Then a feeling of peace came over me and I realized I just had to give it over to God. I had to let Him take care of Thomas and trust that He would keep him safe. This was the same thing that Noah had to come to terms with. He knew he had to quit worrying, he couldn't fix it, he had to just give it over to God and let Him handle and do what was best.

Sometimes it is so hard for us to give our problems over to God. We like to worry, and we want to fix it ourselves. But did you know that you can give any problem over to God, no matter how small, and let Him take care of it? God has what is best for us in His heart, all we have to do is trust Him and let Him handle it.

Dear Lord, please help us remember to give all our worries and problems over to you. Help us trust you with our lives because you truly do have what is best for us insight and somethings are out of our control that only you can fix! Amen.

"Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you." 1Peter 5:7 NLT



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

Hope for America

By Bruce Cannon
Mitchell County

Jeremiah 8:20 *“The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.”*

Jeremiah was a prophet whose ministry was to the nation of Judah. His ministry began around 626BC and concluded after 587BC. At the beginning of his ministry as a prophet, he saw the nation turning away from God. Judah was acting like the nations around them. They were worshipping other gods, sacrificing their children, and so forth. He knew the Lord would not put up with that kind of behavior from His own people. And so he preached, prayed, and wept before God for the sins of his people.

The unthinkable began to happen in 605BC as God allowed Babylon to come into Judah and take many of its citizens captive. It happened again in 597BC and yet again in 587BC. The third time, Babylon came into Judah their soldiers tore down the temple Solomon built, damaged the walls, and took more of the Jews into captivity.

This takes me to the verse above. Jeremiah was marking time in Babylon. Year after year was passing and the people were still not being “saved”. Judgment from God had fallen upon the Jews and there seemed to be no end in sight. Thus Jeremiah marks time by harvests and summer. He laments “and we are not saved.”

This is so eerily reminiscent of what is happening in America. I know no one has hauled us off to another nation into captivity, but we are in captivity. We are losing freedoms! We are seeing a lessening of people openly, faithfully worshipping our Lord. Evil is taking such a stronghold in the U.S. and we see it so clearly.

Judah’s hope in Jeremiah’s day was for someone to set them free from Babylon’s grasp and allow them to go back to Judah. It would happen after the Medes and Persians defeated the Babylonians. Finally, after a long period, they returned. They returned to find the destruction of the Temple. But, at least, they were able finally to go home.

What is the hope for America? The Lord! A return to Him! Our hope is not in the upcoming presidential election, gubernatorial races, or senate. It’s in the Lord. If only America would return to Him in brokenness, humility, and repentance, He would work on our behalf. He would move mightily in our midst.

The thing that was absent in Judah’s captivity was repentance. They did not en masse beg for forgiveness or help from Him.

Bear Creek Baptist Church is participating in a nationwide prayer event on September 26th known as “The Return”. It is being promoted by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Franklin Graham, Ann Graham, and many, many more. It is strategically timed to take place 40 days before our presidential election....an election that perhaps will be the most important one in American history!

Will you participate? You can find out more information by going to this website: www.thereturn.org.

If the only hope for America is the Lord, we must take part, along with millions of other believers in the U.S. and around the world, in this effort. We must claim Scriptures such as 2 Chronicles 7:14 *“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”*

Join us in prayer for this very important occasion. Thank You!



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.

Answer the Highest Calling of Your Heart

By Tracy Jessup



“Let me hear what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts. Surely his salvation is at hand for those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land. Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other. Faithfulness will spring up from the ground, and righteousness will look down from the sky.” --- Psalm 85:8-11

Civil rights leader John Lewis passed away on July 17, 2020. Shortly before his death, he wrote an essay to be published upon the day of his funeral. In the essay, entitled “Together, You Can Redeem the Soul of Our Nation,” Mr. Lewis urged his fellow Americans “to answer the highest calling of your heart and stand up for what you truly believe.”

Borrowing from the words of the Apostle Paul, Mr. Lewis did not lose heart. Even though his outer nature was wasting away, his inner nature was being renewed day by day (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:16). He expressed hope in what he viewed as a transformation that seemed to be taking place in our land. “While my time here has now come to an end, I want you to know that in the last days and hours of my life you inspired me. You filled me with hope about the next chapter of the great American story when you used your power to make a difference in our society. Millions of people motivated simply by human compassion laid down the burdens of division. Around the country and the world, you set aside race, class, age, language, and nationality to demand respect for human dignity.”

The image in today’s scripture is of a world transformed by God’s salvation. Specifically, four aspects of salvation are mentioned – steadfast love, faithfulness, righteousness, and peace. God’s steadfast love amid hardship, uncertainty, and even our rebellion against God is proof that God is true to the covenant he has made with his people. Steadfast love is met with God’s faithfulness. The love we know in a relationship with God is a love on which we can rely. Righteousness - knowing and doing what is right - is integral to the nature of God’s salvation. This righteousness embraces peace, reminding us that salvation ultimately results in wholeness and completion for those who follow God.

These aspects of salvation work together, bringing us into a right relationship with God and one another. Even creation will display God’s salvation as *“faithfulness springs up from the ground, and righteousness will look down from the sky”* (Psalm 85:11). But the most beautiful expression of God’s salvation was manifested in the person of Jesus Christ. Grace and truth came through him (John 1:17), and in his gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed (Romans 1:17).

Those who are longing to see the power of God’s salvation and forgiveness should be able to witness it on display in the lives of those who have experienced it. “From childhood, when Lewis preached to chickens on his family farm, to his twilight years, when he urged National Prayer Breakfast attendees to ‘be a blessing to our fellow human beings,’ faith was the fuel of Lewis’s life” (Adelle Banks, Religion News Service, July 18, 2020). It is my prayer that everyone who professes to follow Christ will embrace God’s steadfast love, faithfulness, righteousness, and peace so that all people may see the salvation of our God.

Prayer: Lord, we turn to you in our hearts so your glory may dwell in our land.

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



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**Burnt But Not Bitter –
How God Rewards Our Suffering**

By Joyce Meyer



I don't know anyone who gets excited about going through hardship, and yet it's unavoidable in everyone's life at some time or other. When trouble comes, a natural response is "Why is this happening?" or "I can't believe this is happening to ME!"

But the Bible tells us that hard times are actually good for us. James 1:2-3 (AMP) says, "*Consider it nothing but joy...whenever you fall into various trials. Be assured that the testing of your faith [through experience] produces endurance [leading to spiritual maturity, and inner peace].*"

These verses are saying that we can learn to go through hard times with joy and hope, knowing God will use them to make us better in the end.

Resist the Urge to Run

When things get tough, our initial reaction is to want to run from the pain and escape the situation, but what we need to do is take a firm stand in our faith and face it. Jesus promises us in John 16:33 that if we will trust Him amid the struggle, we can have peace and confidence that we will overcome it because He is on our side!

Now, we don't just overcome the problem, but in the process of going through it, God uses the very thing that is causing our pain to develop endurance, patience, and perseverance in our soul. This is how we build our faith in God and grow up spiritually.

The Value of Patience and Endurance

The Greek Dictionary says patience is a fruit of the Spirit that grows only under trial. In fact, the word patience comes from the root word hupone, which means "to remain under."

Patience has to do with being steadfast, disciplined, and committed—not running from difficult things, but sticking with them all the way through. It's about having a good attitude while you're waiting for your breakthrough or the fulfillment of something you desire.

Patience has a lot to do with endurance. I've come up with my own definition of endurance: "to outlast the enemy." It reminds me not to give up when I'm weary because I never want to give in to the temptations Satan brings my way or let him win the battle.

We all get weary at times and wonder if we'll ever get our breakthrough when we've been fighting the same battles for a long time. But the ones who refuse to give up are the ones who will have a testimony in the end!

The Test of My Quality

In 1 Peter 4:12, we see that painful experiences test the quality of our faith. When our quality is tested, we learn things about ourselves, because we don't really know what we would do in a tough situation until we're in it. God allows us to go through hard times to reveal what's in our hearts.

I remember a season in my life when I was praying for God to change me and make me more patient, sweet, merciful, and loving. He answered my prayer at the grocery store.

I used to be very impatient when it was time to check out at the supermarket, and I somehow managed to pick the slow line every time. I can vividly remember one day when a new clerk was being trained and everything was taking longer than usual. I was frustrated, and I made sure they knew it! I sighed loudly and mumbled under my breath.

These times at the grocery store were tests meant to develop patience and endurance in my soul. Over time, as I continued to grow in my relationship with God, I began to pass these tests more often. I came to the point where I could wait in the slow line with a good attitude—without opening my mouth or making a sound.

The Reward Always Outweighs the Pain

My example of developing patience at the grocery store may seem trivial compared to the trial you're facing today. But I want to encourage you to find comfort in the truth that God is with you and He knows exactly what you're going through. He loves you more than you know, and He has the answers you desperately need.

There have been many times when I've walked through devastating pain, and Galatians 6:9 has been an encouragement to me. It says, "*Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up*" (NIV).

And God promises in Romans 8:28 that if we will trust Him and keep doing what is right in each situation, He will work it all out for our good. He will take every moment of pain and use it to develop priceless fruit, such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control in our soul (Galatians 5:22-23).

That's more than enough reason to keep going, one day at a time, and never give up!

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.

And thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that [are] within thy gates. Deuteronomy 16:14-15

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Mike Adams: The Fault Lies With Those Who Make-Up the Audience

By Rev. Mark Creech

Back in 1967, there occurred a raging furor over remarks made by an Episcopalian rector, Dr. Cotesworth Pinckney Lewis. Lewis was then serving at Bruton Parish Episcopal Church in Williamsburg, Virginia, when in his sermon; he took up the subject of the Vietnam War. That day, President Lyndon Johnson was in the audience.

In his remarks, Lewis never mentioned the President by name, but he did raise poignant questions. “We know the necessity of supporting our leader. But we cannot close our Christian consciences to consideration of the rightness of actions as they are reported to us – perhaps erroneously, perhaps for a good cause (of which we have not been apprised), said Lewis. “We are mystified by news accounts suggesting our brave fighting units are inhibited by directives and inadequate equipment from using their capacities to terminate the conflict successfully. While pledging our loyalty, we ask humbly, ‘Why?’”

Lewis’ remarks were not well-received. Life magazine reported that the President simply said, “Thank you” as he left the church, while Lady Bird Johnson said, “A wonderful choir.” Both the Vestry and Virginia’s Governor sent apologies to the President. Lewis was charged with “exquisitely bad taste,” while others suggested that he overstepped his bounds. The media had a field day citing the criticisms. Numerous government officials, religious personalities, and self-styled experts voiced their opinions and issued their denunciations.

Strange, isn’t it, what a few words spoken in a particular context, will do to stir animus, proving it’s not always the speaker’s fault, but who makes up the audience.

Mike Adams, the Criminology Professor at the University of North Carolina-Wilmington, who had garnered national attention for his successful court battle over free speech rights, and was also an electrifying speaker and columnist, suddenly and shockingly died last week. Religious and political conservatives deeply mourned his passing.

K. Walker wrote in Clash Daily that Adams was “an absolute titan when it comes to debating the pro-life position, advocating for free speech, and exposing the rot in our colleges and universities.”

Indeed, and many hated Adams for it, referring to his words as controversial, vile, racist, misogynistic, homophobic, xenophobic, transphobic, etc. The media excoriated him. But for those who knew Adams, the fault was not so much with him, as it was with those who made up his audience.

Even some Christians disdained Adam’s speech. One of Adam’s friends eulogized him in a column. Though he spoke more of what he believed was Adam’s better qualities and contributions, the eulogizer said he could find Adams to be frustrating and outrageous. He said he had an “intemperate edge” and was sometimes “acerbic.”

I can’t say there was ever any speaker or writer that I often read with which I always agreed. Nevertheless, I disagree with the later characterization of Adam’s communicative skills and believe it fails to recognize the value and legitimacy of his forthright, sharp, and sometimes satirical rebukes.

The Bible has many examples of speakers who used such speech and were never condemned or censured by the Scriptures for having employed it.

When the prophets of the false god Baal danced around the altar they had made and futilely sought to call down fire from heaven on the sacrifice of a bull, Elijah mocked and taunted them. “Shout louder, maybe he’s gone out for the day,” ridiculed Elijah. “Maybe he’s on a trip, maybe he’s relieving himself, or perhaps he’s asleep and needs to be awakened,” Elijah added. Was he over the top? Not according to the Bible.

When the Pharisees and Sadducees came out to hear John the Baptist, John called them a “generation of vipers” in need of repentance and baptism. He publicly and scathingly denounced King Herod’s divorce and incestuous remarriage, which ultimately cost John his life. Interestingly, Jesus said that among those who ever lived, none was ever greater than John the Baptist.

When Stephen was arrested for preaching the truth about Christ, he boldly charged his audience, including their forefathers, as “stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears,” persecutors of the faithful, betrayers of the truth, and murderers. Strong language, don’t you think?

When Paul was dealing with agitators in the church who kept suggesting circumcision was necessary for salvation, Paul said he wished they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves. Such speech today would likely garner severe disapproval, but Paul was right and his strong words served to show the absurdity of the troublemakers' arguments.

Even Jesus utilized what might be deemed by some as offensive language. He referred to King Herod disparagingly as a sly fox. He called the religious authorities of his day, whited sepulchers, full of dead men’s bones.

The point is not to say that we’re justified in throwing off sensitivity when trying to share the truth with people. The point is, abrasive, offensive, confrontational expression, has its necessary place among God’s Kingdom tools. Figuratively speaking, some people need only a popgun fired at them, while others both deserve and need an elephant gun.

A fearful and misplaced takeaway from Mike Adam’s death would be that the way he wrote and spoke was utterly unacceptable and best avoided. I completely disagree! I firmly contend that if America had only a thousand preachers with the courage to speak truth to power as Adams did, our nation could be morally renewed and reclaimed for Christ.

Adams was under extreme pressure from his detractors for years. The New Hanover Sheriff’s Department ruled his death a suicide. Perhaps it was. A couple of weeks before his death, I spoke with him on the telephone. He seemed slightly



depressed and reflective about his life. In retrospect, drawing from some of the things he told me, I question if he had started to believe his critics. If he did, it’s understandable how he might have been led to despair and consequently commit a desperate act. Perhaps the suicide wasn’t even related to his controversial style, but something entirely different and unknown to anyone except himself. Maybe it wasn’t a suicide, but a homicide. More than a few believe this not only to be possible but plausible. We shall probably never know.

One thing, however, is almost certain. Mike Adams was an incomparable truth-teller. We have more than enough speakers and writers who soothe people in their sins, who give them verbal opiates while the disease preys upon their vitals. Mike Adams wasn’t one of them!

He was someone who bore a heavy load for each of us, and we owe it to his memory to show similar faithfulness.

No, it’s not always the speaker’s fault. Sometimes the fault lies with those who make up the audience.

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

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9	2	8	3	6	4	5	7	1
7	6	3	9	5	1	8	2	4
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8	5	2	4	9	3	1	6	7
4	9	7	1	8	6	2	5	3
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Marlene’s Meditations

How to Be Calm When You Feel Like Exploding

By Marlene Houk
Burke County



10, 9, 8, 7, 6...I clicked on the button to start my long-awaited meeting. The microphone worked, but the camera didn't. Losing all hope of impressing the host, I checked my sound. (She thought I was saying hello.) The audio worked. Now, for the camera. For the life of me, I couldn't get the camera button to work. Finally, I read the tiny dialog box. "Apparently, you are already using your camera. Shut that application down and retry." My thinking brain reined in my emotions. Then, I realized that I had tried the videoconferencing platform earlier, just to make sure it worked. I closed the earlier window and then clicked on the camera button. Voila! My interview began...

Today's world steals the extra margins of emotion and time, and I often indulge in reacting to my problems rather than reconsidering my rationale. The fog of my emotions overshadows my spirit, and the smoke of my feelings obscures my potential to think biblically. God gifts us with emotions, but He also addresses our tendency to allow them to rule over us. Like the fire that warms or kills, emotions enrich our lives but can be destructive.

God helps us to defuse unhealthy emotions by tucking Abigail's story into 1 Samuel, chapter 25. He shares with us her secret for being calm when the crisis urged her to explode. Her husband was a jerk. He treated the future King David with disdain and arrogance when David asked for food for him and his 600 men. The platoon of soldiers had been hiding from King Saul. As was the custom in ancient oriental lands, neighbors helped each other by protecting their herds from thieves and wild animals. In return, the owner shared his abundance with them. David and his soldiers had guarded Nabal and his sheep farm for many months. But their food supply had dwindled, and he requested whatever Nabal could provide. But the man refused, sneering at David for attempting to claim God's promise of kingship to him and accusing him of breaking away from his authority. David erupted in fury, committing to kill Nabal and all his men.

But a servant told Abigail about the crisis, and she responded quickly. Grabbing as much food as she could in a few minutes, she loaded the donkeys, sent the servants ahead with them, and raced to meet David and his soldiers. When she met him, she shows us some simple steps that will help us to be calm when we want to explode. Here is one of them.

1 Samuel 25:30 contains the phrase, "when the LORD shall have done to my lord according to all the good that he hath spoken" underscores a powerful truth that prevents me from exploding. The LORD intends good to all that have accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Don't focus on the grinding anxiety of the moment, but on the good that God intends for you.

King David, the sweet Psalmist of Israel, encourages us to focus on the LORD's goodness.

Psalm 16:6 "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage."

Psalm 23:6 "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever."

Psalm 27:13 "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living."

Psalm 31:19 "Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!"

Psalm 33:5 "He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the LORD."

The lyrical rhythms of these verses soothe our souls and refocus our thinking beyond our current angst to God's gracious kindness toward us.

Music empowers us to remember the promises of God. I love the fourth verse of Amazing Grace because it reminds me of Abigail's transforming truth, spoken to David when he was consumed with vengeance.

The Lord hath promised good to me,
His word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures.

Think about that. Read the Word of God and believe the Lord's promises for you. Be like King David who, after Abigail's wise advice, refused to relinquish his sword of truth to the enemy of unbridled anger and chose to realize that God intended good for him. God equipped David with the fortitude to follow Him rather than focus on Nabal's rejection of him.

Currently, we as a nation are being encouraged to exercise for physical and psychological health. As you consider physical action, practice the following spiritual exercise to lessen life's frustrations.

Fill in the blank with a current situation that is causing emotional jack-in-the-box reactions. My _____ has done this: _____, and I'm about to explode in anger/tears/contempt/disgust. But, let me take a moment to think about all the good that God has allowed in my life and all the future good He has planned for me.

Look again at the verses that King David writes in the Psalms. Do you think he followed Abigail's advice?

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

Thou hast multiplied the nation, [and] not increased the joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, [and] as [men] rejoice when they divide the spoil. Isaiah 9:3

Commissioners Pave The Way
For Additional Hotspots

By Cheryl Shuffler
Burke County

The Burke County Board of Commissioners has approved additional funding to Burke County Public Schools to purchase 750 hotspots to help students connect with their teachers during remote learning. The commissioners made the announcement at their regular meeting on Tuesday.

Burke County Public Schools Superintendent Larry Putnam said, "We started school in a way we never have before: remotely. I am proud of our technology team for distributing more than 9,680 devices in the two weeks before school started and our teachers for their ability to adjust to a new way of instruction. Now that students are connecting with their teachers remotely, we are learning the true needs for access to reliable internet connections. In areas of the county with strong cell service, hotspots provide a valuable link for students to learning. We are grateful to the county commissioners for recognizing this need and approving funding for 750 hotspots."

Johnnie Carswell, Chairman of the Burke County Board of Commissioners said, "The Burke County Board of Commissioners recognize the importance of education and are thrilled to be able to provide the additional hotspots. The County Commissioners have worked diligently for years to get internet providers to serve Burke County's rural and underserved areas and it will remain a top challenge/priority for the Board."

Burke County Public Schools conducted a survey early in the summer and 10.5% of the 1,158 surveyed said they lack access to reliable, high-speed internet. Now that students have devices in hand at home, the district sees the need for hotspots is even greater than originally anticipated.

Putnam said, "As we know, hotspots are only as good as the cellphone reception in the area. We have parts of Burke County that have no cell service, and we appreciate the commissioners looking into that need as well. No doubt there are even more students, and even teachers too, who could benefit from hotspots if they had cell service near their homes."

Burke County Public Schools has mapped out locations around the county that have free, open wifi available in parking lots. In addition to school parking lots, churches, libraries, fire departments, and businesses have stepped up and offered to open up their wifi to students.

Putnam said, "This does not mean that the students have to sit in mom's and dad's car to complete their work. Once they are at the wifi location, they can download their assignments or their teacher's video lesson for the day on their device and then work offline from home. Then they can return to the wifi to upload their completed work and receive their next assignments."

Also stepping up to help fill the need for hotspots are the Morganton Housing Authority and Burke County United Way. The Housing Authority has added wifi access for students and the United Way has launched a campaign to raise community donations to purchase hotspots.

Putnam said, "People's true colors come through amid a crisis, and I am proud to say that our community is shining brightly amid this pandemic. We are so grateful for the Burke County United Way's efforts to rally the community and raise funding to purchase hotspots for our students. In life and in education, technology is a great equalizer. These actions from our county commissioners, the city of Morganton and United Way prove that government and nonprofits can come together and impact the lives of so many of our students, and for this, we are extremely grateful."

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



A Healthy Church Reaches Out

By Rev. John B. Sorensen



As believers, we are often tempted to get comfortable. We belong to a church and have Christian friends. We give our time and finances to support the ministry. We may even feel that our faith is increasing as we read the Bible, pray, and worship God. While all these practices are beneficial, if we aren't careful, we can become disconnected and inwardly focused. Our spiritual growth isn't complete until we share it with others.

Jesus, Himself, set the example for us. Reaching out was His primary purpose in ministry. And everywhere He went, people gathered. They were drawn to Him – His words and His healing touch. The time Jesus spent in prayer and worship didn't just fill Him spiritually. It prepared Him to go out into the world and minister to the needs of the people, pointing them to the Heavenly Father.

He made His calling clear. "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mark 2:17). Before He left the earth, Jesus told us that our purpose was the same – to go and make disciples of all people.

As a church, we can only be truly healthy if we are fulfilling our God-given purpose. He didn't call us to be comfortable, to sit on the sidelines and watch others share His Good News. He called us to go and tell others about the free gift of eternal life, so that they too may be saved.

If outreach is so vital, why does it not tend to be our priority? Churches today are pulled in many different directions. Pastors often serve as teachers, disciples, counselors, leaders, administrators, and so much more. Contrary to what many believers may think, they are not the primary ones responsible for evangelism. We are. It is our responsibility to share Christ with our families, our neighbors, and the people we meet in our communities.

Church-wide outreaches are great, and I encourage them, but evangelism becomes more wide-spread when believers leave the church building and disperse into their neighborhoods, taking the Gospel with them wherever they go. The message of eternal life can be shared in line at the grocery store, while waiting for clothes to dry at the laundry mat, or with a next-door neighbor.

Many Christians stop short of sharing their faith because of fear. They don't want to be rejected. They don't know what to say. Or, they don't know how to even start the conversation. But the good news is that these things can be taught. We have found that when people learn how to begin Gospel conversations, answer difficult questions, and share Jesus effectively, they are often excited to share their faith!

When Christians start spreading the best news of all, people's lives are changed for eternity. The church grows. Our faith is strengthened. Other believers are encouraged to take a step out in faith and share the gift of eternal life with someone they know who needs hope.

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

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To Know His Will

By John McCoury
Roan Mountain, Tennessee

Acts 22:16-22 “*And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord. And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance; And saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me. And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee: And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him. And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles. And they gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live.*”

Paul recounts his own conversion experience to this enraged mob which had just been ready to tear him limb from limb! I am sure that if I had been in his shoes I would have been trying to get out of there as fast as possible. But Paul recognizes this as his opportunity and he wants to be the instrument to reach this stubborn crowd. So he seizes the only opportunity he has, hoping the Lord will give him success, and he tells of his own conversion and specifically the role which Ananias played. The details of this event are etched into the memory of the apostle. Though it occurred thirty years before, he has never forgotten a single detail. This was the moment he was chosen to be an apostle, and Ananias conveyed the commission to him. It had three parts, three aspects of ministry.

First, he was chosen to know the will of God. Now, that was not where God wanted him to go, or what God wanted him to do. What Paul had to learn was that the will of God is a relationship to his Son. When Paul understood that, he had all the power he needed to do anything God asked him to do. So many young Christians struggle at this point. They think that the will of God is some kind of itinerary they must discover, that if they can just find where God wants them to go, and what he wants them to do next, then they can do the will of God. No. The Scriptures make clear that the will of God is a relationship. It is your attitude of expectancy that Jesus Christ, living in you, will work through you. When you expect him to do that, you are in the will of God. Everything you do is in the will of God. Do anything you like, then, because it will be in God's will, unless the Holy Spirit within you indicates otherwise, according to his Word. That is what Paul learned — the power by which a Christian lives his life.

Next, Paul looks back and says, This is what made me an apostle. I have seen Jesus Christ many times. He has appeared to me and talked to me. He told me, directly and personally, the things that the other apostles learned when they were with him as disciples. That is how I know them. Motivated by the love of Jesus Christ and an awareness of the majesty of his person, Paul pushed on ceaselessly, out into the far regions of the earth, performing his apostolic ministry.

Finally, Paul heard a voice from the Lord's mouth, what his message was to be — to declare what Jesus Christ had said to him. It was the same message Jesus had given to the twelve, in the days of his flesh. That is how they knew that Paul was a true apostle — because he knew what they knew. That constitutes the same message that God has for all of us today — the words of his mouth, which Jesus had given to the Apostle Paul. Father, thank you that you have commissioned me as well to bear witness to your great work in my life. Help me to be faithful to that call. What are three vital aspects of the Apostle Paul's calling which apply to all who seek to know and follow God's will? Do we attempt to define or limit his will to a specific place, a particular activity?

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



The Cattle Prod

By Steve Bietz
Burke County

For my college education, I went to Southern University near Chattanooga Tennessee. And although it has been a lot of years since I was a college freshman, I still remember my first class at 8:00 am on the very first day of classes. It was actually a Bible class and the professor gave us what I still consider a wonderfully unique assignment. He asked us to take these four individuals, Abraham, Moses, David, and Daniel, and pick one verse that contained their name that we students thought best described their entire life. Not so easy. For example, it is said that there are 929 verses in the bible that mention the name of David. Like Lay's Potato Chips, it's hard to pick just one as a synopsis of David's entire life. By the way, I picked 1 Samuel 18:14 for my verse for David. “*And David behaved wisely in all his ways, and the Lord was with him.*” Of course, we cannot say that David really acted wisely at every point in his life. Again, it is difficult to narrow David's life down to just one verse that contains his name.

Yet, this is exactly the case for a man whose name was Shamgar. His name does not show up in scripture 929 times. Shamgar's name shows up only one time in one verse in the Bible and it is in Judges 3:31. “*After him was Shamgar the son of Anath, who killed six hundred men of the Philistines with an ox goad and he delivered Israel.*” That is all there is about the man Shamgar. But from this one verse, we are given quite the snapshot. Shamgar is not said to be a judge of Israel in those days before the Hebrews decided they wanted kings to rule over them. Instead, Shamgar was just a local guy down in the southwest part of Canaan who allowed God to use him. There is a local threat from a people known as the Philistines.

Now what is interesting to me is that Shamgar does not pick up any conventional weapons that one would expect to find on a battlefield. I got to believe that if Shamgar would have had a sword or other conventional weapon, he would have used it. Instead, Shamgar used an ox goad. What is an ox goad you ask? Well, it is a tool that one would have used as he plowed. An ox goad was basically a long stick, around 8 feet long with a sharp point on the end. Today's more modern device would be called a cattle prod. Normally you would use it to convince your ox or oxen to keep moving and pull the plow. Shamgar grabs it and takes it to the battlefield.

Shamgar used what was in his hand and evidently, God gave Shamgar a great victory for His people. He simply used what he had in his hand. Years before, God asked Moses, What is that in your hand? (Exodus 4:2) Moses had been trying to explain why he was not the man for the job because of his shortcomings and God pops the question of what's in your hand. It happened to be a shepherd's rod. And Moses would carry that rod for the next 40 years and would use it in completely unconventional ways, again and again. Just a simple shepherd's rod but look at what God did with what Moses had in his hand.

It was the same for the "one verse man" Shamgar. He had a cattle prod, and by the power of God, he was able to accomplish a great victory for the cause of God...for God's church of that day. What is in the hands of your church that could be used for God's people? Way too much of the time we look at our hands and think I have nothing that God can use. I can't get upfront and speak, I can't sing or play the piano or guitar, and I would not even make a decent greeter at the church entrance. First, don't underestimate what God can do through you. Secondly, God can use the most unconventional item to bring victory for His people. Now I'm not suggesting that we pick up a cattle prod. But this we know, that God uses what we have in our hands, and there is no telling how God will use you. I promise you this, God will use us if we will let Him use what we have in our hands.

Steve Bietz, Pastor, Morganton Seventh day Adventist Church.



Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly [is] great, but the labourers [are] few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest. Luke 10:2



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Obedient Heart Fellowship

Half Gospel Church?

By Jim Huskins
McDowell County



The Nazi Holocaust and the death of six million Jews are appalling, but even most Christians are unaware of an event which could have exterminated virtually all of the Seed of Abraham. This attempted genocide was thwarted by the bravery and faithfulness of a young Jewish woman named Esther.

The Book of Esther is a thrilling story. Through unlikely circumstances, she became the wife and queen of the leader of the mighty Persian Empire. An unscrupulous court adviser named Haman tricked Emperor Ahasuerus into granting Haman permission to exterminate every Jew in the Empire. Since Persia dominated a vast portion of the world, few Jews would have escaped. The plot was thwarted because Esther risked death by confronting her husband.

Speaking to the King unbidden could be a capital crime. While Esther agonized over whether she should take such a risk on behalf of her people; her uncle, Mordecai, asked a question which has reverberated through the ages: “Who knows whether you have attained (your) status for such a time as this?”

Every believer with eyes to see and ears to hear is aware that our world is permeated by clear and present danger to God’s people and His agenda. In addition to the manic proclamation of viral pandemic and expanding waves of violence, Biblical values are under assault at every level of society. Practices clearly labeled “abomination” in scripture are now enshrined into law by the Federal Government and every state. People who dare to proclaim and live out Bible teaching often find themselves vilified in person and through social media. Job losses, growing scarcities, and escalating costs for necessities are causing grand-scale desperation. Perhaps the safest thing for present-day believers is to keep their faith to themselves.

But is the safest thing for me the best thing for God’s Kingdom? Part of Messiah’s clarion call is that His disciples must be salt and light. Significant quantities of either are impossible to hide. They command attention because they alter their context. As the satanic agenda permeates our culture, anyone who attempts to exhibit Biblical righteousness will stand out. Standing out, even for a holy purpose, can be dangerous.

Bible prophecy defines God’s people as those who have faith in Jesus and also keep God’s commandments. Jesus did not say that having a warm, gushy feeling toward God and a warm, gushy feeling toward people fulfills the commandments. Defining love as any type of feeling is a Greek concept. The Hebrew definition of “love” is obedience. Jesus says bluntly, “If you love me, keep my commandments.” He also says that every pen stroke of the instructions for living revealed through Moses will be in full force for as long as heaven and earth remain.

The “true” Gospel is that everyone who exhibits faith which leads to righteousness can be grafted into God’s family, the Kingdom of Israel. That is why the core of Jesus’ message is summed up in Matthew 4:17, “*Turn from your sins for the Kingdom of Heaven is near.*” He preached this same message throughout His ministry. He never mentioned His own death, burial, and resurrection. Those events became an important part of the gospel message since that was the way He became the perfect sacrifice for sin under the terms of the Torah, but they are only part of the message. Hebrews 4:2 says that Israel received the same Gospel message at Sinai that we now receive.

The Sinai covenant administered through Moses was not about imposing impossible burdens or arbitrary barriers between God and His people. The Torah—falsely labeled “The Law” in Greek and English translations—teaches us to live according to God’s standards of righteousness. Jeremiah 31:32 reveals a key aspect of the new covenant: “But this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days”—it is a declaration of YHVH—‘I will put My Torah within them. Yes, I will write it on their heart.’” Jesus did not revoke or alter the Torah. He made us capable of hosting the Spirit of Holiness.

Most Christians believe that the Torah is a “burden” from which believers are freed. When we are part of the New Covenant, we have within us a great desire to obey God’s instructions for righteous living. That’s what it means to have His Torah written on our hearts. 1 John 2:3-4 says that the only true indication of our relationship with the Messiah is that we keep His commandments. James 2:20 says that faith without obedience is dead.

The good news Jesus taught is that God is in the process of establishing a Kingdom where He can once again dwell amid His people. Our age makes light of sin, but sin is what separated us from God’s presence. God has, from the beginning, taught His children how he wants us to live, and He made those lessons unmistakable when His Son took flesh and became our example. Jesus’ perfect sacrifice nailed the death penalty we deserve to the cross and made it possible for us to follow His example.

Our age cries out for Messiah’s disciples to choose obedience underscored by Esther’s joyful proclamation: “If I die, I die.” Grace is not an excuse for God’s people to sin. “Grace” and “obedience” are not mutually exclusive. The message of scripture is that those saved by grace through faith want to lead lives focused on righteous obedience. No one achieves salvation through obedience. Only Jesus was capable of perfect obedience, but the life He lived is our example. How did He live? He kept the Torah. His true disciples will do the same. That is the meaning of, “Take up your cross and follow me.”

Obedient Heart Fellowship believes that the entire Bible is both true and relevant. We accept salvation by grace through faith in Jesus, and we attempt to love and serve Him by keeping his commandments. See Revelation 14:12. lostranger@mindspring.com

Jim & Beverly Huskins are members of Obedient Heart Fellowship.

And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. John 4:36

Morganton Baptist Church

A Worthy Walk

By Dan Quorollo
Burke County



In Colossians 1:9, we read of Paul’s desire that these believers would be filled full with the complete knowledge of God’s will in wisdom and spiritual understanding. Wisdom is the practical application of knowledge. Without wisdom, knowledge is little more than an accumulation of needless facts. Spiritual understanding is discernment in spiritual matters.

In Colossians 1:10-12, we discover that Paul had a specific goal in mind when he prayed. He prayed for the purpose that “*ye might walk worthy of the Lord.*” The increase of knowledge described in verse 9 is intended on impacting how we live. The truth of the Word of God is to be studied so that it might be applied to our lives. We are not to merely study so that we might increase our knowledge; we are to study so that we might become more godly in our walk with the Lord. Our goal is to walk in a manner that is worthy of the Lord. Such a walk is pleasing to the Lord and is characterized by four dimensions.

The first dimension is “*being fruitful in every good work.*” Genuine salvation inevitably produces fruit. It includes but is not necessarily limited to the fruit of the Spirit mentioned in Galatians 5. Believers have been called to live in such a way that fruit produced by the Holy Spirit is evident for all to see.

The second dimension is that of “*increasing in the knowledge of God.*” A life that is a worthy walk is a life that is continuously advancing in a greater knowledge of God. This knowledge is more than acquiring more facts about God; this knowledge encompasses a great knowledge of Him. As believers, we should be conducting our lives in such a way that we come to know God. Too many Christians are content to know about God.

The third dimension is being “*strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.*” It is through the divine power given to the Christian that he can endure and persevere. Amid all the pressures and difficult circumstances we endure in the Christian life, God’s strength enables the believer to do so with joyfulness. This is why Paul said in Philippians 4:13, “*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*” Far too often, we rely upon our own power, rather than the power of God. Philippians 3:10 teaches that believers can experience the very same power of God that raised Jesus Christ from the dead.

The final dimension of a worthy walk is that of continuous praise unto the Father. The content of this praise will be developed more in the subsequent verses in which Paul directs our attention to the wonderful salvation we have been given for God. If you are a believer, you are to be continuously giving thanks for that which God has done in our lives, especially in our salvation.

A worthy walk is characterized by increasing fruit, increasing knowledge, increasing power, and increasing praise. Strive to live a life that is worthy of the Lord.

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

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Walnut Grove Church

Praying for Healings

By Kurt Bomar
Avery County

In this time of COVID 19 worries, it brings to mind what our attitude in praying for the sick should be. 1 Chron. 19:11 says “*Be of good courage, and let us behave ourselves valiantly for our people, and for the cities of our God: and let the LORD do that which is good in his sight.*”

These men were armed, trained to do battle- but they realized the results would have to be left to the Lord. They did what they could, but realized only the Lord could bring about ultimate victory. We need to have the same attitude when we pray for the sick. I fear we are sometimes reluctant to pray for the sick because we’re worried that they won’t be healed. If you say to someone “let me pray for you” and you pray the prayer of faith and seek the Lord, you will have done what you can do and what we are encouraged to do in the Scriptures. We simply trust in God and “*let the Lord do that which is good in his sight*”.

If they are healed, Great! It’s a cause for celebration. If they are not, it is still pleasing in the sight of the Lord, and it will always be appreciated by the person for whom you pray.

Pray for each other, dear saints. Don’t pray generally or apologetically. Pray boldly for specific healing regarding a specific ailment. And don’t let fear quench your desire or your aggressiveness in prayer.

Selah (think about it)

PS- if you’re missing church because of social distancing. We broadcast live on 93.5 FM from our parking lot on Sundays at 11:00. Come join us.

Kurt Bomar is pastor of Walnut Grove Church.



Berry Chapel Baptist Church

Never Give Up

By Steve Williams
Mitchell County

We are living in a day where you see so many people giving up on the church and many others getting ready to give up on the church. Understand something my dear friends, it takes no character to give up, it takes no discipline, no zeal, no giftedness, no talent, you don’t even have to work on it, to give up. To many people, it just comes naturally. The truth of the matter is, we do not overcome painful afflictions through positive thinking or by minimizing or denying suffering. We overcome painful afflictions by turning to the LORD and seeking His salvation and power to deliver us. God is the Savior, the rescuer, the deliverer of all who is suffering painful afflictions. The Bible tells us in Lamentations 3:25 “*The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him.*” In other words, God loves a God seeker.

We live in an upbeat, fast-paced world. People are hurting now, suffering now, experiencing afflictions. People are not willing to wait or seek out things any-more, people want everything yesterday. See no one likes to wait because waiting implies we are not in control. And when people feel they are not in control they have a greater tendency to give up. The reason this world we live in is in the mess it is is that people are so willing to join the crowd and give up rather than to hang in there, proving again, anybody can give up. There is a story about Winston Churchill, the Prime Minister of Great Britain. He was a great leader. When Winston Churchill was nearing the end of his time he was asked to speak at a well-established university in his country. The people were sitting on the edge of their seats and students were holding their breath to listen to what the 1st words of this great leader and orator would say. A man who single-handedly roused the people to stand against Nazi Germany before America entered the war. Who single-handedly organized their resources to help fight off Adoff Hitler. So when he walked up and stood behind the podium there was hush across the building. It seemed like he stood there four minutes, there was even somewhat of an uncomfortable silence, and then he said these 3 words, “Never Give Up” and he stood there for a few more seconds and said again “Never Give Up”. And he turned and returned to his seat. Well at first, the people were stunned, and just a few seconds later they began to clap because they recognized the words of wisdom that came out of his mouth. See this was the driving message that kept him strong. And that was the greatest advice he could give any audience. “Never Give Up”

I want you to hear those three words, “Never Give Up” Let them ring in your Heart and mind. In this life, we all will face things that seem unfair. We will have things happen that will try our faith. We will face things because we have made bad choices that got our lives off track. But I want to tell you something, hang in there and “Never Give Up” because God has a purpose on all the things we go through and face in this life. We just have to Never Give Up and to do what we can, and rely on God for the rest.

Christians have to understand this great truth is “What you put in your Christian life is what you will get out of your Christian life. There is a story about a king. The king sent out a decree to all in his land. He asked them to come to dinner. The reason for this dinner was to fill his new mote with water. He asked all the guests to bring a vessel of water no matter what the size. So all of his kingdom attended and brought vessels of water. Some brought a cup, some brought a gallon, some brought five gallons, then some brought fifty gallons. Upon completion of dinner, the king opened a door to his dining room which was filled with many jewels. After doing this he told the people to go in and fill their vessels to the top. So the more of our lives that we give to Him the more of Him that He can place in us. Remember Never Give up, empty yourself daily so that He can fill you up with His presents.

Words Of Wisdom

- Never give up your victor is right around the corner. N/A
- I know from experience that you should never give up on yourself or others, no matter what. George Foreman
- I can do all thing through Christ that strengthens me. Bible Philippians 4:13
- ...Greater is He that is in me, than he that is in the world. Bible 1 John 4:4b

Life is a Marathon, Not a Sprint so Never Give Up

The first marathon was run in 1908 in London. The marathon-length was standardized to 26 miles 365 yards. The reason being the Royal family wanted to see the start of the race from their palace and the distance from the palace to the stadium is 26 miles and 365 yards to this day. The first winner of this newly defined marathon should have been an Italian candy maker named Dorando Pietri. He was the first to enter the stadium but turned the wrong way. Rather than going right, he went left he got sidetracked. When the mistake was realized, Pietri staggered and fell. Anxiety from his error triggered an onslaught of exhaustion. He turned around and continued staggering toward the finish line. With just a few yards remaining, Pietri fell one final time. Meanwhile, Johnny Hayes, running for the United States, was racing down the homestretch of the stadium. He kept on course and was the winner of the first marathon. He received a Gold medal.

A wonderfully run race was ruined by a wrong turn at the end. Finishing well is what matters. “Never Give Up”

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



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Local Man Fighting for His Life Witnesses God's Love

By Brian Barrier
Mitchell County

Terry Jamerson may only have months to live if he doesn't find someone to donate a kidney very soon. Terry and his wife of 20 years, Sarah Jamerson, live in Bakersville, North Carolina and they are desperately seeking a donor to replace Terry's failing kidneys. Terry had suffered a serious heart attack back in February, which is often called a "widowmaker" or a one hundred percent blockage in the left anterior descending (LAD) artery. He was able to have stints put in but then found out that his kidney function is failing due to severe high blood pressure. If a donor isn't found, he may have less than a year to live, according to doctors.

Terry has been on dialysis at the DaVita Dialysis Center in Spruce Pine several times each week for about three hours each session. Unfortunately, Terry's kidneys are only functioning at eight percent and Sarah says that the doctors have told them he may have less than a year to live without a donor's kidney.

As most people know, finding a donor isn't easy and the short time Terry was given has made things very stressful in the search. Sarah said that many people can live for years while on dialysis but in Terry's particular case, time is of the essence.

Terry has been accepted by both Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center and the University of Tennessee Medical Center for Transplant Services but, so far, there has been no kidney available for Terry.

Despite their heart-wrenching plight, Sarah told me one of the best things that happened during their search was when a potential donor gave his life to Christ! A 46-year-old man from Missouri volunteered to be a donor but had an alcohol problem. The man, determined to help the Jamersons, stopped drinking for the required time to become a donor. Unfortunately, the doctors determined that the man was pre-diabetic which disqualified him from the program.

The man, realizing his own need for a Savior, gave his life to Jesus! Tears streamed down Sarah's face as she recounted the story and gave thanks that even though they were so desperate, God used Terry's illness to save another person. "In the evenings, we go down to the Toe River and there's a rock there next to the river, and we hold hands and pray," Sarah said. "It's quiet and peaceful and we pray at the river".

Sarah and Terry are praying for a miracle. They are praying someone will read this article and at least contact them to find out if they might be able to help. At this point, the doctors are willing to use a donor with any blood type to save Terry's life.

"But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" Hebrews 13:16

If you would like to find out more about being a living donor for Terry, please contact them through Facebook at Facebook.com/sarah.jamerson.399. If you don't use Facebook and would like to get in touch with them, contact Brian at the Blue Ridge Christian News at 828-413-0506.

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



Terry Jamerson and his wife, Sarah

Photo courtesy of Mitchell News Journal

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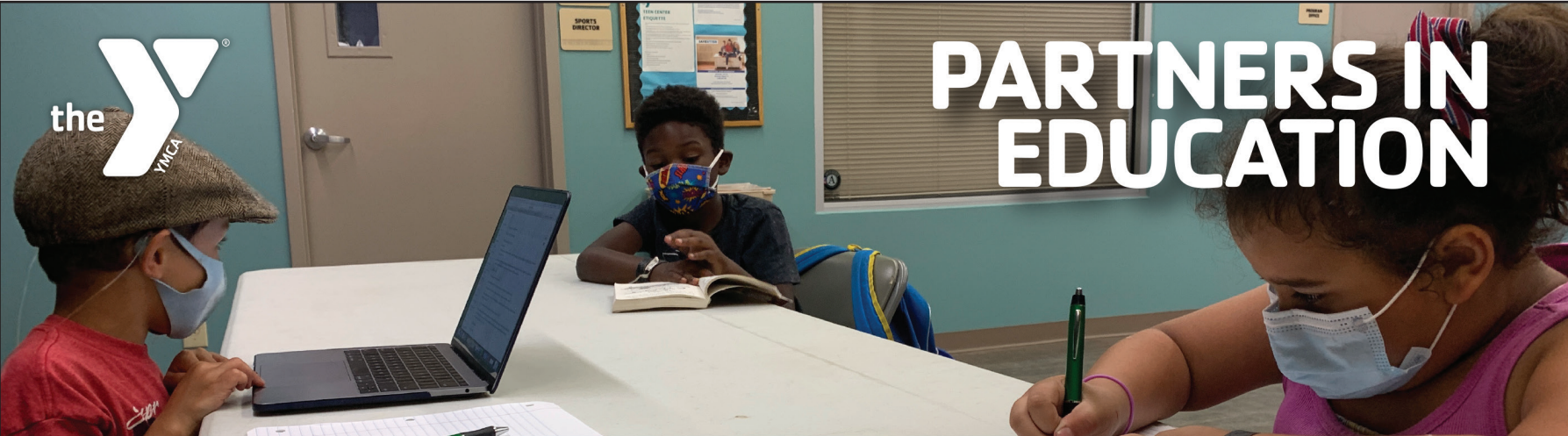
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Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness [is] great. Joel 3:13

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By Pastor Terry Cheek Th.D.
McDowell County



Thanks for joining me for another publication of “The Blue Ridge Christian News” and “The Inspiring Word”.

Over the past couple of months, our world has experienced tremendous grief and heartache. The COVID Virus, natural disasters, violence, and terrorism have inflicted a great deal of pain and suffering on our world, nation, family, and neighbors. That is only part of what is on my heart this month. You see as a bi-vocational minister working a full-time job with the NC prison system I spend almost every day in the presence of men and women on both sides of the prison bars. Then, there is my work as a minister with the homeless. I meet countless people every week. They all have concerns, questions, even fears and they all are looking for answers. We can say, I believe truthfully, occasionally we all find ourselves searching for HOPE!

Maybe you find yourself struggling with addiction or abuse, maybe it is sexual immorality, anger, prejudice, or loneliness. Each one of us from time to time finds ourselves searching for HOPE. These examples are only a few and do not scratch the surface of our struggles.

This month I want to address one of if not America’s single largest struggle, our lack of spiritual HOPE. We live in a day where we are told the only acceptable spiritual journey is one that coexists with all others. Regardless of where you place your faith it’s fine and correct if it doesn’t offend anyone else. That may look good on paper and for a moment give a warm fuzzy feeling but it doesn’t provide any hope! For you and me to have spiritual hope we must have authority in our life. To say there is nothing absolute is an absolute! Where is hope found within an empty absolute? We require the authority of HOPE! This hope exists, please read on.

Many people today know about Jesus, maybe they have been raised in the church and followed in the footsteps of their parents, grandparents, and other role models. Maybe they have memorized their Bible. Maybe they give to countless charities. Yet, they like the multitudes who have never heard of Jesus Christ lack spiritual hope because they have never entered into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Please understand, Christianity is not a membership it’s a relationship that leads to a fellowship. This relationship with Jesus Christ is the spiritual hope that is needed in America. We need less social media and more personal fellowship; first with Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, then with fellow born again believers in the body of Christ. Without a genuine relationship with Christ, we find ourselves vulnerable to subtle yet powerful attacks from Satan. If you find yourself smirking right now I would like to make a bold and sincere statement. You have a soul and you will move from this life to an eternal existence. There are only two options, eternal life (heaven) or eternal death (hell), where there will be no end to the suffering. We cannot decide to turn over a new leaf, we can’t say I’m going to be a better person and have spiritual hope. We must submit to Jesus. Jesus said in John 3:16-17 “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. (17) For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.” Why did Jesus come to save and not condemn? Yes, verse 16 emphasizes love but there is a much deeper truth here. We were already condemned because of sin! The apostle Paul tells us in Romans 5:18 “Therefore as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.” The offense of one came in the fall of man in the garden of Eden and the righteousness of one comes through Jesus Christ! He is our spiritual HOPE. There is no other name under heaven by which we can be saved! God does not coexist with other deities, God does not negotiate or compromise. He has given us HOPE if we will take it and submit our lives to Him as obedient children to a Father. Don’t live in spiritual hopelessness, if God has broken your heart, wherever you are right now you can call upon Jesus and ask Him to save you! His HOPE is real and permanent and genuine. There is spiritual HOPE in Jesus Christ and only in HIM. For more information please contact me using the information given with this article.

Until we meet again either in print or in 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 Or by visiting www.theinspiringword.org



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Hip Pain

By Miguel Cruz
Yancey County

I was noticing on my website that a large percentage of the people searching were looking for information on hip pain. So, I thought that would be a good article for this month as I am tired of hearing about the COVID-19 virus and I am sure you must be too.

The first thing I want to bring up is that God made us in his image, he does not make us flawed so that some things just wear out too quickly, as I have heard from many people. A particular occurrence I would like to point out when people show up at my office with a “wore out hip”, Most of the time it is just one hip. I like to ask questions, so I usually ask, why is one hip wore out more than the other? Aren’t they both just as old?

That tends to get you thinking. It could be that you had an injury-causing it to wear down faster, it could be that something is out of alignment in the pelvis or elsewhere. Think of the front end of your car, if it’s out of alignment, what does it do to the tires, you guessed it, they wear down unevenly and prematurely. Let’s face it, we all get older and some wear and tear is expected. If we kept 21-year-old bodies into our 80’s I think we would all get into the way too much trouble, God knew what he was doing when he planned out our life cycle.

So, when we see one hip or one knee or one area of the spine wearing down faster than the rest, start thinking about “why is this happening”. If it’s an alignment problem, that can usually be fixed, if it’s a tight muscle, that can be fixed. There is a lot you can do for yourself other than just thinking “I’m getting old, so I guess I’ll just have to get used to it”.

The first place I recommend you start is with some simple stretches. Get on your phone or computer and search for “stretches for hip pain” and you will see lots of choices. I suggest you try several different ones; obviously, pick something you feel you can actually do. I say that because some of them will have you looking like a pretzel and possibly make you worse off than you were. Pick from 1-3 different stretches and make it a habit at least once a day to do them, you may be surprised at the results. If that does not work then you may try a chiropractor or massage therapist, just taking something for the pain every day will just about guarantee a hip replacement sooner than later.

Remember our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and temple maintenance is a requirement.

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



The Orchard Partners With Penland School

By Kate Groff
Mitchell County

If you drove by Keith Moir’s Spruce Pine studio during the last month, you would find him with either a jigsaw or paintbrush in hand. It’s all part of a collaboration between the Orchard at Altapass and Penland School of Craft. “This unprecedented global situation that has made it impossible for the Orchard to safely hold music performances, has allowed us an opportunity to focus energies on another part of our mission— education and, by extension, our youngest visitors,” said executive director Beth Hilton. “We’re trying to do more to help kids understand what the Orchard is all about. Not only the apples but the pollinators, the land, and its musical heritage.” To that end, the Orchard gathered images, which with the help of Penland staff person, Keith Moir, were transferred onto plywood and are being transformed into colorful stand-up props that will be situated around the orchard grounds. A photo opportunity for moms and dads and a fun way for kids to find out about the Orchard. Each of the six props will be part of a scavenger hunt designed for the younger crowd and feature the ubiquitous apple and its great pollinator, the honey bee, the brilliant monarch butterfly and caterpillar, a tractor, which no orchard can be without, a train representing the Clinchfield Railroad, developer of the original orchard, and a happy banjo player picking those tunes from a time long past. “We hope to educate our kids about the Orchard and its heritage in an engaging, entertaining way,” Hilton added. “Our collaboration with Penland School has helped tremendously, and we thank them for their assistance with this project. It’s one silver lining in this new normal.”

Children will be able to have their pictures taken as a worm in an apple, playing the banjo, riding a tractor or a train, buzzing or flapping, all while experiencing the magic of the Orchard ecosystem of trees, fresh air, verdant trails, critters both creeping and flying, and an occasional ripe fruit off one of the hundreds of heirloom apple trees. The props should be completed within a few weeks, just in time for more ripe apples. Please visit Facebook for updates on the installations and all Orchard happenings.

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, heritage, and educational venue. Hours are 10 AM to 5 PM, open Thursday-Sunday. Family- and pet-friendly. Wheelchair accessible. For information, please visit altapassorchard.org or call 828-765-9531.

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



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Freedom Life Ministries Press Release

**Secu Foundation Provides Covid-19
Relief Grant Funding To Freedom Life
As Part Of Its Statewide Pandemic Relief Effort**
McDowell County

Freedom Life Ministries was recently awarded a COVID-19 Pandemic Relief Grant from the State Employees’ Credit Union (SECU) Foundation. Freedom Life, like most businesses and nonprofit organizations, has been hit hard by the financial impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic.

“To help meet the extraordinary challenges of these difficult times, we have stepped outside the traditional scope of our grant process,” said Jo Anne Sanford, SECU Foundation Board Chair. “Because the SECU Foundation has been active since its inception in communities served by State Employees’ Credit Union, we understand the challenges these widespread organizations are facing to maintain viability in light of sharply increased demands for resources. We care deeply about the great service these non-profits provide, and we intend for these grants to help solidify these organizations and their support of our communities across North Carolina.”

Freedom Life is a local nonprofit ministry organization that seeks to address the complex needs of men and women, and their families, who have faced incarceration, are currently incarcerated or have been released. These needs include food, clothing, housing, jobs, transportation, mental health needs, medical health needs, substance misuse/addiction vulnerabilities, and spiritual life needs. Many of those released from prison or jail have lost everything and have nothing but the clothes on their back.

Before the full effect of the pandemic hit in March, Freedom Life was already working in a Capacity Grant relationship with the SECU Foundation in its effort to build greater sustainability and create funding opportunities to build long term transitional housing in McDowell County. Since the COVID-19 shut down, Freedom Life has remained open and continued to provide full support service opportunities to justice-involved individuals in the McDowell community.

“With the understandable funding losses experienced as a result of COVID-19, maintaining full operational capacity in meeting the urgent needs of the men and women we serve may not have been possible without the foresight and generosity of the State Employees’ Credit Union Foundation,” said Danny Hampton, Executive Director of Freedom Life, “God provides in awesome ways. While we continue to pray for the dedicated supportive partners of Freedom Life who are themselves struggling in this difficult time, we thank God for His provision through the SECU Foundation. We also want to thank all the members of SECU, along with the Board and staff members of the SECU Foundation.”

The SECU Foundation has provided over \$3 million in supportive grant relief funding to thirty-four different North Carolina nonprofit organizations over the past several weeks. These organizations span all regions of our state and help meet essential needs in the areas of healthcare and human services. Examples include hospice care, healthcare centers, domestic violence, and homeless shelters, addiction recovery centers, and in their support of Freedom Life, justice-involved reentry care. The amount of each grant award was based upon calculations by the different organizations on what the anticipated financial impact of COVID-19 would be over the next year. The Relief Grant award to Freedom Life reflected an impact of \$100,000.

For more information about Freedom Life, visit their website at www.freedomlifeministries.com.

Snow Hill Baptist Church

COVID-19 and “No Regrets”

By Dean Honeycutt
Mitchell County



I write under the title “No Regrets” because my dad was an alcoholic and for more than 35 years alcohol and poor decisions destroyed my dad’s life. And by the age of 65, we were burying my father. One of the hardest things I had to do is see my dad relive his past before his passing. My dad was saved three years before he went to heaven and all his sin was forgiven. Praise the Lord for the Blood of Jesus. “*What can wash away my sin nothing but the Blood of Jesus; what can make me whole again, nothing but the Blood of Jesus, oh precious is the flow that makes me white as snow.*”

Though my dad’s sin was cast as far as the east is from the west and remembered no more by God, my dad could not forgive himself. He relived all his past with many regrets. I want to encourage you today what God has forgiven He has forgotten. There is absolutely no reason for Christians to live with the guilt of past sin. By the grace of God, we have been delivered from the power of sin in our lives and free from the guilt and shame of sin. I am a child of the King and it is the righteousness of Jesus Christ in me that God sees, praise the Lord.

So, I try my best to live a life of “No Regrets” because one day we will all stand before the “Judgement seat of Christ”. I believe one day if the Lord allows us to live, we are going to look back on this time in history and the things surrounding COVID-19 with many regrets. I realize it is better to error on the side of caution. I get it. But have we honestly made the best decisions for our family, schools, church, and our nation? I realize for the most part many of us are doing the best we can. God bless each pastor who has made difficult decisions. It has not been easy.

I really appreciate those who tell me they enjoy reading the “No Regrets” articles. I want to thank you for reading these articles. This allows me to express myself and share God’s word with you. Our nation is starving for the Word of God; however, many people do not want to listen to God. If we as a nation want COVID -19 to go away, we must repent of our sin and turn to God. This birth pain (beginning of sorrows Matthew 24:8) we are experiencing will eventually go away but not until God has fulfilled His purpose. Behind every judgment is a purpose.

Someone may ask why do you think this is a birth pain or “beginning of sorrows”? Because Jesus told us plainly in Matthew 24:7 there shall be diseases or plagues. And something of this nature like the coronavirus definitely “fits the bill.” Think about the plagues God brought on Egypt that literally shut Egypt down. Egypt has never recovered from the plagues God has brought against that nation. Like the plagues of Egypt COVID-19 has put the entire world on shut down. The NFL that drew thousands of fans and millions of viewers every Sunday has been thrown into a tailspin. Think about the size of the United States, far larger than Egypt, and way more advanced and COVID-19 shut our entire nation down, the most powerful nation in the world.

I know God has a purpose in all things. A couple of decisions I am going to make by God’s grace is first the church must go forward. We need to meet and fellowship and worship. And second, we need to share the Gospel of Jesus. I do not want to get sick, but we must not let fear prevent us from sharing the Gospel with others with or without a mask. A little we may suffer down here is nothing compared to the suffering one would experience in hell.

God is still in control of all things. Do not let this opportunity to share your faith with those living in fear pass you by or one day you may regret it. The church does not stop being the church God has called you to be. The early New Testament church thrived under extreme persecution and tribulation and we will too if we remain faithful.

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



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Retirement Income Planning – Keep it Simple

By Steve Gaito
McDowell County



Having been a CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER TM practitioner for over 15 years and provided retirement planning services for over 27 years, I have seen many strategies to create retirement income plans. In fact, I have spent the last 8 years attending what is known as the Retirement Income Summit to keep up to date with the latest thinking on retirement planning. This year it was a virtual event but very well done. There were several conversations about COVID-19 and the impact it has on retirement income and the risk people have to take to generate income. There was another topic that I have been discussing for several years and that the tax impact on retirement plans as a significant risk in retirement. Once quote that stood out to me is “you are in control of your tax situation today. You have to get it right.”

The reality is that people are worried about their retirement. Protecting your retirement according to a Nationwide Insurance survey is the top concern for 88% of people close to retirement. Interestingly taxes were the second-highest concern at 68% with Long-Term care the third most concerning area for retirement at 56%. This is great for me personally because they are areas that I have focused on for several years. One way I help people understand how to plan for retirement is to go back to when they started saving for retirement. The question I ask is why you saved for retirement. The answer is always the same. It was so they would have income or a paycheck in retirement that they could live comfortably for the rest of their life. Not once have I had the response I want a large portfolio that I worry about the stock market every day as the objective. So, my question is why do so many people do something different from their original objective? For most, it is lack of understanding the alternatives and the bias of those that sell them. I prefer to deal with reality and facts. If I can find an income that you cannot outlive at a reasonable cost isn't that what your original goal for saving was? Absolutely. This addresses the first concern of a retirement income plan. Now let's look at the second concern, taxes. This should be a huge concern for most retirees. The reality is that COVID-19 will have a significant impact on future taxes. With the national debt expected to exceed 30 trillion dollars most believe that taxes will have to rise to pay for this. Currently, we are at the lowest personal income tax rates in modern history, but that will change. The Trump tax rates sunset or go away in 2026 and will return to higher rates. This creates an opportunity to both save now and reduce the taxes you will pay on your retirement plans in the future. It takes a strategy, but I believe this is one of the most important areas that you can minimize risk. The risk of paying higher taxes in the future. The third area of concern and this is probably the single biggest risk based on the likelihood of a long-term care event is Long-Term Care insurance. Currently, 69% of people today rely on spouses, family, and friends for care. This is very taxing on all of the above and as we have seen recently results in moving into nursing homes. After COVID-19 this is not an outcome that people want. More than 50% of COVID-19 deaths were related to Senior living facilities. Having a plan for at-home care for most people is the preferred option. With the proper planning, you can create a plan that protects your family and friends and allows you to be cared for in the comfort of your own home.

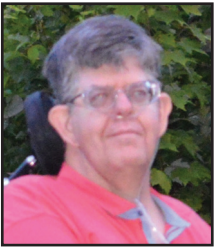
For me and my practice, I like to incorporate all three of these areas into one retirement income plan. With proper planning, these risks can be reduced or eliminated. If you can come up with a plan that gives you the certainty of income, certainty of taxes, and security of long-term care. This allows you to enjoy the freedom of retirement that most say they want. It is not that difficult, but it does take a plan. If you have questions please feel free to contact my office to schedule a time to talk about how we can create your custom plan. We do not charge for the initial consultation.

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



Won't It be Wonderful There

By Allen Buchanan
Mitchell County



Have you ever been on your porch after an ice storm and listened to the silence? Once the sunshine breaks through the clouds and the temperature begins to increase, everything covered in ice starts to thaw. Here in the mountains, the silence turns to snap, crackle, and pop. As the ice melts too quickly and its weight leaves, some tree limbs pop into their normal position. Others break and fall. Thus causing damage to power lines and homes. As I have aged, my body feels like a tree under the weight of ice. After sitting in my wheelchair all day, leaning to my left or right, the stiffness is painful, but only lasts long enough to reposition. One might think a good night of bed rest would ease the pain. Unfortunately, the next morning as I sit up, that stiffness has increased. Do you know this is only temporary? This is a human earthly thing. One of these days my tired, stiff, painful body will lay down here on earth and come morning, I will rise with a painless glorified new body! I will be in heaven with Jesus!! The moment my eyes lock onto Jesus, surely I will begin my praises to Him. In my mind today I picture Jesus holding me in His arms as my dad would. I pray he says to me, "Well done my child!"

Won't it be wonderful there?

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

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The Bookmark

By Patricia Jackson
McDowell County



For many years, I have studied God’s word from a small bible, a hand-typed, 5 x 3 index card serves as my book-mark. It would be impossible to count the number of times I touched this yellow, dog-eared, un-dated index card, as I read various passages of scriptures. Months, probably years passed with little notice of the words typed long ago. As with most of us, the cares of life, working, children, finances, health and a hundred other things consume our thoughts daily. And often when we lie down to sleep at night, we have thoughts of the past or how we will proceed in the future. Until yesterday, I had not recently read the words on the bookmark:

“God, I spend so much time reliving yesterday or anticipating tomorrow that I lose sight of the only time that is really mine – the present. Remind me that the past, with its successes and failures, is over. I can make amends where I have hurt others, or let them down, but I cannot undo what has been done. The future is yet to be and eagerness or apprehension will not hasten it or postpone it. You give me today, one minute at a time. That’s all I have – all I ever will have. Give me the faith that knows each moment contains exactly what is best for me. Give me the hope that trusts you enough to forget past sins and future trials. Give me the love that makes each minute of life anticipation of eternity with you.”

Precious words; words I needed to remember each today, to guide me and direct my paths. But why does God want us to live in the present, not the past or future? It may be difficult for us to understand the dimensional aspect of time, but time is only now. Our life is not like the movie “Groundhog Day”, with Bill Murray, where each day is repeated. Our life is like a vapor for a moment, then disappears. There has never been a time when our life wasn’t now. Winston Churchill said, “If the present quarrels with the past, there can be no future”. Psalms 68:19 says “*Blessed be the Lord, who daily loaded us with benefits*”. If we are not truly aware of each moment today, we may fail to recognize his benefits and blessings of this very special moment in time. If we put our energy into thinking about the past or future, we may not realize how quickly the present moment flies by. Living in the present allows us to be thankful for everything.

But what about tomorrow? In Matthew 6:34, Jesus tells us “*Take therefore no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself*”. We don’t have to worry about it, God is in charge!! God’s word promises us food and raiment, blessings, and eternity if we follow him. Proverbs 16:9 tells us that “*A man’s heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps*”. It doesn’t matter how much thought, energy, or time we invest in our future, God will determine the direction of our future. Therefore our time is often wasted in this process, as the special moments of “now” are ignored.

Proverbs 27:1 says, “*Boast not thyself of tomorrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth*”. No one is assured of a tomorrow because we don’t hold the times and seasons in our hands. It is “*appointed unto men once to die but after this the judgment*”. Tomorrow may not dawn for you or me. (Hebrews 9:27) Therefore we need to commit our today and our future plans into God’s hands.

As we forgive and forget past failures and sins of ourselves and others, let’s place each day, each moment, in God’s hands, because today will never come back. Once a day ends, it can never be reclaimed.

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



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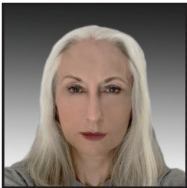
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Census 2020

By Victoria Loe Hicks
Mitchell County



Would you trade 10 minutes of your time for more than \$18,000?

What if those 10 minutes would mean that your children’s school could hire the additional teachers and install the protective equipment it needs to reopen safely? Or that your EMS department got to buy a badly needed new ambulance? Or that your medical clinic could do more to help people addicted to opioids? Or that the county transportation department could schedule additional trips to get you where you need to go?

Money to do all those things – and dozens of others that determine what it is like to live here in Yancey and Mitchell counties – depend on how many people complete the census. For every resident that fails to answer the simple questionnaire, the county will lose more than \$1,800 a year for the next 10 years, or a total of over \$18,000.

“The census affects every aspect of public service as well as COVID funding,” said Jeff Howell, the director of emergency services for Yancey County. “The more folks we have living and working in Yancey County determines the number of ambulances, EMS workers, fire departments, etc. that are needed.”

“Our federal and state grants both are allocated by the census,” said Sheila Blalock, director of transportation for Mitchell County. “Our funding is not based on performance but on population.”

Also, the Dogwood Health Trust is offering counties in Western North Carolina \$1,000 for every percentage point increase in census participation above the level of 2010.

And here’s another reason to either mail in the paper form, answer the questions by phone, or complete the census online: If you don’t, a census taker will come to your house. And, if you’re like most people, that’s something you’d like to avoid. (See below for details on how to complete the questionnaire.)

Perhaps you don’t like to share information about yourself with government agencies. That’s understandable. But, by law, that information can be used only to compile the huge, anonymous sets of numbers that determine how money and political representation are distributed.

It is a crime for any census employee to share information about any person with another individual or group, even within the government. That includes law enforcement, the IRS, or the immigration service. A census employee who breaks the law can be fined up to \$250,000 and go to prison for as long as five years.

At last count, the response rate in both Mitchell and Yancey counties was lower than in the state or nation as a whole. As a result, people in our counties pay state and federal taxes at the same rates that people in other places do, but they receive fewer benefits in return. Also, because census numbers are used to determine how many federal and state representatives each area gets, our counties have less political clout than they deserve.

The only way to fix that is to make sure every resident gets counted. To help make that happen, SEARCH (Sustaining Essential and Rural Community Health-care) is working to get the message out to all residents of Yancey and Mitchell counties.

There are three ways to respond:

- Online at www.my2020census.gov
- By phone at 844-330-2020
- By mail by returning the questionnaire mailed to your home to

U.S. Census Bureau
National Processing Center
100 Logistics Avenue
Jeffersonville, IN 47144

Here are all the things asked on the census form:

- How many people live in your home
- How they are related to each other
- Whether you own or rent your home
- Whether it is a house, an apartment or some other type of home
- Your phone number (only used if the census needs to contact you to clarify one of your answers)
- The name, age, birth date, sex and race(s) of each person, and whether or not they are of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin

There is NOT a citizenship question.

The census happens only once every 10 years. Do your part now, and you won’t have to deal with it again until 2030.

Victoria Loe Hicks is a retired journalist living in Mitchell County. She is a member of a SEARCH Outreach effort to encourage people to complete the census.



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NCBAM Hope Line Seeks Bilingual Volunteers

By Carol Layton

Calls to NCBAM's Hope Line continue to increase as older adults grapple with quarantines, self-isolation, and loneliness--which many have been experiencing for years. NCBAM wants to help as many callers as possible by making the Hope Line available to non-English speakers.

NCBAM provides training which takes approximately two hours and can be completed remotely. Bilingual volunteers place return calls to Hope Line callers. The ministry is seeking any bilingual volunteers, but especially those who speak Spanish, Korean, Chinese, and Vietnamese. Language barriers present a risk to some seniors who may be left without support or feel even more alone. Volunteering as a bilingual Hope Line communicator is a powerful way to make a difference!

Give us a call at 877.506.2226 to learn more. Let's partner together to reach all of North Carolina's seniors!



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

Founding Fathers And How They Served Our Country – Sam Adams

By David Streater
Burke County



Samuel Adams was born in 1722 and graduated from Harvard in 1740. Adams was a remarkable statesman and politician, but an inferior business-person. As a banker, Adams was fired due to excessive time talking about politics. His father then gave him a large sum of money to start a business, but Adams gave half to a needy friend and squandered the remainder. He then worked in his family's brewery, ultimately sending it into bankruptcy.

Hired as the tax collector for Boston, Adams did a poor job by relieving many skivers of their taxes. With his faults, however, Adams was a true American patriot. He and Patrick Henry spoke forcefully in favor of separation from Britain. Using numerous pseudonyms, Adams wrote countless editorial letters opposing British control to as many colony newspapers.


Paul Revere, John Hancock, and others were tutored by Adams to be rebels, and they recognized him to be their "political father". Adams avoided capture due to Paul Revere's famed nighttime ride, announcing the "British are coming". Adams also crafted the Boston Tea Party ploy and formed the Sons of Liberty—who destroyed and ruined British properties. Among other monikers, the British referred to Samuel Adams as the "most dangerous man in Massachusetts" (Fardin, 2002, p.4).

Among other honors, Adams was hailed as the "Father of American Independence", and the "Father of the Revolution". If the British had won the Revolutionary War, Adams would have been executed as a war criminal!

Please visit your Charters of Freedom setting in most western North Carolina counties. Teachers are welcome and encouraged to contact Dr. Streater (david.streater@gmail.com) for information and complementary student education materials to enhance experiential field trips to the settings. A Charters of Freedom setting consists of the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. They are on permanent display analogous to the Charters of Freedom in the National Archives, Washington, DC. Please visit our website (ChartersofFreedom.com) to learn more about our existing settings.

Vance and Mary Jo Patterson are the founders of Foundation Forward, a 501(c)3 education nonprofit organization.


Dr. David Streater is the director of education for Foundation Forward. He is a retired college instructor and administrator, and a retired probation and parole officer/administrator. David is a criminologist who has an acute history interest, served in the Navy, and is a resident of Burke County, NC.



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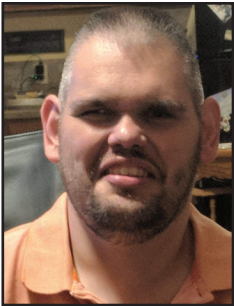


Looking In The Mirror

By David Valls
Mitchell County

We have all heard the phrase " look in the mirror", but let's think about why we look in the mirror. We often do this simply to see how we look or to make sure that we look presentable, particularly if we have to be somewhere. Now think about how often we look in our spiritual mirror to make sure that our Christian life is presentable before God. Remember, we are to be ambassadors for Christ....so the impression we give and the way we present ourselves directly to others affects how our Savior Jesus Christ is presented. Also, the effectiveness of the message often has much to do with the way it is presented....so it is up to the person who presents it to make sure it's presented in such a way that it has a lasting impact on those who are willing to hear it. In other words, we are to reflect Jesus in all we do.... so we must ask ourselves these questions when we take a long hard look in our spiritual mirror, "Are we representing Jesus properly?" " Is his light shining forth in our lives the way it should?" Jesus said you are the light of the world... a city that is sat on a hill cannot be hidden. If you light a candle, you don't hide it where it cannot be seen, you put it somewhere where it's brightness will shine. The moon shines because its surface reflects light from the sun. We as Christians are called to be reflections of the SON!! Sometimes we may look in the mirror and not like what we see, so we try to make ourselves look better, to improve our appearance. We must do the same thing when we see something that doesn't appear right in our spiritual life.... we must change whatever it is that is weighing us down so we reflect the Holiness of our Lord. We do this by recognizing the areas in our Christian life that need improvement. We must ask God to help us to improve in those areas. He tells us to "ask it and it shall be given to you." If there is something in your life that keeps you from being a reflection of the SON, simply ask God to help you to be that reflection that you need to be. The apostle Paul wrote "My Grace is sufficient for thee" We are to let our light shine before men so that it would glorify God. Let us all be mindful of this by taking some time to look in our "spiritual mirror."

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



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Apostasy Predicted

By Glenda Ward
McDowell County



In a Day of Declension
2 Timothy Declension, “a falling away” – the act of professed Christians who deliberately reject the revealed truth of God’s Word.

Apostasy differs from being wrong concerning God’s truth that may be the result of ignorance (Acts 19:1-6). This may also be due to the result of being in the snare of Satan (2:25-26), but both of these may exist with true faith.

A time will come when Apostates’ will not endure sound doctrine and will make the choice to follow after their own pleasures of the world. These people will gather their own teachers for their own ears to hear; they being turned away from the truth and turned to fables or stories that are not true of our living God, Salvation, Jesus Christ and eternity, (4:3-4).

Apostates depart from the true faith but not from showing the outward profession of Christianity, (3:5). Apostate teachers teach of worldly things and pleasures and have their own multitude of followers, (4:3). Apostates are false prophets among people denying redemption by the blood, bringing upon themselves swift destruction; and the way of the truth – Jesus Christ – will be evil spoken of, (2 Peter 2:1-2 and read 2:3-19).

The righteous, dwelling among these kinds of people seeing and hearing, troubled their righteous soul seriously from day to day concerning these people and their unlawful teachings and doings. We are to keep in mind that the Lord knoweth how to deliver the Godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust into the day of judgment to be punished. (Reference Psalms 134:17)

Please Note: Chiefly those that walk after the flesh in uncleanness, and despise government; those that are bold, straight forward, overconfident, and take liberties, are self-willed people that are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. These people speak evil of the things that they do not understand; and they will utterly perish in their own corruption receiving the reward of unrighteousness as they that count it a pleasure to riot in the day time, sporting themselves with their own deceiving’s while they feast among us, (Jude verse 11).

They have forsaken the right way, God’s way, by going astray. Isn’t this a description of what we, as Christians, are seeing here on earth today, (2 Peter 2:10)? Apostates turn way from the faith. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn away from the Holy commandment delivered unto them. (Read the Book of Jude)

Apostasy in the church cannot be redeemed and awaits judgment, (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12; 2 Peter 2:17,21; Jude 11-15; Revelation 3:14-16).

The Lord cometh to execute judgment upon all that are ungodly among us, of all their ungodly ways and deeds which they have committed, and all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against our Lord, our God! Nevertheless, the Lord, our God shall stand with us all of true faith and Christianity, strengthening our faith in Him; through the teachings of Scripture and the detailed account from Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, that will prevail upon the earth during the last days, (2 Timothy 3:1-9).

The Christian’s Resource from the Apostasy Predicted: - Scripture (2 Timothy 3:10-17).

Resources of The Christian

In a day of general declension and apostasy
(2 Timothy 1:12)

1- Faith (1:5)
2- The Spirit (1:6-7)
3- The Word of God (1:13; 3:1-17; 4:3-4)
4- The Grace of Christ (2:1)
5- Separation from “vessels of ... dishonor” (2:4, 20-21)
6- The Lord’s sure reward (4:7-8)
7- The Lord’s faithfulness and power (2:13, 19)

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

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

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



In this monthly series of articles, I have chosen to survey twelve 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. After having completed the first two categories in previous issues, we now turn our attention to the final four spiritual disciplines, which comprise the “corporate” disciplines. They are confession, worship, guidance, and celebration.

College basketball (in a normal year) has the “Final Four.” The College Football Selection Committee selects four college football teams to play in a final tournament to determine its champion. College hockey calls their championship tournament the “Frozen Four.” These “final four” perhaps represent the crowning achievement of the work of the Holy Spirit of God in the believer’s life.

What God most desires for and from those whom He has set free from sin through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on Calvary’s cross, is that His newly adopted spiritual children live out the gospel message of salvation. We are to live for Him. And if we are going to be faithful to live the gospel, we must not just speak the gospel, but also allow others to see the gospel being lived out. We practice (live-out) our faith by practicing and living the habits of the heart. Not just a few of them—but all of them.

If the child of God is to grow into the likeness of our Savior, then we must commit ourselves to learn from Him, grow in Him, and live for Him. Each of these spiritual disciplines is a call from God to become like Christ. The inner disciplines prepare us to meet without Savior daily. The outward disciplines ready us to be used as living witnesses in a lost, dark, and dying world. God equips us through learning and practicing the disciplines of simplicity, solitude, submission, and service to present us and use us as His powerful witnesses.

The corporate disciplines are designed by God to remind us that we are not alone. As an act of His love and mercy and by our response to His invitation of salvation, God grafted us into His universal family. By faith, we become children of God. We then become a part of His family—each one of us valuable members of that family, which Jesus called “the church.” (ekklēsia—ἐκκλησία; i.e., “the called-out ones”)

These disciplines serve to move us toward a deeper sense and reality that we are a part of God’s family. A deep, true spiritual journey is not only about our own private, individual devotion and pursuit of Christ—it is equally about our commitment to be an integral and functional part of the community of faith—God’s Church. His Church is made up of living stones made alive in Christ. Placed together by the Lord, each believer becomes a part of the “Body of Christ.” Jesus called us, His Church, His bride! And as His bride, we have the glorious privilege of loving, honoring, and serving our Savior.

In Mark 3:33-34, Jesus responded to a crowd who informed Him that His mother and brothers had arrived and were looking for Him. “Answering them, He said, “*Who are My mother and My brothers?*” *Looking about at those who were sitting around Him, He said, “Behold My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother.*” The new birth, Jesus insisted, would usher humankind into a new spiritual existence and possibility in which men and women would become brothers and sisters in faith. Barnhard Anderson (*The Living Word of the Bible*, Westminster Press, 1979, p. 146) adds, “The church, as the family of God, sets forth a new criterion of worth, a new form of parity, and a new context of belonging for each person in the kingdom of God.” You and I are the church and we are expected to be a part of God’s functional family.

Christians who do not commit themselves to the “Body of Christ” or to these “family” disciplines will remain as spiritual infants—in self-induced isolation, vulnerable, weak, and immature. God cannot and will not be glorified!

The Spiritual Discipline of Confession begins with our acknowledgment of the reality of sin and rebellion in our lives. We are accustomed to thinking of sin as purely an individual act of disobedience to God. That is true in one sense. But the scriptures go much farther. Since we are a part of God’s family, our sins not only affect our relationship with Jesus but also radiate outwardly and affect our relationships with our fellow family members. God’s spiritual remedy for the broken relationships caused by sin was the sacrificial death of His Son, Jesus, the unblemished Lamb of God. We can remove the power and consequences of our sin by way of accepting and receiving God’s gift of forgiveness. We become righteous, not in and through what we do, but rather who we receive. Paul made it so very clear in Romans 5:17, “*For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.*”

Jesus accomplished our forgiveness and salvation through His sacrificial death. But it has to be activated by both our acknowledgment of sin and our faith and acceptance of His gift of grace and mercy. When we acknowledge our sins, we are actually agreeing with God about the status of our spiritual being (i.e., we are sinners and as a result, are lost and separated from God by our sins). The gift of salvation comes to us full and free! What do we mean by “full?” God makes us fully right with Him! What do we mean by “free?” We didn’t do anything to obtain it! Remember, Jesus came to the cross out of love, desiring to make a way for God’s creation to receive the Father’s forgiveness and pave the way for God to offer His beloved His very best.

The cross made God’s forgiveness accessible to all of His marvelous creations. But it is only through the Spiritual Discipline of Confession is it possible for us to

receive God’s forgiveness. Jesus’ substitutionary death on Calvary activated God’s forgiveness for all of our sins—past, present, and future. All that is left is for you and me to receive His forgiveness by faith.

That process began when we received Christ as our Savior. We confessed our sins and invited Jesus to be the Savior and Lord of our life. Paul wrote (1 Timothy 2:5), “*For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus...*” By faith, we agreed with God that only Jesus could save us from our sins. By faith, we agreed with God and accepted Jesus’ sacrifice as payment for our sins. By faith, we agreed with God that once the payment was made and received, that God’s cleansing is our free gift. We no longer have to live under the weight of sin, guilt, or shame. John stated (1 John 1:7), “*but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.*” And in 1 John 1:9, he continued that marvelous truth, “*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*”

There are many things in this journey of life that seek to stand in the way of receiving God’s forgiveness. One is continuing to live in ungodly and unbiblical patterns of sin. Another is a misconstrued theological viewpoint, which sets the stage for other emotional and spiritual snags. Salvation has often been errantly tied in with ecclesiastical authority—and confession and penance have been used throughout the history of the church as a method to convey salvation and forgiveness.

The Protestant Reformation shifted that theological perspective. As a rallying cry, the Reformers pointed to 1 Peter 2:5 where Peter wrote, “*you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*” And in verse 9 he proclaimed, “But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God’s OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light...” This “universal priesthood of all believers” stands as the cornerstone of our evangelical faith. We stand before Almighty God as a kingdom of priests, each and every one subject only to the authority of God and the Lordship of Christ. Each one is responsible to God as a member of the body of Christ. We need no other priest, except Jesus who is our “High Priest.”

Confession then ceases to be the means by which we appease God and secure our forgiveness and salvation. Confession becomes an act of obedience and worship—as we come before the presence of God acknowledging His Lordship and authority, as we humbly kneel acknowledging our sins and rebellion, and as we lift our hearts as redeemed and forgiven before our God thanking Him for His mercy and grace which has already accomplished our salvation and forgiveness. In truth, the spiritual discipline of confession draws us to expose our sins to God and others—so that we no longer hold any false guilt or shame. We have been forgiven! There is a renewed sense that nothing stands between God and me—for He has already removed both the stain and the power of sin.

Richard Foster sums it up so eloquently, “The Discipline of confession brings an end to pretense. God is calling into being a church that can openly confess its frail humanity and know the forgiving and empowering graces of Christ. Honesty leads to confession, and confession leads to change.” That is the essence of the spiritual discipline of confession. Blessings!

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



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September 2020- Blue Ridge Christian News page 29

Notes from the Shire

Friends and Revival

By Nancy Malik
Avery County

September is upon us and the past 6 months have been full of one thing; COVID. This includes economy issues, lockdowns, masks, and testings. Some businesses may never reopen, world wide. The world will never be the same. But as we go through wars, the economy collapses, or food shortages there is one thing not lacking in the high country! Friends! They are everywhere and as I contracted COVID, they were there for me in so many ways! I needed my car moved from Canon to Watagua Hospital. They brought me food, books, and flowers! Phone calls and concern was precious. I was blessed and thank God for these precious ones there to help! Churches have tried so many ways to reach out to their parishioners and many, using Facebook, have tripled the number listening to their sermons! The hard thing has been isolation from family and friends for many. My older sister was in lockdown for 5 months in her nursing home and is just now able to go to the dining room and eat with others. She is a new person having that added back into her life! Many around the world have found they like homeschooling their children and are going to continue this fall with that. Teachers are trying to organize rooms for safety. My dear friend, in South West Florida, will have half her class on Monday, and Tuesday, clean her room Wednesday, then the other half of her class on Thursday and Friday. What a way to teach. Changes, accommodations, and concerns are prevalent as we head into autumn. The trees will change colors, ahhhh, and the children will learn, God is in control and we keep our eyes intently on Him!

Brian Barrier works hard to get the Blue Ridge Christian News out monthly with the help of his mother in law, Cathy Pritchard, the co-editor. This gracious, free, godly newspaper, is a blessing to so many of us! There are ads for Christian that are found in 6 area counties and that is good business! I have used many of the companies whose ads are in the paper! Working with Christians is a blessing! The state legislators, Bible teachings, and other special articles, including sudoku and a crossword puzzle complete the blessing of this monthly newspaper. Pick one up for yourself, friends, and neighbors! Let's surround the Christian businesses in our area, Bible teachers, and more!. This paper is a friend, indeed, in a time of worldwide news!

What does the body of Christ of the Blue Ridge Mountains need to be praying for? Revival! We need it like never before as this worldwide pandemic is changing our daily lifestyles dramatically! Please pray earnestly for a county-wide, worldwide Revival for the souls that need to be saved! It is needed, for such a time as this!

Blessings to you both for your hard work on this exceptional paper for the High Country!

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.



A Grateful Girl

Words Matter

By Patti Jensen
Mitchell County

“The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.” -Proverbs 18:21

On any day, any hour, you can get on social media and find someone hurling negative words, attacking a person, an opinion, a group of people, an idea. Just name it.

What was once a place to share family photos, encouraging words, funny stories, and videos, a prayer request... have now become an unending onslaught of negativity.

Each negative comment or attack is a stone dropping in the water...creating so many ripples....affecting so many more than we know.

It's disappointing. At least to me, it is. To see some on my newsfeed who can so easily jump from sharing a scripture to sharing their opinion and attacking someone or some group in our community on a Facebook group is disheartening. Facebook groups that encourage and thrive from negative conversations, the tearing down of our community, our leaders both local and nationally...are becoming popular feeding grounds. And does anyone ever think what this does to our community? To any community? Does anyone ever think what it does to those on the other end of the words?

Whether it is politics, religion, community affairs, education, gossip, ...you name it...when did we all decide that everyone needs or wants our opinion?

What is most disappointing is the deafening silence from Christians. Shouldn't we be the light? Shouldn't we all be sharing a positive word amid the negative? Shouldn't we be finding ways to heal our communities from this disease that is causing so much hurt, division, and depression? Instead, for the most part, we are silent. I know I have been. My approach has been to just not engage in the word wars. I don't belong to those negative Facebook groups. But still...I am silent. And the word war rages on.

What is more surprising to me is that so many women are taking part in the verbal attacks. I don't mean to sound sexist in any way, but shouldn't Christian women be the ones to NOT be taking part in the negative comments? Shouldn't we be the ones who find ways to turn those conversations away from the negative? To offer a kind word, a word to turn the conversation, ...anything?

I'm not sure what the answers are. I do know that it isn't healthy. It isn't healthy for our communities. It isn't healthy for those who are the targets of the attacks. It isn't healthy for those who just jump on and read all of the negativity. It really isn't healthy for those taking part in the negativity. And I have to believe it isn't healthy for our Christian walk. We can't possibly feel close to God when we take part in those activities whether as one who comments or a passive reader.

I do think that the first thing we can do is pray. Pray before we decide to share our "opinion". Pray for our communities. Pray for those who are so negative and seem to enjoy tearing others down. They obviously have something that is hurting them as well. Hurt people hurt others.

I get it. These are very stressful days in our world right now. So many unknowns and fears. And when people are frustrated and scared they lash out. But in the middle of all of the unknowns is God...a very known God...who knows all. The One who we should all be turning to in prayer rather than trolling Facebook for a place to share our opinion.

Our community, our churches, our families, will all be the product of the words we speak over them. Let's remember that the next time we jump on social media with a snarky comment, a probing question, a passive-aggressive attack, an all-knowing opinion.

Instead, could we make a pinky promise to one another to do better? When given the chance to be positive or negative, to be positive? When deciding whether to rant or rave, to offer up a rave?

Remember what our moms always told us...if you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all.

“Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.” Colossians 4:6

“Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.” Ephesians 4:29

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



Pleasant Hill Baptist Church

The Helmet of Salvation

By Caron Cline
Burke County



We have studied the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of peace, the shield, and faith and now we arrive at the helmet of salvation. Paul tells us to ‘take the helmet of salvation’. The Greek word for ‘take’ is ‘analambano’ and it means ‘receive up; take unto’.

Psalm 3:8 and Jonah 2:9 remind us that salvation belongs to the Lord and can only be received as a gift from Him. We cannot purchase it, earn it, or steal it. But what is it? In the OT, we constantly see references to the salvation of God as He came in and rescued His people: Exodus 14:13-14-Deliverance at the Red Sea for the people of God; Psalm 62:1-7-Deliverance for David as he fled from his enemies

Psalm 69:29 and Jeremiah 17:14-Deliverance from sickness; and Isaiah 35:3-4 promises that our God will come and save us.

Paul pulls two of the descriptions of the armor from the book of Isaiah. In Isaiah 59:14-20, the prophet likens righteousness to a breastplate and salvation to a helmet.

These passages are based on God’s salvation of His covenant people. However, we know that the Redeemer that came was Jesus Christ and although He came to the Jew first, He also came to the Gentile.

Isaiah 49:5-6 “*And now says the Lord, who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, to bring Jacob back to Him, so that Israel might be gathered to Him (For I am honored in the sight of the Lord, and My God is My strength), He says, ‘It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations so that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth’*”.

The bottom line is that God wants to save people more than people want to be saved.

Matthew 1:21-23 is the account of Gabriel’s visit to Joseph after Mary had announced her pregnancy. Joseph was troubled concerning this news, but Gabriel told him that this child was conceived by the Holy Spirit. Joseph was to name Him, Jesus, for He would save His people from their sins.

The name Jesus, which came from the Hebrew name Joshua, means salvation. God provided a Savior, Jesus, the God-man. He came to live a perfect life in the flesh of a man and die as the Son of God, the ultimate and perfect sacrifice. Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection bridged the gap between sinful man and a holy God. He purchased salvation for all who would believe in His Name and He offers it as a free gift. Therefore, Paul says ‘take the helmet of salvation’. He gives the least amount of description concerning the helmet of any other piece of armor. Why? He has discussed salvation in depth throughout the letter to these believers. In Ephesians 1:13-14, Paul wrote that when we hear the truth of the gospel and believe, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit, Who is our guarantee of eternal salvation.

In Ephesians 2:8-9, Paul states that our salvation is based on the grace of God, not on anything that we can do.

In Ephesians 2:13-14, we learn that we have been brought near to God by the blood of Jesus

In Ephesians 2:19 we discover that we are now members of the household of God

And lastly, in Ephesians 4:22-24, Paul announces that we have the power to put off our old lifestyle and put on the new because we are renewed in the spirit of our minds.

We must put on our helmet of salvation because the enemy of our soul desires to destroy our confidence concerning our true identity in Christ. Our brain is command central and controls every movement in the body, however, our mind controls our decisions, our words, our thoughts, our will. The mind is the battlefield of Satan.

Have you ever doubted your salvation?

When true believers doubt their salvation, their productivity in the kingdom of God drops tremendously. Satan understands that causing us to struggle in this area limits our confidence to present the gospel to our family, co-workers, friends, etc. So how can we be confident in our salvation? The word of God and the Holy Spirit will guide us into all truth. We must spend time reading and meditating on God’s promises, standing firm on every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

If our heart desires to please God by obeying His Word and loving others through word and deed, it is a strong indication that we are a child of God.

2 Timothy is believed to be Paul’s final letter and in 1:12, he confidently stated that he knew Whom he had believed. There was no doubt in his mind that his salvation was secure for time and eternity. We must walk confidently through life wearing the helmet of salvation. Refuse the devil even a toe hold in your mind by bringing every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. The defeated foe will flee!

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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Since 2011, the Republican-led General Assembly has focused efforts on sunseting temporary taxes, reducing other taxes, creating a very low flat income tax rate, and substantially raising the standard income tax deduction. At the same time, a strong savings surplus was created to retain our state's AAA credit rating. Before 2011, the state had run out of money and faced a budget deficit of over \$3 billion even after the Democrat-led General Assembly had raised taxes by billions of dollars from 2003-2010. The strong savings reserve at the beginning of 2020 was the result of stabilizing broken programs like Medicaid and the Unemployment Trust Fund, along with resisting the urge to spend the annual surpluses. Through prudent budgeting, the state has been able to address the needs of North Carolina, without the reckless spending that was common before 2011. Since 2017, Governor Cooper has vetoed every budget sent to him with the excuse of wanting more spending. If the General Assembly had followed the wishes of the Governor, we would not have the strong savings reserve that is helping us through this time of COVID, nor would we be ranked in the top 5 nationally in terms of the economic outlook. North Carolina has also been ranked as The Best State for Business three years in a row according to Forbes. North Carolina's job and population growth outpace competing states thanks to a decade of successful Republican reform.

A fiscal challenge this year has been unemployment. As you know, over 1 million North Carolinians had to file for unemployment benefits due to COVID Executive Order shutdowns by Governor Cooper. The Unemployment Trust Fund, funded by taxes paid by employers, was in great shape going into 2020, with approximately \$4 billion in reserve to pay unemployment benefits. However, a decade earlier during the last recession, under Democrat management that same Trust Fund had a deficit of over \$2 billion.

Conservative budgeting has also been very effective in allowing North Carolina to respond to several natural disasters. In August 2020, the NCGA approved millions more in additional hurricane relief, bringing the total spent since 2016 to \$1 billion. While providing that level of hurricane relief, the Republican-led General Assembly was still able to retain \$1 billion in reserve.

I am proud of the record of our majority conservative leadership in the General Assembly. More importantly, it has been an honor to be a part of a decade of historic reforms that have been called the Carolina Comeback, and have made North Carolina the best state to live, work, and raise a family. I pray that in the decade to come our state and our citizens will continue to prosper.

NC House District 86



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

It sometimes can seem there is never-ending bad news. So, I would like to share some important good news about our state's financial condition. The first good news I want to highlight is that North Carolina's Republican-led legislature is acknowledged to have financially-positioned North Carolina to weather successfully the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, even liberal, Democrat media outlets, National Public Radio, acknowledges this. A recent NPR story notes that North Carolina, unlike other states, entered the pandemic with significant financial reserves. These reserves have allowed teachers and other state employees to keep their jobs without furloughs, job losses, or reduced wages. In fact, state employees and others actually have received raises or bonuses where the governor would agree.

Further, North Carolina's excellent financial situation allows it to be able to take advantage of President Trump's extension of unemployment benefits. To be able to provide the \$400 per-week payment proposed by President Trump, North Carolina will need to pay for \$100 of it. Republicans have confirmed their willingness for the state to pay its share. Unfortunately for North Carolinians's out of work, at this point, Governor Cooper has been dragging his feet on sending in North Carolina's application to participate in the program. While he delays, North Carolina families continue their financial struggles from the shutdown of our state's economy. One more positive story to share: Our state Treasurer Dale Folwell reports that the North Carolina pension system is healthy, too. This is great news for our many educators and state and local employees. North Carolina's pension system is widely regarded as one of the best-funded in the nation. In fact, Moody's Investors Service (one of the respected, national rating services) recently reported that North Carolina's retirement systems are the best-funded in the nation based upon their "Adjusted Net Pension Liabilities". Additionally, a recent "stress test" by The Pew Charitable Trusts, another respected national evaluator of state pension funds, concluded that North Carolina's state pension fund is positioned to maintain solvency during tough economic times. This is all very good news for all who look to the state system for their retirement income.

NC Senate District 46



Sen. Warren Daniel
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919-715-7823

Since 2011, the Republican-led General Assembly has focused efforts on sunseting temporary taxes, reducing other taxes, creating a very low flat income tax rate, and substantially raising the standard income tax deduction. At the same time, a strong savings surplus was created to retain our state's AAA credit rating. Before 2011, the state had run out of money and faced a budget deficit of over \$3 billion even after the Democrat-led General Assembly had raised taxes by billions of dollars from 2003-2010. The strong savings reserve at the beginning of 2020 was the result of stabilizing broken programs like Medicaid and the Unemployment Trust Fund, along with resisting the urge to spend the annual surpluses. Through prudent budgeting, the state has been able to address the needs of North Carolina, without the reckless spending that was common before 2011. Since 2017, Governor Cooper has vetoed every budget sent to him with the excuse of wanting more spending. If the General Assembly had followed the wishes of the Governor, we would not have the strong savings reserve that is helping us through this time of COVID, nor would we be ranked in the top 5 nationally in terms of the economic outlook. North Carolina has also been ranked as The Best State for Business three years in a row according to Forbes. North Carolina's job and population growth outpace competing states thanks to a decade of successful Republican reform.

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Tim's Treasures

A Soul in the Middle of Nowhere

By Timothy W. Tron
Burke County

They once called it “Nowhere” mountain. Today it’s known to the rest of the world as “Rich” mountain. The slow gradual climb slowly wears at your body, walking or running. The deceptive incline slowly takes you to a secluded overlook. There only the stone remnants of an ancient house’s foundation are all that exist. Leftover from another time, a bygone century. For a moment, above the distant mountain peaks, above the wayward meadows there is a feeling of freedom. The cattle in the fields dispersed amongst the shaded oaks and hemlocks, lowing in the fresh mountain air. Their voices bellow across the ridge. Once this was all that there was of a pioneer outpost, a home in the wilderness. It eventually became the property of the Cone’s. Today, it’s a place where one can go and find themselves a few moments of seclusion from a world that seems to fall out of control a little more each day.

A few days ago I had found myself atop of Nowhere. Therein lies the story – it was part of my run.

Several weeks ago, the Lord convicted me to start running again. At the time, it was as if something inside me wanted to be done with this life. Between the never-ending accusations of our society from one extreme to the other, to the seemingly never-ending pandemic, fueled by every political conspiracy theory you can imagine, one begins to look with joy toward the next life. In a sense, pushing my body to the extremes will either make me a healthier warrior for the Lord or it will take me home to be with him quicker. The options are Pauline in nature, “*For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*” Herein lies the rub: many have not, nor have no idea what that “next life” is. They live day-to-day, battling through each day without hope. Their lives have little to no direction. For them to find the way to life eternal on their own would be like finding a needle in a haystack. While we want to help them as much as possible, we can only plant the seeds. It is God’s grace that we are saved. As Jesus told his disciples, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.*” Sadly, there are greater numbers of lost in our world than those who are awakened to God’s plan of salvation. For those who know Him, and have asked Him into their lives, there is that hope of life eternal. Jesus said, “*For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.*”

I don’t know the exact mileage of each week. I don’t know the miles that my body has been pushed these recent days, but this much I can tell, there is a renewed strength. Slowly, my body shifts from the unhealthy cravings as before to now, those of wholesome, natural foods beckon my taste buds. As I had experienced once before, the feeling of how the body changes when it is exercised to the extreme is not new to me. Yet, the reserve with which I can now control my diet and temptations to imbibe in things that only go against not only your body’s health, but the spirit within – these have become the things to which I am now drawn, those things which enrich the body, soul, and spirit.

This journey is not about becoming the fastest. The goal these days is to merely push this terrestrial body to become the best it is capable of being, only so that my soul has a better home. I heard Ravi Zacharias mention a quote from the 19-century writer, George McDonald a couple of days ago. McDonald said in a roundabout way, that we do not “have” a soul, but rather, we are a soul. “We have a body,” he said, “but we are a soul.” This new perspective has made me rethink some of the ways in which I had been approaching life. In the act of pushing my body, I am then making a better dwelling place for my soul to live within. The nicer the home, the better the soul can feel. As Paul to the church in Corinth, “*What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?*” The more features the temple has, the more possibilities there are for the soul to flourish, and with it, the spirit. When our spirit is awakened, it then can welcome the Holy Spirit to dwell within us. Then, as we might prepare for an esteemed guest, we would too want our temple to be the most glorious that it can be. It is in this vein that my pursuit of the new day’s dawn, from the time, that the sun hits the horizon until long past its setting – my days are thus filled to serving Him.

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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Humor

By Buddy Freeman
Madison County



Johnny was a public hero. When he went to church the preacher asked, “Johnny, why did you so fearlessly rush out onto that thin lake ice to rescue your friend?” Johnny replied, “I had to. He was wearing my skates.”

The anxious young preacher asked his wife on the way home, “Did they like my sermon?” His wife said, “I think they did. At least, they were all nodding.”

A church member “asked the Pastor how did you get that cut on your face?” The pastor said, “I was thinking about my sermon this morning and wasn’t concentrating on what I was doing so I cut myself while shaving.” The member said, “That’s too bad! Next time you better concentrate on your shaving and cut your sermon.”

Two men were talking. One said, “I love Paris! Because of Paris, I have spent many wonderful days and nights.” His friend said, “But Fred, you never were in Paris.” The man said, “No, but my wife goes there every year.”

Two men were sitting in the expectant fathers’ lounge at a hospital. A nurse walked over to one of the men and said, “Congratulations. You have a little daughter.” The other man leaped and shouted, “Hey that isn’t fair. I was here first.”

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

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Please . . . I Need More Time

By Ken and Jan Merop
Avery County



Don’t pray for patience some say because then the trials will come that will teach you patience! There’s some truth to that.

Early in having combined our two single families some 37 years ago, I found myself thin on patience and short with our boys.

I caught myself one morning as they left for school. I bowed there at the front door and prayed asking forgiveness and for help to be more patient like Jesus. A short time later, circumstances out of our control demanded extraordinary patience.

Asthma that gripped my husband Ken and persisted several years required immense patience and kindness. Loss of work, taking on more responsibility myself...while still having compassion for his predicament...piled one on top of another; along with caring for our boys and helping them to understand our circumstances.

Suddenly, I remembered my prayer. It was time to see through God’s eyes...his perspective.

Looking back, I was learning another facet of patience recently uncovered while studying Galatians 5: 22 NLT which says, “*But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!*”

Some translations say, “patience,” the ability to wait for something you’re longing for; being composed even when things are in upheaval.

But another word for patience is forbearance. I settled in for a deeper look.

Forbearance asks something more of me.

Forbearance says, “I’ll give you more time.”

Something has to give if we are to live in harmony while putting up with someone’s poor behavior...ultimately expecting repentance and forgiveness. In fact, that must be the goal or there will be bad behavior indefinitely.

A parable in the Bible tells the story of a person who owed his king millions of dollars and couldn’t pay. The king ordered him and his family sold, but the debtor pleaded for patience and received the king’s forgiveness.

Is God calling you to forbear with someone? Giving more time is a blessing, especially when the treasure of forgiveness will be bestowed.

But what if bad behavior doesn’t accompany forbearance...just faith and trust?

I wonder. Do we forbear with God? When his answers seem slow in coming or come in unexpected ways...when in essence he is asking us to give him more time...do we practice forbearance with our Creator who knows best?

His patience with us is beyond understanding.

Psalms 27:14 reminds us so graciously. “*Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the Lord!*”

Forbear. Selah

A PLACE TO BE

Inhale the clean, crisp mountain air.
Fill your senses ~ find nourishment.
Be still in this place...in His presence.
Let the symphony of nature stir your soul.
Be inspired.
“The mountains and the hills
shall break forth into singing before you.”
Isaiah 55: 12



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

Witchy Women

By Tina Wolfe
McDowell County

An unknown author once said, "We process the world through our words." As a writer, I can certainly identify with that and journaling has been a therapeutic practice for me since I could hold a pen. But let's tweak that quote just a bit.

"We process the world through what and how we think and believe about ourselves."

I got this God Thought during a morning devotional on Philippians 4:8

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

In a world that seems upside down to many Christians, it's a challenge to practice that which what Paul tasks us. Especially when we are dealing with combative or passive-aggressive people in our work lives. Being confident in who we are as children of God allows us to not only embrace Paul's instructions but to live them out in personal and professional settings. This truth revealed itself recently in a client's work meeting.

I had been helping a client navigate some passive-aggressive behavior from a group of women on the board of the organization she ran. These Witchy Women had been privately pressuring (bullying in the grown-up world) her to support an initiative that went against her Christian beliefs and was not directly related to the mission of the organization. In a team meeting, these women lodged negative accusations about her for what they perceived as not doing enough work (at least the work they wanted her to do) and in a passive-aggressive way reprimanded her in front of the others for not communicating properly. They never once mentioned the aggressive emails and conversations about the initiative at the meeting, but instead gaslighted her. They were relentless in their accusations and intent on making sure everyone thought about her as they did.

My client saw this coming and, in our work, together we focused on the importance of accountability and how to professionally and as a Christian, manage the impending attacks. She has a heart for service and the Lord, which is what brought her to this organization in the first place. Her sensitivity can get the best of her like it does us all. Even though she was hurt, offended, and mad, she was able to remain true to Paul's words because she focused on who she was in Christ and refused to believe the false attacks. She had prepared both with practical notes and research and with prayer. She was able to replace their lies about her with truth and show her work to the others.

The efforts of the Witchy Women backfired as several attendees later expressed their concern and disapproval of their behavior to the big boss. My client's ability to remain calm, and not be pulled into their web of destruction, shined the light on her positive behavior and earned her respect.

I admit, when she first came to me with this, I was mad too. I wanted to defend her and expose their hidden agendas and passive-aggressive behavior. (Imagine fist in the air, cape flowing behind me!) But Paul gives us a clear and simple way to bring our minds into the captivity of our Lord Jesus Christ. If you're anything like me, we tend to want to lash out, defend our honor, and lead with emotion. When we do, we stop living for Jesus and place our wounded ego on the throne instead. The idea that we process our world through our words starts with our thoughts. We must first and foremost focus on who we are in Christ and why we were saved. In 2 Timothy 1:9 we are reminded who has saved us called us holy, "not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity."(italic mine for emphasis)

We live in a world, especially our digital world, where words are used as weapons, badges of superiority, and to promote lies and belittle others. It can get under our skin and make us in turn have bad thoughts about the author or the speaker. Can you believe we have somewhere between 60K and 80K thoughts per day? This makes my head swim. I was having not-so-nice thoughts about the Witchy Women, but Paul's words convicted my heart. It brought me back to my God Thought;

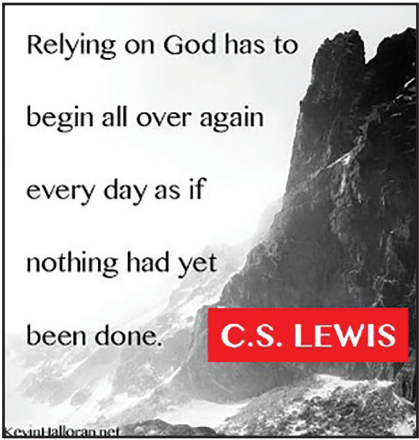
"We process the world through what and how we think and believe about ourselves."

As Christians, we are called to remember what God says about who we are--not what the world says. Ground yourself and your identity in these truths:

- We are made in His image (Gen. 1:27)
- We are redeemed (Luke 1:68)
- We are washed white as snow (Isaiah 1:18)
- He died so that we could live (John 3:16)

When we see ourselves as loved, cherished, and covered by our loving Father, the weapons--whether words from Witchy Women or Facebook friends--can not penetrate to the core of our being--our heart and soul.

I realize that when I allow the world and its ugliness to capture my attention, I think bad thoughts. Now in the case of these women, the ability to recognize the threat is the gift of discernment from God. The gift of discernment is so that we may take proper care. This is the truth revealed. At this point, recognizing they



have ill intent is not "thinking bad thoughts"--at least not at this point. You are merely recognizing a threat. God gave us the ability to assess and reason along with our basic survival skills. Once we are aware of the threat, how we deal with it is informed by what we believe about ourselves. Do we feel, "I deserve this treatment?"

If we believe we deserve bad treatment, we begin to self-shame. The human physique can only handle so much self-abuse. We then turn our anger outward to the perceived cause of the pain--the Witchy Women. Allowing our thoughts to get to this level is when we let sin in.

But let's present God's view of us. He loves us, we are precious in His eyes, we were created in His image and adopted into His Kingdom family as sons and daughters! That's something to rejoice over. We must replace the lie of unworthiness that the enemy tells us with the truth of who we are in Jesus Christ. That's not to say we don't accept responsibility for our own wrongs, we must. If we don't we lose His protection. Proverbs 18:10 tells us that, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe."

The Bible offers us the tools to handle situations like Witchy Women. The fact that these women intended harm is an informative statement--not a judgment statement. We also must understand that these women are sinners just like us and have allowed the enemy to rule their thoughts and actions in this situation. We are not called to assess the state of someone's soul! That's way above our pay grade. The purpose of learning to be aware of and acknowledging intentional harm against us is to inform us, not to judge.

When we feel intimidated, threatened, or are being bullied in a professional or personal environment, remember this:

- The threat, insult, et. al. is to inform us of our next move according to God's word.
- Hateful words, lies, and insults must be replaced with who we are in God's Truth.
- Let who we are as God's child inform how we respond (we are never required to react to aggression.)
- Let the knowledge that we are ALL created in His image inform how you interact with the aggressive or passive-aggressive person.

Tina Wolf is a long-time resident of McDowell County with a passion for helping business owners operate from a Christian, servant-led perspective. She is a follower of Christ, a wife, and a mother. As a business owner, marketing professional, and journalist, she has studied Christian business models and worked with business coaches to learn how to effectively operate in a worldly business environment from a Godly perspective. She believes that when we dare to serve, we succeed in life, and in business.

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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

Church on Lawn

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By Bennia Lee Sholes

Roanoke VA formerly from Micaville, NC



There is no question about it: COVID 19 has thrown countless familiar routines out the window. Sometimes this is extremely disruptive, but sometimes the change makes possible new and delightful opportunities. Here's one you might like.

The week before Palm Sunday 2020 (April 5) two neighbors in Roanoke, Virginia, were talking together, at the mailbox, socially distanced, of course. They were pleased that their churches were not open to protect their congregations from the COVID virus, but disappointed that there would be no Palm Sunday worship and, the following week, no Easter worship either. Then a lightbulb went on. One of the neighbors, Bennia Sholes, enjoyed listening to music on her porch in the evenings with her husband Jim. With their Alexa, they could listen to whatever music they liked... "Some Enchanted Evening" and other old favorites.

Ah-ha! What if we move Alexa out onto the front lawn on Palm Sunday and invite all the neighbors to enjoy Palm Sunday music together? That Sunday some 18 neighbors showed up. Everyone brought their own folding chairs and sat socially distanced on the lawns and the sidewalk, even at the edge of the street. There was no preacher. No offering. No Sunday School. No Palms. No choir. But there was Alexa!

One by one the neighbors (who usually attended Episcopal, Methodist, Baptist, Roman Catholic, and Presbyterian churches) called out their favorite hymns and Bennia would command "Alexa, play 'All Glory Laud and Honor.'" Alexa did just as she was told, to everyone's delight!

The first Sunday was so successful that the group reconvened the following week on Easter Sunday. The first two gatherings were so much appreciated that every single Sunday since, the community has gathered at 11 a.m. Everyone looks forward to it. After a time of greeting one another, the music begins. There is no singing or talking. It is a time of peace, music, and reflection. It is a beautiful opportunity to enjoy listening to a wide range of Christian music called out one by one by the gathered neighbors. The birds sing along, and the breeze moves through the leaves. Neighbors sit back and close their eyes in reflection and peace, look at the beauty of the sky and trees, or simply enjoy being in a community with neighbors in this new way.

Sometimes Alexa does not understand what Bennia says. She may say "Alexa, play 'Amazing Grace'" and Alexa may respond with something wacky like "Amazing Gaves by the Deadbeats." Everyone has a good laugh and Bennia will say again, slowly so the digital friend can understand, "Alexa play Amazing Grace" and she does.

A word about the musical selections each Sunday. There is no church in the world, no matter how big their choir or their music budget, which can match the diversity of musical wonder and spiritual inspiration in every single Sunday Worship on the Lawn. Friends have enjoyed getting to know neighbors' favorites, some familiar, some new. In a single morning, the Lawn Worship Congregation might enjoy "A Mighty Fortress is Our God" by the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. "No Hard Feelings" by the Avett Brothers. "The Prayer" by Josh Graban and Celine Dion, "The Lord's Prayer" by Andrea Bocelli, "I'll Fly Away" by the Blind Boys of Alabama, "Be Still My Soul" by the King's College Cambridge Choir and "Oh Happy Day" from the movie Sister Act.

Someday, when things get back to "normal". The Sunday Lawn Worship congregation will most likely dissolve as people return to their individual churches and familiar routines. But there is no question, each person who has attended will remember this special, spiritual, and unexpected blessing that sprung up during the time of Covid-19. Thanks be to God. Thanks to Jim, Bennia, and Alexa.

Bennia and Jim Sholes were raised in Yancey county. They met in at East Yancey High School. They have been married almost 60 years. The Navy took them to California in the early 1960's. Jim spent 5 1/2 years in the navy during the Vietnam war. They have two children, Kathy Shepperson of Richmond, VA and Mike Sholes of Salem, VA, 4 grandchildren and one great grandchild. They reside in Roanoke, Va but visit Micaville, Spruce Pine and Burnsville often! They love the mountains of NC!

Six days thou shalt work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest: in eaving time and in harvest thou shalt rest. Exodus 34:21

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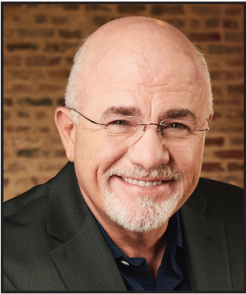
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His Lady's Getting It Done!

Dear Dave,

I'm single, and I'll be a pilot in the military for the next 10 years. I'm also debt-free, have a fully-funded emergency fund, and I'm saving 15% of my income for retirement. After my military days are over, I plan to work as a commercial pilot. I've done the math, and I have about \$20,000 a year to give, have fun with and build wealth. My question is about wealth building. When it comes to rental properties, I know you don't like the idea of a long-distance landlord. Being in the military, there's a good chance I'll move around a bit. What should I do?

Rachel



Dear Rachel,

First, thank you for your service to our country. And, wow! You're in a tremendous position financially and career-wise. You've got a great future ahead of you as a pilot in the military and after, plus you've followed my plan item by item. You've got so many options, and you can make a difference in your community and in the lives around you right now by giving.

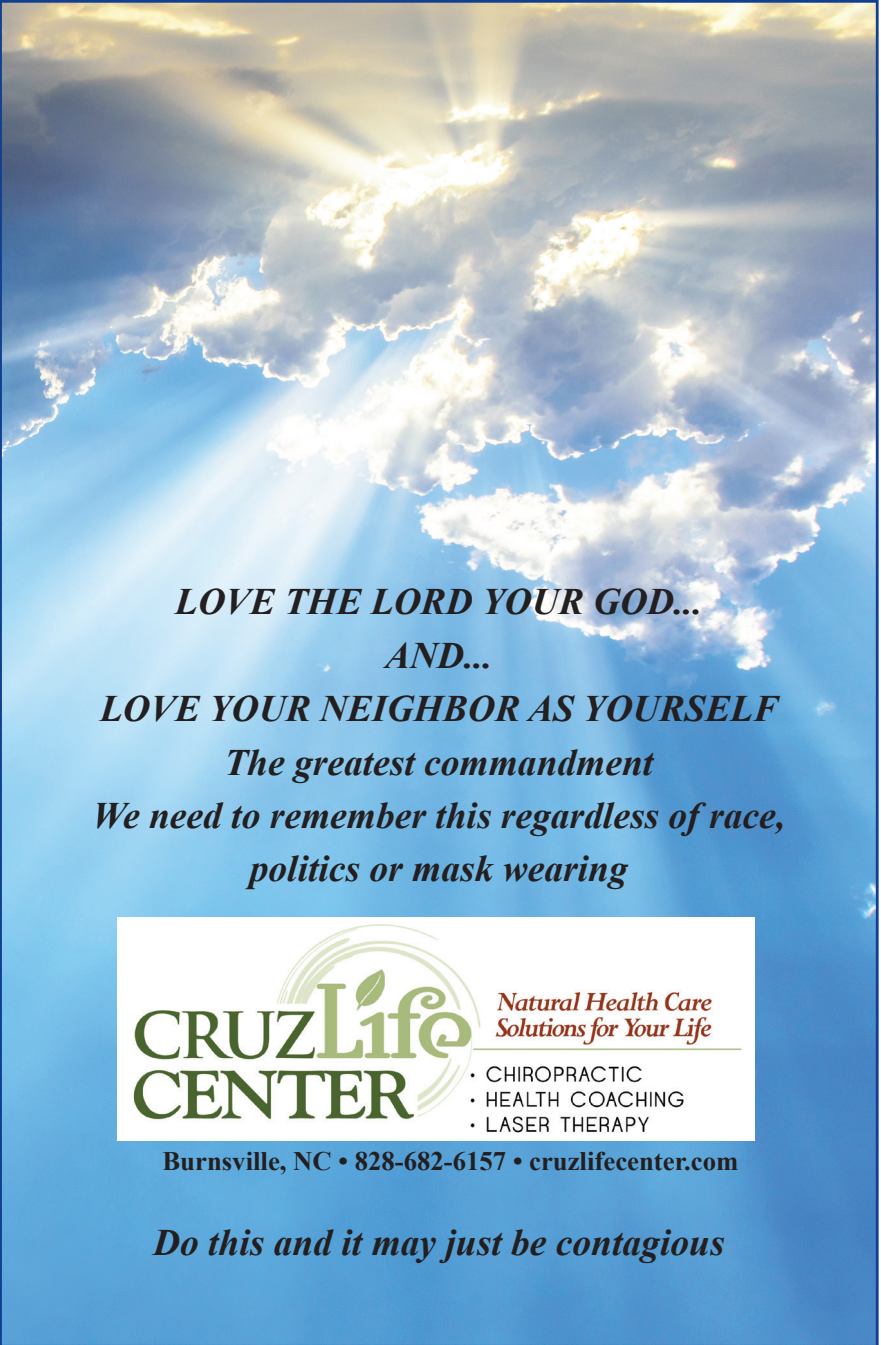
When it comes to wealth building, I hope you've already taken advantage of the TSP, or Thrift Savings Plan, which is kind of the military version of the 401(k). For wealth building beyond that, I'd get with a good investment pro—one with the heart of a teacher—and dive into some growth stock mutual funds. You could have a lot of money piled up just by the end of your military career. Who knows? You may even be able to buy a nice home with cash when you leave the service. Beyond that, you may be able to settle into some real estate and pay cash for those investments.

You are one cool, smart lady, Rachel. Congratulations on setting yourself up for a wonderful life—one where you can live and give like no one else!

—Dave

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






LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD...

AND...

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF

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Crossword

Crossword 258 and Solution
ACROSS
1 with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of ____ (Ex 31:3)
6 nor change it, a good for ____ (1,3) (Lev 27:10)
9 the LORD said to him, "Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ____ (Gen 15:9)
12 not greedy of filthy ____; but patient, not a brawler (1 Tim 3:3) KJV
13 I will destroy the king who is in the Valley of ____ (Amos 1:5)
14 during the time of King Herod, ____ from the east came to Jerusalem (Matt 2:1)
15 He shall not ____ it, nor change it (Lev 27:10) KJV
16 he will sharpen his sword; he will ____ and string his bow (Ps 7:12)
17 They cooked it in ____ or made it into cakes (1,3) (Num 11:8)
18 This man is not doing anything that ____ death (Acts 26:31)
20 and made a lofty ____ in every public square (Ezek 16:25)
22 fine ____ have been poured upon me (Ps 92:10)
23 Traitors, ____, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than (2 Tim 3:4) KJV
24 He removed the high places and incense ____ (2 Chron 14:5)
28 for one official is ____ by a higher one, and over them both are (Eccl 5:8)
31 gathering his wheat into the ____ (Matt 3:12)
32 was in the ____ that is called Patmos (Rev 1:9)
34 The brasen altar, and his ____ of brass, his staves, and all (Ex 39:39) KJV
38 Manasseh and Ephraim were born to Joseph by ____ (Gen 46:20)
40 They will spring up like grass in ____ (1,6) (Isa 44:4)
42 He is to wave the ____ before the LORD so it will be accepted (Lev 23:11)
43 Nehemiah the governor, ____ the priest and scribe (Neh 8:9)
45 there is ____ that doeth good, no, not one (Rom 3:12) KJV
46 ye ____ men with burdens grievous to be borne (Luke 11:46) KJV
48 into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ____ rocks (Isa 2:21) KJV
50 ____, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me (Matt 25:36) KJV
53 men will throw away their idols to the rodents and ____ (Isa 2:20)
55 ____ was eight years old

when he became king of Judah (2 Kings 22:1)
56 Sarah's maidservant, Hagar the ____ (Gen 25:12)
61 And ____ begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David (Ruth 4:22)
62 King Saul found a woman who was a medium in ____ . (1 Sam 28:7)
64 The death he died, he died to sin ____ for all (Rom 6:10)
65 Joshua said, ____, O Lord GOD, wherefore (Joshua 7:7)
66 The earth ____ like a drunkard, it sways like a hut in the wind (Isa 24:20)
67 To do justice and judgment is ____ acceptable to the LORD (Prov 21:3)
68 Babylon is taken, ____ is confounded (Jer 50:2)
69 the hollow of his hand, and ____ out heaven with the span (Isa 40:12) KJV
70 they ____ fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves (Gen 3:7)
DOWN
1 the warriors are ____ in scarlet (Nah 2:3)
2 he shall ____ them with a rod of iron (Rev 19:15)
3 Fifth book of the New Testament
4 to let the oppressed go ____ (Isaiah 58:6)
5 Men will faint from ____, apprehensive of what is coming (Luke 21:26)
6 when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with ____ (1,6) (Luke 8:16) KJV
7 "son of" in Hebrew
8 He asked water, ____ gave him milk (3,3) (Judges 5:25)
9 with diligence and is making ____ progress under their direction (Ezra 5:8)
10 O LORD, heal me, for my bones are in ____ (Ps 6:2)
11 till thou hast paid the very last _____. (Luke 12:59) KJV
13 And Cain talked with ____ his brother (Gen 4:8)
14 "Don't call me Naomi," she told them. "Call me ____ (Ruth 1:20)
19 Instead, I hope to ____ you and talk with you face to face (2 John 12)
21 Have you not put a ____ around him and his household (Job 1:10)
24 exalt him that is low, and ____ him that is high (Ezek 21:26) (KJV)
25 The LORD Almighty will ____ them with a whip (Isa 10:26)
26 A good ____ cannot bring forth evil fruit (Matt 7:18)
27 a prophetess, ____, the daughter of Phanuel (Luke 2:36)
29 But in the first ____ of Cyrus the king of Babylon

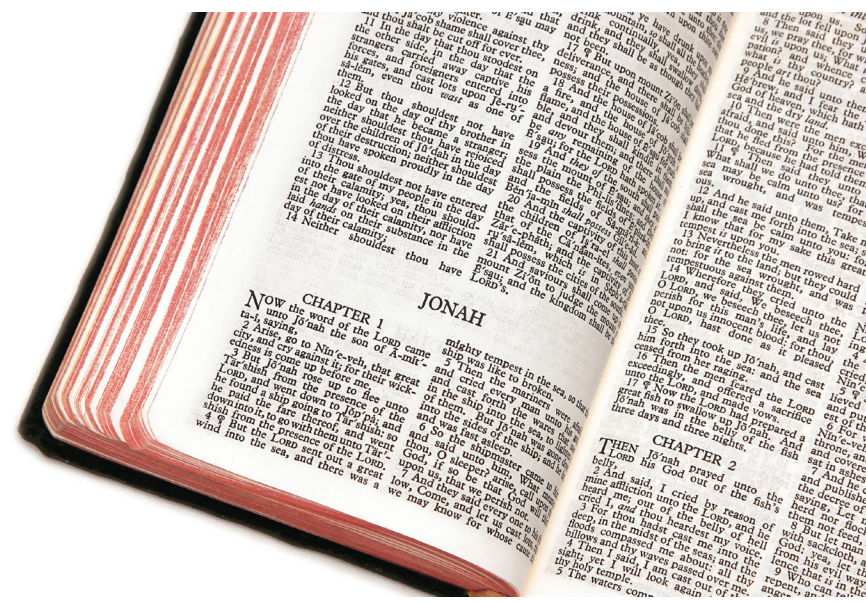
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(Ezra 5:13)
30 and to buy timber and ____ stone to repair the breaches (2 Kings 12:12) KJV
33 their feet rush into sin, they are swift to ____ blood (Prov 1:16)
35 At midnight the cry ____ out: 'Here's the bridegroom! (Matt 25:6)
36 said to David, "Am I ____ , that you come at me (1,3) (1 Sam 17:43)
37 I wish I could be with you now and change my ____ (Gal 4:20)
39 Whom are you pursuing? A dead dog? ____? (1,4) (1 Sam 24:14)
41 saints, and with the blood of the ____ of Jesus (Rev 17:6) KJV
44 James the son of ____, and John his brother (Matt 10:2) KJV
47 They neither worship the LORD nor ____ to the decrees (2 Kings 17:34)
49 the sucking child shall play on the hole of the ____ (Isa 11:8) KJV
50 the seed on good soil stands

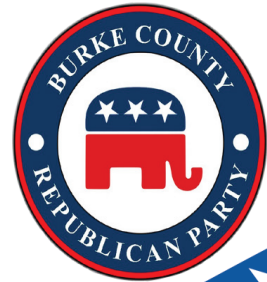
for those with a ____ and good heart (Luke 8:15)
51 made the tomb secure by putting ____ on the stone (1,4) (Matt 27:66)
52 young children
54 in purple and have ____ chain placed around his neck (1,4) (Dan 5:7)
55 ____ son of Zeruiah was commander of David's army (2 Sam 8:16)
57 I will sing to the LORD, for he has been good ____ (2,2) (Ps 13:6)
58 Am ____ trying to win the approval of men, or of God? (1,3) (Gal 1:10)
59 killed some twenty men in an area of about half an ____ (1 Sam 14:14)
60 I have ____ to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? (Matt 3:14) KJV
63 and drew the ____ to land full of great fishes (John 21:11)

Solution on page 14



BURKE COUNTY CONSERVATIVE VOTER GUIDE 2020

President Donald J. Trump	NC Auditor Tony Street	NC Supreme Court Paul Newby Phil Berger Jr. Tamara Barringer	NC House District 112 David Rogers
Vice President Michael R. Pence	NC Comm of Agriculture Steve Troxler	NC Court of Appeals April C. Wood Fred Gore Chris Dillon Jeff Carpenter Jefferson G. Griffin	NC District Court 25 Burford A. Cherry Richard Holloway Andrea Chiz Plyler
US Senate Thom Tillis	NC Comm of Insurance Mike Causey	NC Senate District 46 Warren Daniel	Board of Commissioners Scott Mulwee Jeff Brittain Johnnie Carswell
US House District 5 Viginia Foxx	NC Comm of Labor Josh Dobson	NC House District 86 Hugh Blackwell	Register of Deeds Stephanie A. Norman
NC Governor Dan Forest	NC Secretary of State E.C. Sykes		
NC Lt. Governor Mark Robinson	NC Supr. of Public Instr. Catherine Truitt		
NC Attorney General Jim O'Neill	NC Treasurer Dale R. Folwell		



Early Voting begins October 15th!

VOTE NOVEMBER 3RD!

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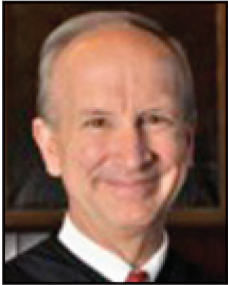
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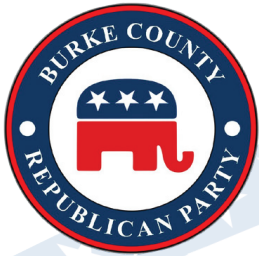
Chris Dillon
JudgeChrisDillon.com



Jefferson Griffin
JeffersonGriffin.com



April C. Wood
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