



BLUE RIDGE CHRISTIAN NEWS



Morganton Seventh Day Adventist

Will You Be Mine?

By Steve Bietz
Burke County



I know it isn't a church holiday, but when we were kids, giving each other those little red-and-pink cards on Valentine's Day was a favorite part of the school year. If my memory serves me correctly, and it seems to do that less and less, from 1st grade to the 5th grade we gave everyone in our class, plus our teacher, a Valentine's Day card. Now the cards I recall would not win a Hallmark greeting card contest for their beautiful poetry. My mom would allow me to buy a box of 25 cards and envelopes.

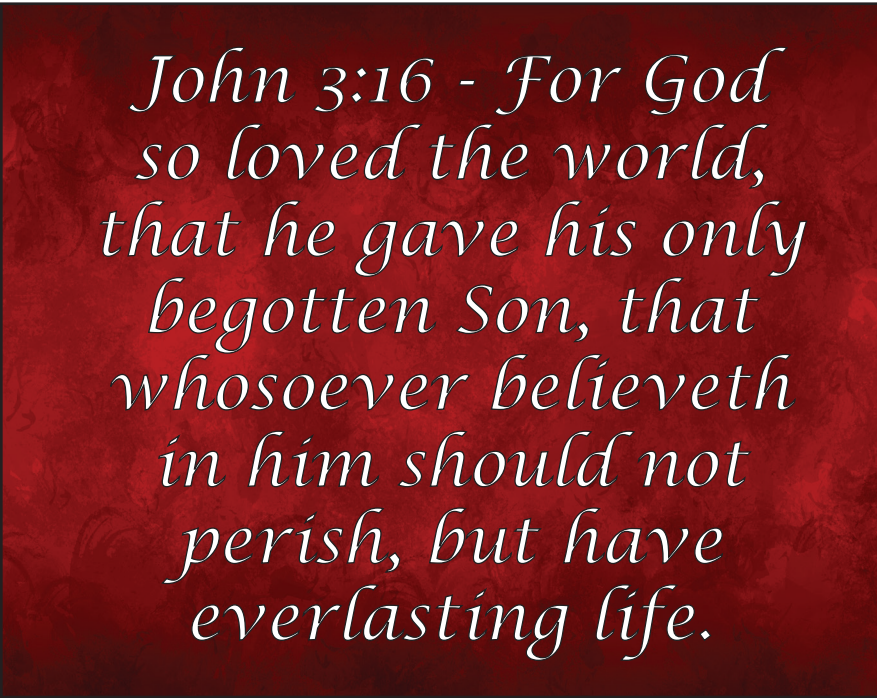
That evening I would then scatter them on the kitchen table as I made the tough decisions on which of my friends would get a certain card. I would read their simple messages, for example: "Just For The Record Valentine, You're The Music In My Heart. "Will You Be Mine?" And with those words, there would be an illustration of a boy and girl listening to a record on a record player. Yes, just typing the words record player makes me feel old. Then the next day at school during our Valentine's Day party, we would pass out our enveloped cards to everyone in our class. Now if there was a special girl that I was friends with, I would include candy with the card. And of course, the only candy that would suffice for Valentine's Day, were those candy hearts with short messages on them like, Hug Me, or Luv You, or Crazy 4 You, or Be Mine. The message had to be short and sweet on such a small heart. The stamped words were not even always straight or centered on the hearts.

I was in college when I first spotted a young lady on campus. I would ask her to go out with me on a date. I took her to a restaurant in town where we began to get to know each other. And that date would eventually lead me to the place where I popped the question, Will You Be Mine. And for 42 years and counting, we have belonged to each other.

It's the call of the chosen, isn't it? "Will you be Mine?" asks the God of the universe, who for millennia now has been trying to win back the hearts of a runaway and rebel race. "Will you be Mine?" It's as if all the children God already has around the dinner table in heaven aren't enough--as if He'll never really be truly happy and content until we say "Yes" and come and join Him too. "Will you be Mine?"

We read in John 3:16 the greatest Valentine card words this world has ever received. *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."* I can not begin to explain the way of Love divine and the compelling passion that drives a God from His great white throne to our dark, fallen earth, for what? That we might be granted to scream at the top of our lungs, "We have no king but Caesar?" And with our ugly refrain repeating inside of Him, this rejected God stumbles on to the place of execution. And as they stretch out His naked frame and pin Him to that cross, with every thud of the mallet upon those nails the question He came to earth to ask is hammered out. "Will you be Mine?" "Will you be Mine?" "Will you be Mine?"

Steve Bietz, Pastor, Morganton Seventh day Adventist Church.



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

God

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

Jesus

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

The Holy Spirit

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

The Bible

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

Humanity

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

Eternity & Eternal Security

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

Salvation

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



Lessons Learned

By Glenda Ward
McDowell County



“Be still and know that I am God” Psalms 46:10

When feeling rejected or unseen, when you find yourself uncertain of the future and changes you are facing and changes yet to come ...Intentionally turn to God. There are lessons to be learned in the waiting in God’s timing that can be put into practice instead of panicking. God gently whispers we must decrease, become less, so He can become more in our lives, in times of our troubles and trials. What does it take for us to decrease in heart and mind? It begins with quieting our mind and soul: “Be still and know that I am God”. God is our refuge and our strength. When we look to God relenting in His Will for our life; we will discover deeper issues that take us from living with healthy expectations to feeling the weight of things like fear, insecurity, pride, comparison, and, yes, doubt. It takes intentional effort every day to identify the areas that are pulling us away from God, and begin to make the necessary changes needed to turn back to Him. Regardless of how the weights of negative issues overwhelm us; if we keep our eyes focused on everything – and everyone around us, instead of directing our gaze toward God, we can never hear God’s voice inviting us to our next best step.

An overflow of our heart is how we speak – to others and ourselves – it’s a reflection of what is in our heart, and our following our thoughts. Hearts filled with God, grace, and the gospel bear good fruit in thought, word, and action. Hearts that are in the grips of the world and focused on the expectations and demands of the world will bear unhealthy fruit. (Reference Luke 6:45). But it’s through salvation and God’s help we are transformed by the renewing of our mind. This transformation in our life can make the difference between just surviving and thriving in life. (Reference Romans 12:2).

Satan doesn’t need to destroy us, only distract us, to keep us from fulfilling the plans God has for us. What better way than for Satan to fill our hearts and minds with the things we think we need to be doing when in reality we are missing out on the fulfilling work God has for us?

As things in life feel uncertain and we are running on empty, pray to God ...being honest about your doubts with other people will help you give God the glory as we show our dependence on Him to others. We don’t always know our next step in direction of what we feel is really unclear, but we should focus on God and follow Him! Just be still and wait on Him until He shows you the way. Swap uncertainty for contentment creating new thoughts and pathways that transforms our mind and will keep our heart focused totally on God. Make an intentional effort every day to identify areas where Satan is pulling you away from God and make the necessary changes to turn back to Him. It matters so much! You may be the very person someone is looking at for them to know it is ok to say yes to what God has in His plan for them. Watching you learn to embrace and experience more of what God has for you will influence others to experience God’s way in their life.

It is only by being still and knowing that He is God. Quietly, intentionally choosing to hear God, making time to spend studying His Word and time in prayer that we can begin to embrace a life of less guilt, less fear, and doubt. Receive more freedom, contentment, and joy in your life. Be willing to dig deeper and uncover the root of the reason you struggle to hear God speak to you. Hearing God speak to you is the greatest contentment anyone will ever experience. Seeds of doubt are planted in our hearts and minds – by others or by ourselves – and this prepares a pathway for the enemy. If we keep these doubts, fears, and struggles to ourselves, we give them room to enter our hearts and minds and put down roots. One should not be afraid or ashamed of the feeling of doubt and questions we have. Don’t keep your hearts and minds closed off. Instead, live-in awe of a God who knows your name and loves us more than we can possibly comprehend. There will be times and seasons when we have absolutely no idea what God is doing. We doubt our direction and what or how to continue. When this happens take time to quiet your heart and mind. “Be still and know that I am God”. Take it all to God, and ask Him to help you during this time and season of your life to grow closer to Him, to get to know Him better. Then, in God’s time when He reveals your next step and gives you clarity in direction, you will not only be alert and prepared, but you will be much stronger in your Christian faith than ever before. It is with a shield of faith and the Word of God that we stay rooted in our faith and connected to God.

Create a space to encounter God in the quiet.
Come before God with your whole heart in prayer.

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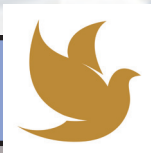
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“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace: that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation: that saith unto Zion. Thy God reigneth!”

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

"Home of Tri County Christian School"

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

Berry Chapel Baptist Church

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

Pastor - Steve Williams

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

*Where Everybody is Somebody
And Jesus Christ is Lord!*

The Rock Church

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

Pastor - Billy Chapman

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

*Come Join Us
Tent Revival 2020*

Grassy Creek Baptist Church

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

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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Gospel of Jesus Christ!
www.marionnc.adventistchurch.org

First Baptist Church of Spruce Pine

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

**Dr. Rocky Branch
Senior Pastor**

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

Great Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church

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

Pastor Barry MaHorney

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

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

A Bible-believing Fellowship
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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 Richard Schilling

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

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

Newland Christian Church

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

Pastor - Phillip Greene

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

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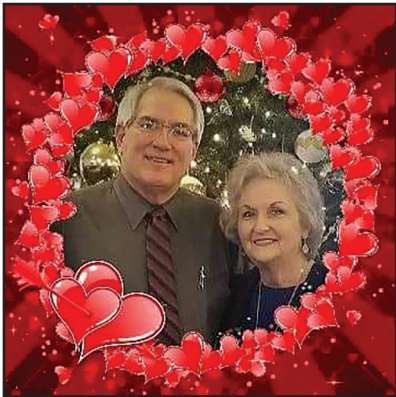
Berry Chapel Baptist Church

Something to Think About

By Steve Williams
Mitchell County

According to what the Bible says I have hit the jackpot. The Bible Says in Proverbs 18:22 *“Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD.”* I have truly been blessed with a good wife. So according to this verse, I have been double blessed. I not only have a good wife, I have also obtained favor with God. We know that God created Adam and placed him in the Garden of Eden, He saw that it was not good for Adam to be alone. God recognized man’s need for a lifetime companion. Therefore, He lovingly crafted woman and brought her to Adam. From that point on, every man would have to find or search for a wife for himself. When a man finds a good wife, he finds the good treasure that God designed for him. Good describes that which is pleasing to God, beneficial to life, and abundantly enjoyable. So when a man finds a good wife who loves him, he should recognize that she is a wonderful gift presented to him by God. She should be the most cherished, precious treasure in his life. And I want you to know that my wife, Beverly, truly is a precious treasure to me.

Mesmerized, Awestruck, Overwhelmed, Stunned, Astonished, Dumbfounded, are some words that describe how I feel about God’s gift to me through my wife Beverly. I know that God has blessed me with a good wife, but He has also blessed me with my best friend. And the reason I say that is because there is not another person I really want to hang out with more than I do my wife. We got married I when was 18 and she was 21. She has stood by me faithfully for 43 years come March the 11th 2021. And through those years we have faced many hurdles, to say the least, but with God’s help, we have been able to cross each one that has come our way. She has always supported my decisions, the good ones, and also stood by me in the bad ones. She has never tried to change me from who I was, but she prayed to God for Him to make me the man I am today, and for that, I will be forever grateful. Other than God saving my soul, Beverly is the greatest asset that I possess. She is the greatest mom, grandmother, friend, and pastor wife, that I could have ever asked for. I don’t know who said this but I know that it is so true. “ No man succeeds without a good woman behind him. Wife or mother, if it is both, he is twice blessed indeed.” And dear friends I have been twice blessed by an almighty God. I want to thank the Lord for putting two

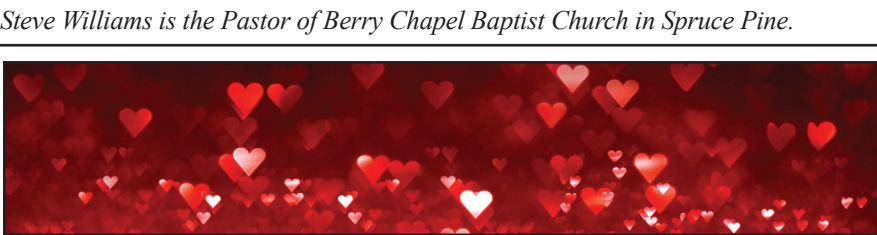


great women in my life for me to enjoy and to learn from.
If you read this, I bet some of you are saying, he must have messed up and is trying to get on his wife’s good side. No that is not the reason at all. As I get older I realize how thankful I should be for having a Godly, God-fearing wife. And I just want everyone to know how blessed I am to have such a wonderful wife and best friend to live out my life with.
Men if you have a great wife please let her know. Tell her, and show her, and February the 14th is a day set aside to show the one you love how much that you love them. So take the time to let her know how important she is to you.

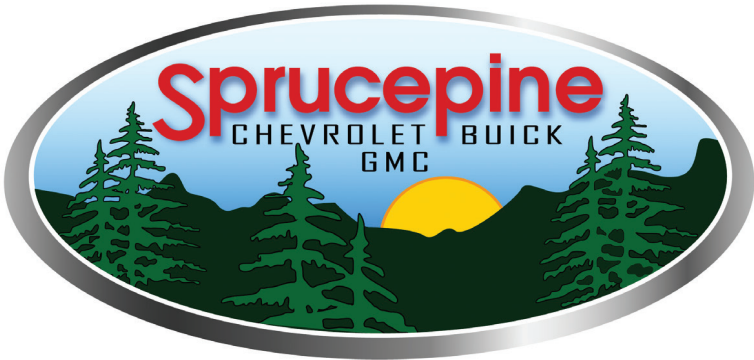
- Words of Wisdom:**
- Of all the home remedies, a good wife is best. N/A
 - Daniel Boone said all you need for happiness is a good gun, a good horse, and a good wife.
 - A happy wife is a happy life. Gavin Rossdale
 - Let the wife make the husband glad to come home, and let him make her sorry to see him leave. Martin Luther

- Words of Humor:**
- New Found Respect
- These three guys were talking. Two of them are talking about the amount of control they have over their wives, while the third guy remains quiet. After a while, one of the first two turns to the third and says, "Well, what about you, what sort of control do you have over your wife?"
 - The third fellow puffs out his chest and says, "Well, I'll tell you. Just the other night my wife came to me crawling on her hands and knees."
 - The first two guys were amazed! Their eyes are wide and they have a newfound respect for this guy. "Wow! What happened then?" they asked.
 - The third fellow sighed and uttered, "She said, 'Get out from under that bed and fight like a man!'"

Something to think about:
A man told me after 45 years of marriage, when he has an argument with his wife, if we don't agree, we will do what she wants. But, when we agree, we do what I want.



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



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POEM

By Joy Baldwin
Madison County

YOUR LOVE

How lovely is Your song oh Lord
So tender from above
It's sweet to know Your spirit
As peaceful as a dove.

Fresh as a flower in sunshine
Clean as the spring waters flow
Soft as the rain in the morning
White as the new-fallen snow.

No cloud can ever cover
The glory of Your face
As a beautiful horse at battle
With reins of love and grace.

Tho time could bring all wisdom
Of earth and heaven above
Nothing here could ever change
The wonders of YOUR LOVE.



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 Weaverbill, "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.

"Something to Think About" -
Signs---Signs---Signs! - Matthew 24:3

By Dennis Love
McDowell County



Years ago there was a song out that said; "Signs, signs everywhere a sign, blocking out the scenery breaking my mind; Do this, don't do that can't you read the signs?" The Five Man Electrical Band recorded it in 1971. Ever since the disciples asked Jesus this question in Matthew 24:3, people have been looking for signs of His second coming. When I began in ministry, Hal Lindsey wrote a book entitled; "The Late Great Planet Earth." It sold millions of copies. Lindsey implied that since Israel (symbolized by the fig tree in Matthew 24:32) had become a nation in 1948, this generation will by no means pass away until all of these things take place" (v34). He implied that Jesus might return by 1988 since $1948 + 40 = 1988$. But 1988 came and went without Jesus parting the skies.

Clearly, just like the disciples who asked this question of the Lord more than 2,000 years ago, we are fascinated by signs of His coming. However, did you know that the Bible actually speaks of three major comings of the Lord? First, the coming of Christ, born of a virgin in Bethlehem was foretold centuries before the Baby was born. Next, the prophet Joel foretold the coming of the Holy Spirit (who is God) and that prophecy was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came to indwell the believers, never to leave us and to empower us for service. The third and only major coming yet to be fulfilled is the return of Jesus in the air for His church which sets the stage for the end of the world. So what are the signs of the things that will take place before His coming?

(1) Watch for a Polluted Pulpit—In v11, Jesus said that immediately before His return, "many false prophets will rise up and deceive many." In other words, there will be a turning away from the truth. We are right now living in such a day.

(2) Watch for a Particular Place—That place is Israel. The Bible says that before Jesus returns, the tiny nation of Israel will be reborn as a major player on the world stage. In Amos 9:14; God promised to bring back the captives of My people Israel into their own homeland. That began taking place in 1948 and today we see the Jews flooding back into Israel from all over the world and they now can call Jerusalem their capital.

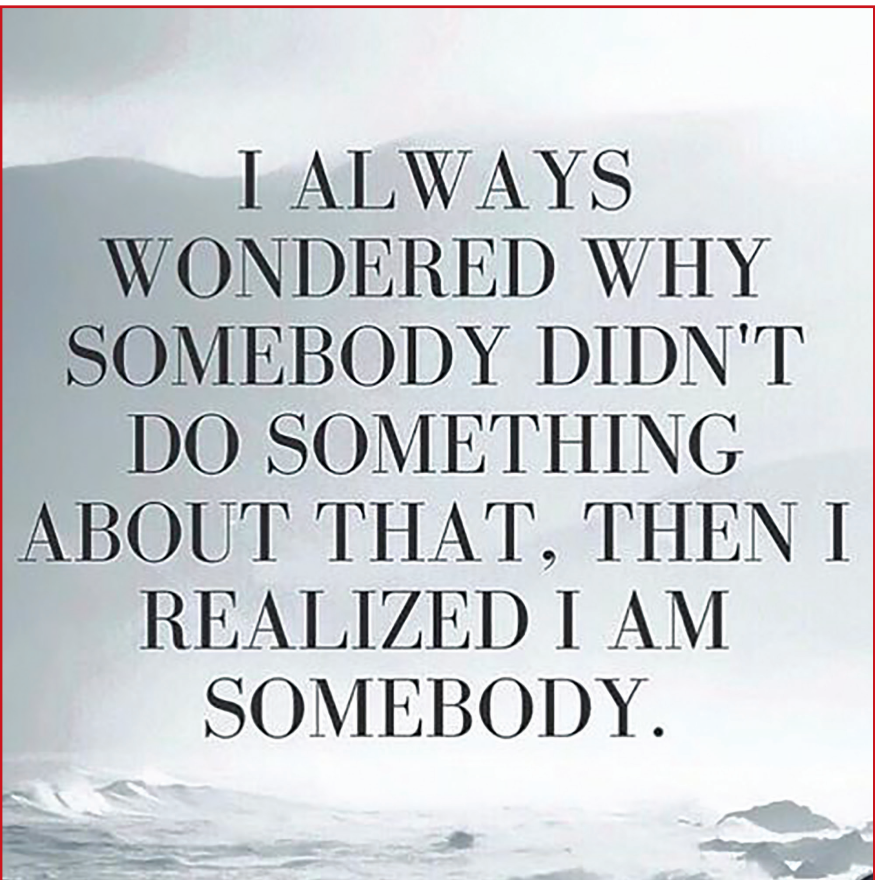
(3) Watch for a Powerful Coalition of Nations—The Bible indicates that before Jesus returns, a powerful coalition of nations will emerge in Europe. Daniel referred to them as being the "ten horns" of the ancient Roman Empire. (Daniel 7:15-25). From this new world, the order will emerge the essence of a one-world power with a common currency. Sounds very familiar does it not? This prophecy seems to be unfolding right before our eyes today.

(4) Watch for a Popular Politician—According to the Bible, shortly before Jesus returns, an electrifying leader will emerge on the world scene. He is called the Antichrist (1 John 2:18). This charismatic leader and orator will promise a world of peace. He will be filled with promises. He will speak of freeing the world of war and speak of solutions to solve the economic and political problems of the world. Much of the world will follow after him. There have many such leaders down through the years, not the least of whom was Adolf Hitler in World War II. It could be that since Satan does not know the timing of the Lord's return, someone is always on the stage who could fulfill the role of Antichrist.

(5) Watch for a Pluralistic Religion—The Bible predicts that before Jesus returns, a new religion will emerge that seeks to unite the world under one banner (Revelation 17:1-18). This has already infiltrated the Western world through the media and much of the educational process. Listen to the opening prayer of Representative Emanuel Clever that he prayed on Sunday, January 3rd to begin the 117th Congress and you will see we are there.

Jesus said when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near (Luke 21:28). In light of this verse and the events going on in our world today, it just might be time for Christians to stop looking for signs and start listening for a shout! Now that's something to think about! "For the Lord, Himself will descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18).

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

What Faith Is?

By John McCoury
Roan Mountain, Tennessee



Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see... And without faith, it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him. Hebrews 11:1,6 there is an element that is regarded as essential to the Christian life, and that is faith. It is what makes the Christian different from the non-Christian. Henry David Thoreau, once said, "If I seem to walk out of step with others, it is because I am listening to another drum beat." That is an exact description of faith: Christians walk as though listening to another drum beat. This chapter centers on what faith is. Faith is greatly misunderstood and there are many peculiar ideas of what it is. Faith is not positive thinking. Faith is not a hunch that is followed. Faith is not hoping for the best, hoping that everything will turn out alright. Faith is not a feeling of optimism. Faith is none of these things, though all of them have been identified as faith. What is faith then? Faith begins with things hoped for, that is, it starts with a sense of discontent. You can never have much faith unless you are dissatisfied with the way you are now and are longing for something better. That is why, all through the Bible, the great enemy of faith is a complacent spirit, an attitude of self-satisfaction with the status quo. But if you are dissatisfied, if you are looking for something better, then you are in a position to exercise faith. Then comes the conviction of things not seen — not only a desire for something better but an awareness of something else: That is faith. It means we become aware that we are surrounded by an invisible kingdom, that which is seen is not the whole explanation of life, there are realities which cannot be seen or touched, and yet which are as real and as vital as anything we can see. This is so beautifully seen in the words and teachings of our Lord Jesus. He speaks of God the Father as though he were standing right there. He does not see the universe as an impersonal machine, grinding and clanking along, as science so frequently does, but he sees it as an invisible, but very real, spiritual kingdom.

Again Verse 6 says the same: *“He that comes to God must believe that he is, that God exists.”* Some say That's the hard part. No, it is not. The easiest thing in the world to do is to believe that God exists. It requires effort to disbelieve. Everyone starts out believing God exists. It is only when they are carefully trained to disbelieve that any come to the place of declaring God does not exist. Light from God is streaming in on every side and all we need to do is open our eyes to see it. That is why children have no problem with this. The concept of God ought to be one of the most difficult ideas for children to grasp since God cannot be seen. But children have no difficulty at all in believing that God exists. Are you a person of faith? Is there a hunger for something better in your life? Is there a conviction that God is ready to answer your cry? In fact, He has already answered it, in Christ. Are you ready then to commit yourself to obey what He says, to accept His verdict, His viewpoint, as the true one despite the cries that will pour into your ear from every side, saying this is wrong? That is what faith is, and if you are that kind of person you can join this parade of faith. Father, thank you for this revelation of what faith is today. How I feel the need for it, as I live amid a confused and bewildering society. Grant me the simple faith of a child. Teach me to live according to it, though it is through difficulties, trials, heartache, and tears. Are you hopeful for that which you hunger for -- your not-yet-completed maturity in Christ in your life? Will you rest in the indwelling Christ to work out His life in your salvation, bringing what He has promised to completion? *“The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.”* -- 1 Thes. 5:25

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



“Please pray for our newly elected government officials. Pray that they will seek God as they lead our country.”

Being Transformed into What We Adore

By Michael Cloy
McDowell County



The Apostle Paul understood what it meant to adore God. He encouraged the Philippian Christians to imitate him as he imitated Christ (Philippians 3:17). Paul understood being made in God's image and likeness (Genesis 1:26) as the reason why we as Christians have a Spirit generated desire to adore God and the ability to imitate Christ. *"Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."* Ephesians 5:1-2

By God's creative design, Adam and Eve found deep soul satisfaction in imitating and finding themselves in their Creator's identity. Through the admiration of God and his divine attributes, Adam and Eve adored God and worshipped God. This is because God made us to become what we adore. God created us to become what we worship. When we worship the Triune God, we find our identity in God the Son. *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."* 2 Corinthians 5:17.

Unfortunately, once sin entered the world through Adam and Eve, our adoration for God died. Romans 1:18-25 states that all men suppress the truth of God and exchange the truth of God for a lie. Said another way, all men suppress God's adoration and exchange the adoration of God with something other than to Him. In our sin, we worship ourselves and the objects in this world and not the true and living God. *"But the LORD is the true God; he is the living God and the everlasting King. At his wrath the earthquakes, and the nations cannot endure his indignation."* Jeremiah 10:10

The good news of the Gospel is God restores us to worship in the righteousness of Christ when Jesus saves us from our sins and the indignation or anger of God the Father. Once we are restored to God through Jesus Christ we no longer suppress God's worship and exchange it for the worship of ourselves. Through God-centered worship, God transforms us into the image and identity of God the Son. 2 Corinthians 3:18 describes what happens to us when we worship. *"And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit."*

At Landis OPC, we admire what Christ has accomplished in each of us. Therefore, we appreciate each other because we know that each of us is being renewed in Christ. When people really get to know us, we hope that they will see how deeply we love our Savior. We rejoice and worship God, knowing that He is progressively transforming us into the image of His Son by His Spirit. We invite you to come worship with us and become remade into the image of Christ by the power of the Triune God whom we adore.

If you would like to know more about Landis OPC, you can see who we are in our welcome video found at vimeo.com/491464277. You can also contact Elder Mike Cloy at opc mikecloy@gmail.com.

Mike Cloy is an Ordained Ruling Elder on the Session of Landis, OPC. You can contact him at opc mikecloy@gmail.com



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Redeemed Free Will Baptist Church

The Voice of God

By Patricia Jackson
McDowell County

On Christmas morning, our nation was shocked as we received news of a massive explosion in Nashville, Tennessee. One of the officers involved in evacuating nearby residents was Officer Wells. The news media quoted Officer Wells as saying, "He had started back toward the RV when the voice of God "told him to turn around." He immediately changed course. The explosion went off seconds later, with significant destruction to the surrounding businesses and apartments. Officer Wells suffered hearing loss.

You might wonder why the voice of God spoke to him. Was it to bring safety, salvation, perhaps heal his backsliding? Whatever God's reason, we know he trusted the voice of God, and the officer's life was spared. He then openly and publically gave God the Glory. Proverbs 3:5, 6 tells us, *"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct his paths."*

When did God first speak to man? Genesis 1:28 *"And God blessed them (Adam and Eve), and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply."* From that time on, God walked and spoke with Adam frequently. John 1:1 tells us, *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."* God's conversations with Noah were very specific as he revealed his plans to flood the earth because of man's great sins. Moses and the children of Israel were totally dependent upon God as he led them out of Egypt, feed them, and brought them to the Promised Land

God can speak through supernatural manifestations. He spoke to Moses through a burning bush (Ex. 3:1-4) and Gideon through a fleece (Judg.6:37-40). God spoke to Saul through a bright light (Acts 9:1-5) and even spoke to Balaam through a donkey (Num. 22:1-35). God also spoke to the child Samuel three times. *"And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him and did let none of his words fail to the ground."* (1 Samuel 3:19). *"God can speak through the voice of a great multitude, a voice of many waters and a voice of mighty thundering"*. (Rev. 19:6)

Amos 4:13 says that God makes known his ways to us through our thoughts. In Jeremiah 29:11, God's word tells us that *"his thoughts are towards us, thoughts of peace, not of evil, to give us an unexpected end."* God can speak through dreams and visions, as shown in the lives of Joseph, Solomon, Jacob, Peter, John, and Paul.

The good news is that God does communicate with us, and yes, you can "know" that you hear his voice. When he speaks, he wants us to listen and heed his words. There is no more tremendous honor than to communicate with an all-knowing, all-caring God. It is by God's grace we hear him.

1 Kings 19 tells us that The Lord spoke to Elijah in a still small voice. The Lord was not in the wind, the earthquake or fire, and after the fire, he spoke: *"in a still small voice."* This scripture reminds me of a precious hymn, "He Whispers Sweet Peace to Me," written by William Morgan Ramsey (1872 – 1939). V. 4 *"He speaks in a still, small voice we are told, A voice that dispels all fear; And when I'm in doubt or troubled in soul, That still small voice I can hear. He whispers sweet peace to me"*.

"And he shall seek me and find me when ye shall search for me with all your heart, and I will be found of you, saith the Lord." (Jeremiah 29:13)

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.



High Country Prison Ministry

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)

During the long and painful season of COVID, the work of providing for the spiritual need continues. The demand for spiritual care has only increased during these days, particularly for the incarcerated and their families. Thankfully, provision for such demand has been steady and faithful. One such provision is the time and opportunity to explore new and creative offerings of spiritual impact for the offender population. Therefore, I am excited to make the following announcement:

Unbound Ministry is coming to AMCI! This ministry is "a well balanced and easy to use guide to deliverance and freedom" built on the work and writing of Neal Lozano, and based on Five Keys: 1. Repentance and Faith 2. Forgiveness 3. Renunciation 4. Authority 5. The Father's Blessing.

Rev. John Rice, AMCI Community Volunteer, presented this exciting opportunity, went through a long season in preparation, and has prayerfully recruited a small team trained as prayer ministers. Recently I received this update from John:

"I've been taking a refresher e-course on Unbound Ministry in preparation to train and equip prayer ministers locally for Unbound. One of the next steps will be to recruit additional people to be Unbound



prayer ministers for serving on prayer teams at AMCI. The prayer ministry will be the most important part of the program, for that is where the men will actually encounter the love and healing power of Jesus!"

When the time comes that we are able once again to invite volunteers back into the facility, we hope to have a team of 'prayer ministers' to serve on 'prayer teams' and participate in this move of God to bring reconciliation, deliverance, relief from spiritual bondage to incarcerated men. This effort requires training and equipping for volunteers in accordance with DPS policy AND within the framework of Unbound.

If you would be interested in being on an Unbound Prayer Team, please let me know as soon as possible. I will connect you to John and the small team already assembled. And we will wait to see how God Blesses the ongoing work of Unbound! Whether or not you join a prayer team, we hope that you will make this ministry effort a part of your daily prayer routine. Thank you so much and may God Bless us all as we move beyond the days of COVID and look forward to a future filled with the incredible riches found by faith in the Name of Jesus Christ!

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

Freedom of the press has always been the hallmark of our democracy, the standard by which we declared that we were a free people and had the freedom to make a decision based on correct knowledge. Today press has a different meaning than it did when the constitution was written. In the past, press were the news agencies reporting the facts of what was going on, the newspapers, then the radio, then television. Today that world has changed and technology has changed. Today we have much more direct communication based on various social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and various other platforms that allow us more direct contact, we get to communicate and hear directly from opposing sides, or we were supposed to be able to do that. That is changing before our very eyes!

The Bible tells us that the wise person does not make a decision until you have heard both sides of a situation, to do this you need to be able to hear both sides. *“He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.”* Proverbs 18:13 KJV
“He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him.” Proverbs 18:17 KJV

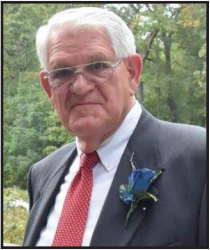
Today the “media giants” don’t only include ABC, NBC, CBS, the giant newspapers, and radio broadcast which are mostly very liberal, left-leaning operations that have become vastly more biased in their coverage. Now the social media are totally restricting who is allowed to speak. When free people are denied the opportunity to speak and be heard, they are the same as a communist country. The America where the people were allowed to make intellectually sound decisions after hearing the facts of the case is rapidly disappearing before our very eyes. Wake up America before it is too late! I don’t care what your politics are, we need to be screaming at the top of our lungs for all voices to be allowed to be heard. Our colleges are prohibiting anyone with a conservative message to even speak on the campuses, to deliver opposing sides and views and yet we continue to allow our tax dollars to support them. We the people are being deprived of our right as a free nation to make the decisions, demand that the first amendment be enforced across all platforms, in any tax-supported institutions including our colleges and universities.

If we the people don’t take a firm stand against fraud in our elections we are in the total control of a select few that will be telling us what, when, and how high. We have to have confidence that our votes will be counted fairly and without bias, without that there is total anarchy! The regulations for voting should be fair and equal, it should be mandatory that anyone casting a vote should be identified as fitting the qualifications that enable them to freely cast a ballot. When the votes can be manipulated then why even waste the time. We must be able to verify the results as being honest and true.

We are at a point in time that if we are to be free, we must demand truth and honesty in our government and our leaders. Our very foundations of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are on the line folks. Wake up before it is too late. May we all continue to be one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all!

To God be the glory.

Doug Harrell is a life-long resident of Mitchell County, Owner of Harrell Hill Farms, Inc, a member of Bear Creek Baptist Church and Publisher of the Blue Ridge Christian News.



By Brian and Katie Carter
McDowell County

Hi, we are Brian and Katie Carter. We have been in foster care for almost two years now and we have been blessed to help and love 3 different children. We are not anywhere near perfect people or perfect foster care parents but we love children! We decided to foster children because we truly have a special place in our hearts for children in need. All kids need love and children placed in foster care need it more than most. As foster care parents, we can take in a child and provide them a safe home with love and experiences that will bring joy to their lives. They can feel what it is like to just be a kid. Foster care parents are the bridge to a calm environment when the children are dealing with turmoil and uncertainty. We have 5 biological children that we love dearly. We have not adopted any children through foster care but we are open to the idea of adding to our forever family. We believe that we can show the love of Jesus to these children and we can potentially change their lives forever. That is an amazing opportunity!

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Special Days

By Nancy Malik
Avery County

February does have many special days. Groundhog Day, February 2nd, celebrates that we are halfway through winter. Two presidents celebrate their birthdays, George Washington (2-22-1732) and Abraham Lincoln (2-12-1809). 1 John 4:8 says *”whoever does not love does not know God; because God is love.”* He created us and loves each of us! His plan of Creation with perfect earth did not at first look like it ended well. But in the end, Jesus Christ came to earth out of love to show us the way to the Lord and Heaven. Jesus was God's plan for our future. But Jesus, after three perfect years on earth, died a sacrificial death, with our salvation as the plan for eternity for those who seek Him and are saved. Jesus had a great earthly father, but His Father was the reason He came to earth, to bring us to live with Him. Many of us have and will accept His offer on the cross, resurrection. and His return to Heaven to wait for us there! That is Love and the Gift of Gifts!

St. Valentine was a historical man of God. He wrote letters of love to incarcerated Christians in Rome when the days of death by wild lions were common. Caesar expected total devotion in those days in the Roman world. The Roman Empire covered all of the known worlds at that time. Anyone who had allegiance to anything else was killed. In Rome, it was death by the lions. Valentine gave out letters of love to the prisoners awaiting death. This became a custom that is still followed today. The followers of Jesus were hunted down and fed to the lions. It was a sport that packed the Colosseum in Rome for the citizens to cheer on the lions. Many of these believers died as they praised Jesus because they knew He would be with them soon! The precious notes of St. Valentine extend unto today to share the love with others. They are sent around the world to share the love with family and friends!

Love is a gift from Our Lord and Our Savior! Sharing love with others is a command and a promise from above. February is Love Month. Our world needs the love of God more than ever. As Christians, we need to 'love others' as ourselves and so much more. That is my hope for this year; to practice loving others, including the unloved!

May February be a month full of love for you and yours! John 13:34 says *“a new command I give you love one as I have loved you!”* What a beautiful command to share His love to all. These days are interesting and the world is scared. But His love breaks through that barrier as well! Let us all try to reach out in love and understanding and stand firm in His Love!!

Valentine's Day is another way to share love with others. God is love!

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.



Where Is Thy Sting?

By Jim Huskins
McDowell County



The Bible is filled with the admonition to read and understand God’s word. *“Thy Word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against Thee.”* (Psalm 119:11) *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”* (2 Timothy 3:16) *“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”* (2 Timothy 2:15) Jesus resisted the devil because he knew the Bible. We cannot properly love and follow the Son of God until we become intimate with the Word of God.

One clear message of Scripture is that Jesus died to save our souls. In Hebrew, “soul” is a body united with a spirit. *“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.”* (Genesis 2:7) Jesus died to save our spirits and our bodies.

God made it clear to Adam that if he did not obey, he would die. In Genesis 3:19, God defines death: *“By the sweat of your brow will you eat food until you return to the ground, since from it were you taken. For you are dust, and to dust will you return.”* When we die, we return to dust. This message runs throughout scripture: *“When You hide Your face, they are dismayed; when You take away their breath, they die and return to their dust.”* (Psalm 104:29) *“For what happens to the children of man and what happens to the beasts is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts, for all is vanity. All go to one place. All are from the dust, and to dust all return.”* (Ecclesiastes 3:19-20) Daniel 12:2 ties our return to dust with the coming resurrection: *“Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake—some to everlasting life, and others to shame and everlasting contempt.”*

When most believers say “soul” they are actually referring to “spirit.” They believe—because they have been taught—that when we die, our spirit leaves our body and goes directly to heaven in conscious form. This notion is not taught by the Bible. It contradicts a core message of Jesus: the resurrection of the body.

Not understanding what happens when we die leads many to misinterpret Ecclesiastes 12:7. *“Then the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.”* Of course, our spirits return to God. He is the author of life. The Bible does not teach, however, that our spirits exist in Heaven in conscious form. That would remove any need for resurrection. Jesus died to save our souls: both spirit and body. The resurrection of our bodies in glorified form will take place when Jesus returns. Until then, we are dust.

Jesus makes this clear while speaking with Nicodemus: *“No one has gone up into heaven except the One who came down from heaven—the Son of Man.”* (John 3:13) No one has ascended into heaven!

Why does the modern Church universally believe and teach that disembodied spirits pop off to Heaven when Jesus insists that He is the only one who has ever made that trip? The early Church made no such claim. The Apostles and those they disciples joyfully proclaimed the resurrection of the body. This notion of disembodied spirits floating around came from the heresy known as Gnosticism. Specifically, it was proclaimed by the infamous second-century heretic, Marcion. Gnostics taught that all matter is evil and that God cannot be associated with matter. They claimed that Jesus did not have a body. In their view, He was merely a visible spirit—a phantom.

Most modern believers can easily see that this idea makes a mockery of the incarnation. Jesus could not know the human condition if He never walked as we walk. He could not die for our sins if He had no body. He could not have been resurrected if no part of Him died. Why, then, is it so difficult for us to understand that the notion of conscious, disembodied human spirits makes a mockery of the resurrection. Early church leaders including Justin Martyr and Tertullian defended the Biblical doctrine of the resurrection of the body. Modern believers mostly identify with the heretics.

The Gnostics might not have fallen into such grievous error if they understood the Hebrew Scriptures. Instead, they patterned their doctrine on a Greco-Roman view of the afterlife. This pagan perspective venerated gods of the dead. They believed that no one dies, they just shed their bodies. They taught that every man’s goal was to be freed from the constraints of the body. Jesus died to save both body and spirit.

The message of scripture is clear. *“Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ... For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, “‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.”’”* (Acts 2:29, 34-35) If David did not ascend into heaven, then who could?

The enemies of Christ will become His footstool on the glorious day of His return—Resurrection Day. Those who do not accept salvation by grace through faith will eventually be reunited with their bodies, but they will wish that they had not. More on this topic next time.

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.

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Sin is a Reproach to Our Nation

By Joe Sturz
Shenandoah, Virginia



When people do right they are lifted up and honored by other nations. But when they do wrong as a nation they bring disgrace upon themselves (Proverbs 14:34). Our country as a nation has been increasingly sinful as God has withdrawn His manifest presence and removed His restraint (Romans 1:18-32). This is seen in increasing lawlessness in our:

- people of lustful thoughts and imaginations acted out in adultery and sexual immorality of all kinds (Galatians 5:19),
- churches of false teaching, conflict, and division (Galatians 5:20),
- ethnic groups of anger, strife, and violence, in and between them (Galatians 5:20),
- cities of alcohol and drug addictions, anger, violence, and murders (Galatians 5:21),
- godless government at all levels seeking more power (Romans 1:29-32).

So let us weep over the disgraceful state of affairs that our country has fallen into. And let us as individuals humble ourselves and take responsibility for our sins of rebellion and neglect. Thus admitting that we have contributed to this terrible situation by our personal lawbreaking of God's law. Let us confess and repent of our personal sin and seek God's mercy and forgiveness for ourselves and our nation (II Chronicles 7:14; I John 1:9).

Brother Joe "weeping for our nation" Sturz January 17, 2021, www.sturzchristiancounseling.com Sharing what the Lord has taught me through: His Word, my mistakes, failures, and successes and 47+ years as a Biblical counselor applying all of the Bible to all of life. Look for my short daily morning Bible counseling messages on Facebook or by request through email at joesturz80@gmail.com to be put on my daily email list.

Coming to Jesus Christ? (Matthew 11:28) Then I pray that you will pray the Lord will enable you to pray a prayer like this from the heart as you repent of your sins: *"Heavenly Father, Please help me to repent and love You with all my heart by more and more: putting You first, removing idols, respecting Your name, and worshiping You and resting on the Christian Sabbath (Luke 10:27; Ex. 20:3-11)". "Lord, please help me repent and love my neighbor more and more by: honoring authority You put in my life, putting off unforgiveness, hate and sex sin, and stealing, lying, slandering, and or coveting what my neighbor has (Exodus 20:12-17). Help me repent and change my ways"*

"In Jesus name through what He did on the cross when He took the place of true believers to pay for their sins (John 16:23-24)." "Amen."

Here are the ways to build your faith: confess Christ (Matthew 10:32; Romans 10:9-10) by getting baptized (Acts 2:38; Matthew 28:19) and join a Bible-believing church (Hebrews 10:25; Matthew 18:20) read the Bible daily (Acts 17:11 and pray (Ephesians 6:18) and share your faith with others (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 1:8).

Joe Sturz, a Christian counselor at Sturz Christian Counseling Service now living in Page County, www.sturzchristiancounseling.com ministering to people with problems and sharing what the Lord has taught me through: His Word, my mistakes, failures and successes and 47+ years as a Biblical counselor applying all of the Bible to all of life in daily messages on Facebook and email.

Foundation Fathers and How They Served Our Country—Thomas Stone

By David Streater, PhD
Burke County



This is an American education moment concerning our Founding Fathers and how they served our Country. Thomas Stone was born in 1743, coming of age in Charles County, Maryland. As an adolescent who enjoyed learning, his father reluctantly allowed Thomas to travel 10 miles to school. At the Blaize-del School, Thomas studied Greek and Latin. During the 1760s, he borrowed money to read law under Thomas Johnson, a prominent attorney in Annapolis. In 1764, Stone was admitted to the Maryland Bar.

By the early 1770s, Stone was a budding attorney known for his quiet, yet strong way he opposed British authority over the colonies. Being on the local Committee of Correspondence, led him to other key positions. On August 2, 1776, he signed the Declaration of Independence and continued to advocate for a peaceful resolution with Britain because he detested war.

Thomas was elected to the Continental Congress and served on the committee that authored the Articles of Confederation. In 1787, he was elected to represent Maryland at the Constitutional Convention but did not attend. Instead, he remained at home to care for his wife, who was chronically ill because of smallpox. Unfortunately, she died several months later. Being greatly in love with Margaret, Thomas became deeply depressed and died four months after his wife, when he was 44.

Thomas Stone was a signer of the Declaration of Independence who is remembered as the "Quiet Man Who Hated War" and "The Signer Who Died of a Broken Heart". At 33, he was the youngest member of the Maryland delegation to vote for independence on July 4, 1776.

Please visit your Charters of Freedom setting in most western North Carolina counties. 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 the Charters of Freedom in the National Archives, Washington, DC. Please visit our website (ChartersofFreedom.com) to learn more about our existing settings.

Teachers are encouraged to contact Dr. Streater for information and complementary student education materials to enhance experiential field trips to a Charter of Freedom settings. Everyone is welcome and urged to obtain a personalized engraved legacy paver for placement at their Charters of Freedom setting. Please contact Dr. Streater (david.streater@gmail.com) for an engraved legacy paver and free educational materials.

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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Hope that Help is on the Way!!!

By Christy Young
Mitchell County

Wow! How assuring to hear that help is on the way in times of disaster or distress? It's a sense of security, safety, and comfort to know that help will soon be arriving. This past year has definitely created fear and insecurity throughout our country. If you are like me, I have been overwhelmed with emotions and the uncertainty of what the future holds for my family. I have begun to pray and ask for God's guidance, comfort, and peace. He has revealed himself over and over. God is always good! Life may be hard, but we have hope in Christ Jesus. As we travel through this life, it is often easy to focus on the trials we are faced with.... but I was reminded that my blessings way exceed any hardship that I have ever faced. We serve a mighty God that is always available and has a willingness to work in our lives. Hebrews 4:16 says, *"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace in the time of need."* The door to the throne is always WIDE open to God's children, us. We can come anytime, we don't need an appointment. Wow, that means that we can walk straight to the throne of grace when we need help. We have a direct line to the Father! I have realized that I am weak, and I am in such need of God's strength in both the good times and bad. But, it is so great to know that in our time of despair that we serve a God that is always faithful, compassionate, and able to calm our storms. My son Hunter recently reminded me that God changed Saul from a man that persecuted Christians to a man of great faith and a desire to spread the gospel. He is the same God, capable of miracles today. I do not know what the future will bring, but I do know with complete confidence that I serve a God that will hold my hand to the end. God promised that He will never leave us nor forsake us. So, no matter what storm, hardship, or trial that you may be facing...Our God is always near. Find your strength and refuge in HIM and believe in faith that help is on the way.

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.



Rooted and Grounded

By Caron Cline
Burke County

February has long been celebrated as the month of love for couples worldwide. According to Eat Out Eat Well, \$448 million is spent on candy during the season of Valentine's Day. 250 million roses are also produced for this special day in the US alone. Thousands upon thousands of songs have been written to express a feeling that must be love. Clearly, love is the universal language. Webster defines love as "strong affection for another arising out of kinship or personal ties; attraction based on sexual desire: affection and tenderness felt by lovers". Sadly, millions of people who once expressed deep love for a friend or spouse suddenly realized this was no longer the case. Those wonderful and euphoric feelings had gradually been replaced by feelings of apathy, boredom and sometimes deep resentment.

The foundation of our relationships cannot be built on the shifting sand of that which our world defines as love. The secular world pursues only the fleshly aspect of love, one which fulfills the selfish desires of another. When one individual no longer validates another's feelings there is no reason to continue the relationship. These feelings of love were once quite real but were based solely in the temporal and therefore lacked a solid foundation. Regardless of how often love has come and gone, the average person never tires of the search for more. The problem arises when the foundation for the next relationship is poured with the same weak ingredients. The first step to success in relationships is to accept the original Lover's definition. John 15:13 says, *"Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends"*.

We must also build on this foundation; selflessness. On the surface, this appears to be an impossible task and definitely one that will require supernatural intervention. Before the foundation of the world, this complex issue was resolved. *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life"*. These words confirm our understanding of God's definition of love which is based in self-sacrifice. Jesus was also willing to empty Himself of His divine glory and His position of authority to enter time and space. The Creator of the Universe, Who spoke everything into being, humbled Himself and became a helpless baby who could not even speak a word. That is love. At the age of 30, Jesus began a public ministry, preaching about the kingdom of God, casting out demons and healing the sick. He expressed the heart and the love of God through His compassion. Then He expressed the final and greatest act of love as He died for the sins of the whole world on the cross. The sacrifice and selflessness of Jesus is the necessary foundation for eternal life. Only as we receive His death, burial and resurrection in exchange for our sin are we empowered to love others with a sacrificial love. Romans 5:5 says, *"... because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us"*. After receiving Christ as our Savior, the Holy Spirit indwells us and with Him comes the selfless, sacrificial and immeasurable love of God. Paul offers even greater news in his letter to the Ephesians. Chapter 3, verses 16-19 says, *"...that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God"*.

Notice the phrase, 'with all the saints', a principle that teaches the necessity of assembling and fellowshiping with brothers and sisters in Christ. Only as we come together as one, will we comprehend and experience this boundless love of God. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the very fullness of God is poured into our hearts, flowing forth to reveal Jesus to a world tainted by a false understanding of love; a love that is often short-lived and insincere, based on circumstances and emotions. Our love is secure, for He is anchored beyond the veil of this world, seated at the right hand of God. From this moment and throughout eternity, His love will never fail!

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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The Perfect Law of Liberty

By Alan Griffin



The only free people in this world are those who believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. The words He spoke to us in His Holy Book are ours to cherish for eternity. All else that is available here on earth can be taken away from us. If you have the Word of God in your heart it is yours even after you die. His Word is with you no matter what. They can throw you in prison, they can take all your possessions, they can kill you and bury you in a shallow grave, but they can't take the Word of God from you. It is ours! *"The Spirit of the LORd upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, To proclaim liberty to captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed."* Luke 4:18 NKJV It does not say the rich, the powerful, or the mighty. It says to set us, captives of sin, at liberty from sin. *"And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."* Therefore, if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed." John 8:32,36 NKJV

We are free to do as our heart would guide us. We have the Holy Spirit inside of us to lead us in ways of righteousness. A true believer is not looking for an opportunity to sin. Our greatest desire is to please our King and Savior. We have been called to liberty. As Christians, we are not obligated to anyone. We owe everything that we may achieve to Almighty God. We bow only before Jesus, our Savior, and King. “We are chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but now are the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.” 1 Peter 2:9-10 NKJV

We are to approach God through His Son. We don't need a building, a prayer book, an image, a denomination or its leaders, songs, sacrifices, or people talking in tongues, but through our Mediator, Jesus Christ! *"For there is God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus."* 1 Timothy 2:5 NKJV Our Heavenly Father wants us to come to Him as a son or daughter, and make our petitions known directly to Him so that he can answer our prayers according to His Word. We are living in the wonderful day of grace where Christ alone mediates our longings with His Father. We are saved through His blood, led by His spirit, and kept by His power. We, as sons and daughters of God, have liberty to go before the Father in Christ's name. We have the perfect law of liberty. *"For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues it, is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does."* James 1:23-25 NKJV

The perfect law of liberty is the Word of God. So, we do not go by way of religions, denominations, and abstract interpretations that do not stand up to the rightly divided Word of Truth. We stand with Paul the Apostle when he said, *“Let God be true, and every man a liar.”* Romans 3:4 NKJV Everything we need to know about God, eternity, heaven, and hell can be found in the perfect law of liberty. We are to abide by its Word and live a life that sets an example for others to follow Christ. We are to do everything the Spirit leads us to do, but we are to test these spirits to be sure we are following the Spirit of God. We test our callings through His Word because it answers every question, it teaches us how to live, and it warns us against false teachings. It tells us to, *“Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.”* Galatians 5:1 NKJV

Sadly, this is the age of acceptance. Everything is fashionable. Many are experimenting with every kind of foul behavior known to man. We must not mix with these people. We are not to judge, but to set a shining example for all to follow. If anyone, even an angel, preaches any other gospel than what is preached through the Bible let them be accursed. Please understand this friendship with the world is enmity with God. Those Christians who continue to go along with the crowd are God's worst enemy. They distort the truth for their own pleasure. If anyone comes to you to share with you and does not believe in the doctrine of Jesus Christ, do not let them into your home. Do not offer them any blessing, because you will be a partaker of their evil deeds.

When Adam sinned, he sent all of the creation spiraling down into slavery. Death and the curse of sin came upon all that is on earth. The animals, the plants, the atmosphere, all of us live under the curse. Thanks be to our heavenly Father the last Adam (Our King and Savior Jesus Christ) came to save that which was lost. He, being perfect in every way, took on a body of corruption so that He could pay the price for the sin of the world. ...” *The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.*” Matthew 20:28 NKJV He was tempted in all points just like we are, but He did not sin. He gave His life so that we could receive the perfect liberty of a relationship with our Father without any other interference from others. Just before He passed His spirit back to the Father He said, “It is finished!” Every aspect of the Law of God was fulfilled. The sin-debt was paid, and we were brought back into the fold of God’s family.

Whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Jesus is the chief cornerstone, and there is no other name under heaven whereby you must be saved. *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.”* Acts 16:31 NKJV Yes, we preach the gospel to those who are heartbroken,

to those who are blind, to those who are oppressed, and to set at liberty those who suffer in this cruel world. We have been given the perfect law of liberty to be able to enter in the presence of God through our faith in Jesus Christ, not by any other man's means. We are truly free.

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

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The Inspiring Word

The Growing Gospel Seed -
Mark 4:26-29

By Terry Cheek
McDowell County



Let’s be very honest, spreading the Gospel can be a discouraging thing. Often, it seems like the efforts are ineffective and fruitless. Preachers who preach the inerrant Word of God frequently see little or no response from either saint or sinner. The message of eternal life is often shared with those who are dead in sin and they reject it outright. The light of salvation is given to those in darkness and they prefer darkness to the light. Many of God’s men labor in the Word for hours, seeking the message of God for His people, and then when the message is preached, no one seems to be moved. The glories of Christ and the Bible are preached to those who profess to know Jesus and often they sit there and look at the preacher as if he is sharing the most boring news imaginable. Honestly, this can be very discouraging.

Some of you are actively sharing your faith with your friends, family, and co-workers. When you do, you are often ignored, ridiculed, or even attacked. The people you love and desire to see saved seem as though they could care less about what you have to say to them about the condition of their souls. That too is very discouraging.

Mark 4:26-29 is a parable that offers some encouragement to those who take the time to share the gospel and their faith with others. This parable teaches us that the Gospel has power. It teaches us that, while we may not see immediate results from our efforts, the Gospel will bear fruit in the Lord’s time. When we share the Gospel, from a pulpit or a personal witness, a quiet, unseen process begins to take place. This process is a sovereign work of God. This process is often hidden from the attention of man. Yet, this process when completed results in changed lives and saved souls. Let’s look into these verses and have them speak to our hearts.

From this passage, we see there is a steadfast work involved with spreading the gospel. Jesus pictures a farmer sowing seed into his field. When he has sown the seed, he has done all that he can do. He returns home and goes about his business. The image of him sleeping and rising night and day is a picture of the farmer continuing in his daily life. He places the seed in the soil and then he leaves it to do what it will. For the farmer, this is a work of faith. He does not return to the field every day to dig up the seed to see if it has germinated. He may water the field. He may weed the field. He may work the soil, but he does not bother the seed. Once planted, the farmer has no control over what the seed does. He sows his seed, and he leaves the results in the hands of God. The farmer knows that the growth of the seed is God’s business. Therefore, he sows it and trusts the Lord to make it grow. In a sense, we are like that farmer. We have been called to sow seed. We have not been called to sow wheat or corn into a plowed field, but we have been called to sow the Gospel seed into the hearts of other people. We are sent into a lost and dying world to tell others about what Jesus has done for us. You don’t have to be a preacher, a missionary, or a Pastor; if you are saved, you have a testimony and you have a story to tell. Telling people what Jesus has done in your life, your salvation may be just what that person needs to hear.

When we share the Gospel with another person, we have no control over the results. In fact, the results are not our responsibility. Our duty is to sow the seed; the results are in the hands of the Lord. To be honest we all worry about our efforts. There is a temptation to check on the seed. We want to help it grow and check on its progress. Our responsibility is to sow the seed, water it when we can, and let the Lord do His work in hearts and lives. Like the farmer in this parable, we should be faithful to tell a lost world about a saving Lord. If you are a witness for the Lord Jesus, keep sharing His story with others. He will honor your efforts. If you aren’t sowing the seed as you should be, then I challenge you to make a personal commitment today to get busy doing what the Lord saved you to do. There is power in the seed! I recall a story from some time ago, archeologists dug into a pyramid tomb in Egypt. In that tomb, they found several jars of seeds. These seeds had been buried with the deceased person 3,000 years earlier. Those scientists took the seeds they found and planted them in good soil. They watered the soil and waited patiently. After a time, those ancient seeds germinated, and tiny plants pushed their way through the surface of the soil. Those tender plants matured and produced fruit. Isn’t that amazing? When that seed found its way into the right soil, a secret work took place and life came out of death.

Such is the power of the Gospel! If you have never been saved by the grace of God; if you have never trusted Jesus Christ to be the Savior of your soul, you need to know that the Gospel has the power to give you new life. Will you let that gospel seed germinate in your heart and allow the Lord to make you fruitful for His glory?

The application doesn’t stop with the lost. The born-again Saints need to get about the business of telling others about Jesus. This would be a good day for you to put aside all your excuses concerning why you can’t tell others about Jesus. This would be a good day for you to commit to being a witness for His glory.

I believe others are reading that are a little discouraged because you think your prayers and your witness are in vain. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Why don’t you kneel before the Lord and talk to Him about your concerns? Ask Him to let you see a few sprouts in your field.

Our time this month has come and gone. Until we meet again in person or in print may God richly bless you is my prayer!

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

No Regrets in the Hand of the Father

By Dean Honeycutt
Mitchell County

I want to thank the Lord I am saved and for the hope we have in Jesus Christ. Like many of you, I am frustrated over the ongoing pandemic restrictions and the political unrest our country is in. Our country is divided, and this division has caused many problems. We are divided politically and morally. Christian people are really caught in the middle of all this mess. We will not swear our allegiance to a single man because our allegiance is to Jesus Christ. Neither will we compromise our Biblical convictions of the sanctity of human life and the union of one man and one woman.

But one thing is for certain we can not let our differences become our division. We must unite as the Body of Christ and stand together united in the sole purpose of sharing the Gospel and glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ. Satan wants to deceive, conquer, and divide, but we must stand firm, stand strong, and stand united. An unbelieving world will never understand why we want to gather and fellowship. We must continue to gather and fellowship. We are stronger when we are united. The Holy Spirit unites us into one Body. The Body will suffer when it is divided.

1 Corinthians 12:13 (KJV 1900) 13 *“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.”*

1 Corinthians 12:25 (KJV 1900) 25 *“That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.”*

Your church needs you. When you miss church, the body is not complete. Could you imagine leaving home without your hands? How much would you be able to accomplish? Would your day be more difficult, and would you be frustrated? The answer of course is yes. So likewise, your church needs you as much as you need your hands. You are a vital part of the ministry of your church. The idea that we can be a virtual church is not Biblical. We must live by faith and trust the Lord. I realize there are times for the best interest of the Body we may not meet, but this absence from church fellowship cannot be the norm.

Hebrews 10:25 (KJV 1900) 25” *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”*

The closer the church moves towards the return of Christ the more we need to meet as a body of believers. The Church will become smaller because of persecution and lack of commitment. But this is God’s plan it is the “weeding” process God uses to purge His church.

Ephesians 5:26–27 (KJV 1900) 26 *“That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”*

We are living during a challenging but also exciting time “for such a time as this” God has chosen this generation of believers and churches to stand strong in the faith and be a light in a dark world. What example of faith are we leaving our children and grandchildren? Can you imagine the faith to be required to live in the days preceding the return of Christ? Will our children require greater faith than ours to endure the challenges and tribulation of a pre-tribulation church? Yes, believers need greater faith.

The Lord will strengthen His Church and our faith will increase to help us endure the perilous times that are ahead of us. Jesus encouraged Christians and gave us a promise to reward our faithfulness.

Revelation 3:10 (KJV 1900) 10” *Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.”*

During this season of life, we are like the disciples in a boat during a storm. Jesus comes walking on the water. Some of the disciples are in the boat. They like the comfort and safety of the boat. You like the comfort and safety of your home, mask, or distancing. One disciple is walking on the water. His eyes are on Jesus and he has great faith. The only thing he needs is great faith. However, when he takes his eyes off Jesus and places them on the storm he begins to sink. But Jesus is there to rescue him and take him back to the boat. Some of us are walking on the water. Some of us are in the boat. Some of us are sinking. But we are all in the mighty hand of God.

John 10:28–29 (KJV 1900) 28 *“And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. 29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.”*

Praise the Lord. The Lord knows where you are at in this season of life and He is with you. Dear church look up. Our redemption draws near. Strengthen your family by attending church faithfully and reading the Bible.

God bless you.

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.



God’s Picture

By Christopher L. Scott
Exeter, California

“You won’t be included in the team picture,” my coach told me. I thought to myself, “How could he do this? Had I done something wrong? Made a bad decision? Been careless? Was I not trying?” Each day I practiced my golf game and worked hard to improve. I tried my best. But my performance was not good enough.

There were thirteen of us on the college golf team, but only five of the guys were able to travel to tournaments each week. I started out as one of the five guys. Even if I didn’t play great in the tournaments, I had a peace that I was good enough to be part of the traveling team while eight of the lesser players were left home. But over time my game struggled. Eventually, my performance dropped me out of the five guys that traveled each week.

I thought when it was time to take the team picture I would be included in it. I could enjoy some peace knowing I was still part of the thirteen-guy team even if I wasn’t part of the five guys that traveled to tournaments.

But I wasn’t. Why? My performance was not good enough. I was devastated. The golf team was my community. Now I was pushed out because of my poor performance. I tried my best, but my best effort was not good enough.

Thankfully, my participation in the community with God is not based on performance. Paul wrote to the believers in Rome, *“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God”* (Romans 5:1-2, NASB). I am grateful that it is through my faith in Jesus Chris that I have peace.

In his book, The Bumps Are What You Climb On, Warren Wiersbe writes, “It is a great mistake to build your happiness on circumstances or things because circumstances change and things have a way of wearing out and losing their value. True internal peace cannot be based on changing external things. We need something deeper and more satisfying.” That thing that is deeper and more satisfying is Jesus Christ, “For He Himself [Jesus] is our peace” (Ephesians 2:14, NASB). The peace Christians experience is based on Christ and faith in him, not performance. Christians don’t make peace; they enjoy it.

I am grateful it is by faith that I am saved, and that I have peace with God. I know that when it’s time for a picture to be taken in heaven, I will be included in it.

Christopher L. Scott, a graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary, is a pastor and freelance writer. Learn more about his writing ministry at ChristopherLynnScott.com.



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Come and See

By Tracy Jessup



“Philip found Nathanael and said to him, ‘We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth.’ Nathanael said to him, ‘Can anything good come out of Nazareth?’ Philip said to him, ‘Come and see.’” (John 1:45-46).

This past October (2020) marked the 70th anniversary of The Missionaries of Charity founded by Mother Teresa in 1950 in response to the call of Christ upon her life to serve the poorest of the poor. It is an order of the Roman Catholic Church that is active in more than 130 countries. Missionary of Charity homes have been established all over the world to meet different needs: the rehabilitation of leprosy sufferers; the mentally ill; unwed mothers and other women in urgent need; alcohol or drug addicts; night shelters for homeless men or homeless women and women with children; children abandoned or relinquished by their families; physically and mentally challenged children. Adoption centers are run by the sisters in some countries.

“Regardless of where they are sent or what they do, the life of a Missionary of Charity is founded in prayer, marked by the simplicity and humility of the Gospel, and characterized by total reliance on Divine Providence for all personal necessities and those of the poor.” Interestingly, those who aspire to join the Missionaries of Charity are invited to a two-week experience called “Come and See” (<https://www.motherteresa.org/active-sisters.html>).

“Come and see.” Such simple words, yet these words describe the heart of the gospel and what it means to follow Christ. In the words preceding today’s passage, Jesus goes to Galilee and the Bible says, “He found Philip and said to him, ‘Follow me’” (John 1:43). Don’t miss this. Jesus finds Philip, Philip follows Jesus, and then Philip finds Nathanael and says to him, “Come and see.” Nathanael, skeptical about whether or not anything good could come from Nazareth, discovers for himself that Jesus is the “Son of God [and] King of Israel” (v. 49). In other words, his initial attitude towards Jesus is based on preconceived ideas. However, because Philip invites him to meet Jesus, Nathanael’s actual experience of Jesus changes his mind about who Jesus is.

When Christ finds us and we follow him, we will have the desire to find others – some who may be skeptical of others who simply may be searching - and extend to them the invitation to “come and see.” Writing for Working Preacher (January 8, 2012), David Lose, pastor of Mount Olivet Lutheran Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota, tells about speaking at an event at which he met a pastor who asked each member of his small church to get in a circle and tell the person near them what kind of toothpaste they used and why. The thought behind the idea was to start small – toothpaste. And then, gradually people begin talking about more important things – where they have seen God at work in their lives or in the world, or maybe where they wish they could more easily see God at work.

Follow me is the invitation to discipleship to which every follower of Christ responds. And as we journey with the Savior, inevitably it leads us to engage with others, joyfully inviting them to “come and see.”

Prayer: Lord, we thank you for finding us, and for calling us to follow you. May our words and actions point people to Jesus so that they, too, will come and see.

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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An Encouraging Word: Rest from Weariness

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



In 2 Corinthians 4:8-9, Paul wrote some comforting words that have echoed throughout the ages and have been a source of comfort and hope for Christians in difficult times. He wrote, “...we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying around in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.”

Afflicted, perplexed, persecuted, and struck down. That’s quite a list of afflictions that Paul had accumulated throughout his life and ministry. As you read through the Book of Acts and Paul’s epistles, you will no doubt be struck by all of the trials, threats, and difficulties that he encountered for the cause of Christ. May I suggest that what you and I have been through pales in comparison to what Paul and many of God’s followers have experienced throughout the annals of Christian history? All except one of the original disciples of Jesus died a martyr’s death for their faith in and testimony of Christ Jesus. In ancient Rome, crowds by the tens of thousands would gather in the Coliseum to watch as Christians were torn apart by wild animals. Christians throughout the centuries have given their lives for the cause of Christ.

Rather than riches, fame, power, and glory, followers of Christ have throughout history experienced great difficulty and persecution. So much so, that Paul and the other gospel writers often wrote to prepare their fellow believers for what would inevitably come by the hands of evil-doers, unreasonably threatened by the message of love, hope, and eternity.

A believer living in today’s world faces many trials and tribulations. Often, we may become weary from the constant, if not daily, battles. Some of those battles are of our own making. Others are not.

Often, as we live in a dark, evil, broken world, we will be subjected to unreasonable evil and ungodly destructive processes that seek to destroy. As you come against these demonic forces day by day (even moment by moment), you will experience weariness from the battles. There is a fundamental need that emerges from our battle with sin and rebellion that produces weariness. That need is rest! Are you weary from doing good? Are you weary from fighting off discouragement? Are you weary of being misunderstood or misinterpreted? Are you weary from not being heard or your thoughts or feelings being disregarded or flat-out rejected? Are you weary of being taken advantage of? Of being overworked? From expectations which have mounted up? Are you weary of fighting for truth and expending your energies for righteousness and good? Are you weary of doing good?

If you are, then you need to rest! In fact, weariness and fatigue are some of the major causes of discouragement and defeat.

Remember the story of Nehemiah? He rallied the Jewish inhabitants of Jerusalem to rebuild the broken down walls of the city. After much difficult labor and facing increasing threats and discouragement, when they had reached half of the height of the walls, it was reported (Nehemiah 4:6), “The strength of the burden bearers is failing, Yet there is much rubbish; And we ourselves are unable to rebuild the wall.” The strength of the laborers was giving out! They were worn out and physically and mentally exhausted. They were tired, weary, and worn down. It is interesting to point out that exhaustion usually occurs somewhere around midway through the task or mission. That’s when it often hit my wife, Shawn, and me on the mission field. Half-way through our term is when we felt like we had hit a wall—that our efforts were useless and our endeavors were coming up short. The deceiver would plant fear and discouragement in our minds and we had a choice to make. Would we obediently continue to serve, share, speak God’s truth, and share His love—or just give up and go home? Honestly, there were many times when either of us would voice, “Let’s just go home!” This is exactly why the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention gives missionaries furlough.

And that is exactly why serving in high-stress locations requires wisdom and discernment. It’s often why many pastors burn out and give up on the ministry. This is hard work. A pastor is charged with caring for God’s flock—and the demands are endless. They never diminish and they never go away. So, tell your pastor you love and appreciate him or her today. Oh, but what a wonderful blessing it is to follow after the heart of God and minister to, lift up, and love on His children. That is truly what all of us, as followers of Jesus are called to do, isn’t it? And when you are really serious about serving the Lord and ministering in His name—then you are going to grow weary in a season or two.

Are you weary of doing good? If not, then get busy! If you are, then don’t quit—get some rest so that you may serve with joy and energy—so that you may love out of thankfulness and graciousness—so that you may labor with all that is within you. As Paul said to the Galatians (6:9), “Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.” Isaiah declared (Is. 40:31), “Yet those who wait for the LORD Will gain new strength; They will mount up with wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary.” David wrote in Proverbs 23:4, “Do not weary yourself to gain wealth, Cease from your consideration of it.” And Jesus said (John 15:2), “Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.”

Are you weary of doing good? Do you know what you must do? The first thing that Nehemiah did when he noticed the fatigue was to give everyone a little time off to rest. The next thing that he did was reorganized the effort. We read in Nehemiah 4:13, “...then I stationed men in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, the exposed places, and I stationed the people in families with their swords, spears and bows.”

Paul declared in 2 Corinthians 4 that “we do not lose heart” for “we preach Christ Jesus as Lord.” Paul reported that although we are afflicted, even facing the threat of death, our “inner man is being renewed day by day” and any “affliction is producing an eternal treasure of glory.”

Join me in proclaiming, In the name of Jesus, I confess that I am a believer, not a doubter. Though affected, not crushed—though confused, not despairing—though persecuted, not forsaken—though struck down, not destroyed! I am yours, Oh, Lord! Amen!

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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It’s Just Not Fair!

By Dan Quorollo
Burke County

I can still hear my daughters seeing something and exclaiming, “Daddy, it’s not fair!” Oftentimes, they had a legitimate point, and they would hear me say, “Life isn’t fair.” You have probably heard a similar statement and have most likely made the statement yourself. I have to confess that I battle this very reality as an adult. In my mind, it seems that many travesties of justice are ignored, dishonest people are rewarded, and the righteous are mistreated. I want to cry out, “It’s just not fair!”

David faced a similar challenge in his life, a challenge he expresses frequently throughout the book of Psalms. One such psalm is Psalm 10 where David perceives that God is aloof. Have you ever felt that way? Has it ever seemed that God is not near when you need Him? David explained that the wicked are persecuting the poor. Their wickedness infiltrates every aspect of their lives. They foolishly conclude, “*God hath forgotten: he hideth his face; he will never see it*” (10:11). But as David concludes, He is reminded, “*The LORD is King for ever and ever*” (10:16). Regardless of what man attempts to do, we must always remember that God is still on the throne. God has not lost His grip on the events of the world, nor are things spinning wildly out of control. God knows! This truth should serve to strengthen our hearts and encourage us to remain faithful.

Furthermore, the day is coming when God will be sure that the wrongs are made right. David continued, “*LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear: 18 To judge the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may no more oppress*” (10:17-18).

When you are tempted to think, “It’s just not fair,” remember God is still on the throne and righteousness will prevail. God knows!

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



By Bruce Cannon
Mitchell County

“*Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*” (Luke 12:32)

“*Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.*” (1 John 4:7,8)

February is known by many as the month for love though every day should be a day for love. And, we should take every opportunity to express love both to God and to man. The Scriptures teach that we love because He (the Lord) first loved us. (1 John 4:19) He placed within the heart of man the desire to love and be loved.

There are so many Scriptures that speak about love. Luke 12:32 states that the Father takes great delight in giving gifts to His children. James wrote, “*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.*” (1:17) Every gift the Lord gives is a “good” gift. Why does God give so many gifts? He loves us!

The Lord gives so many tangible gifts, but it’s the many intangible ones that really bless us and enable us to bless others. He gives peace which passeth all understanding (Phil. 4:7). He gives joy unspeakable (1 Peter 1:8). He, as stated above, gives the ability to love and be loved. He gives abundant grace. He gives heavenly hugs that warm our hearts and pick up our spirit.

These are the gifts that we must share with others. They are also gifts which when given come back to us in an abundant manner. When we give love, it comes back and increases our love and ability to love. When we demonstrate peace we can help others experience peace. When we show forth joy we can help others have joy which further increases our own.

Take the month of February and give these wonderful gifts to others. Give them what God has so freely given us. And as you are doing so, make sure you do not forget the one’s closest to you. Make sure you give abundant love, peace, and joy to them as well. They will greatly love you for doing so!

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



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Trying to Save a Sinking Ship

By Chris Rathbone
Mitchell County



Have you ever tried to help someone but they wouldn't listen? Has there been a situation where decisions have been made, even by a group, that you knew weren't going to end well, but no one would listen? Have you ever counseled someone on the right thing to do but they went ahead and chose the opposite? Have you ever seen the boat taking on water and no one would let you mend the hole and refused to do it themselves? Do you see people on the wrong road but no one will look at the map or GPS? Most of you likely answered yes to every one of those questions. That means we're not alone.

In Acts chapter 27, Paul came across the same situation. In Acts chapter 21 we read that the Apostle Paul is arrested in the temple by the Jewish leadership for preaching the Gospel. The following chapters leading up to chapter 27 describe how he is brought before the Jewish leadership, before government leadership, etc. The Jewish leaders want him put to death so Paul has to appeal to his Roman citizenship so he can at least get somewhat of a fair trial so to speak. During this time there are hearings, an assassination plot, and many times Paul is allowed to present his defense. In the end, because he appealed to his Roman citizenship, it was ordered that he be taken to Rome to have a hearing there (Acts 26:32).

Chapter 27 describes the events that took place as they began this journey. They sail a while and end up in a place called The Fair Havens near a city called Lasea. In those days ships navigated by the stars. Sailing at that time of the year was risky in September and pretty well impossible by November. These events happened in October. The time for safe travel on the seas was over. The master of the ship did not want to winter there and he desired to make it to another place in Crete to finish out the winter. Then things get interesting.

Acts 27:9-10 states, *"Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past, Paul admonished them, and said, unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with much hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives."*

Now Paul wasn't necessarily telling them of some great prophecy that the Lord had revealed to him. It is possible that could be the case. However, most likely Paul was simply using discernment. History had taught that it was dangerous to sail that time of year. The loss of lives in the many failed attempts of the ships that had sunk in the past had caused many to learn the lesson not to sail during that time. So it wasn't so much a great spiritual revelation as it was common sense. However, the centurion that was in charge of getting Paul to Rome, believed the master of the ship, going against Paul's counsel and common knowledge of what will most likely happen if they set sail. The master of the ship was most likely thinking of the money he was going to make from the passengers he would be transporting, so his decision was influenced by monetary gain, and not common sense or possible consequences.

Sailing started smooth, but as the weather tends to do that time of year, a strong, terrible storm hit. They did everything they could to save the ship, throwing cargo overboard, lowering the sails, raising the sails, and even trying to anchor it, but nothing worked. Verse 20 states, *"And when neither the sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away."*

Against sound advice, they had chosen the opposite of what they knew to be wise and best. Now they were suffering the consequences. After what looks like spending some time in prayer (vs. 21) Paul tells them they should have listened to him and all this would not have happened. He tells them to take cheer, for an angel of God had appeared to him saying that he would make it to appear before Caesar and they all would survive.

Eventually, the ship has to be run aground and some have to swim and others cling to broken pieces of the ship and through much loss and peril, they make it to shore safely.

I know you are probably thinking, "Preacher what are you getting at telling us all about this story?" This story gives me such a picture of what has been happening in our nation for the last several decades. Our leaders seemed determined to take our nation in a direction that will not end well. They ignore the many warnings that have been given by great men of God. They refuse to even learn from the history of what always happens to nations that adopt the Godless philosophies and principles that communism/socialism promote. We sound the warning, they continue to simply ignore us. No matter how many times these things have failed in the past, they seemed determined to repeat them. And for the most part, money is the deciding factor. All that the majority of our leaders see are the dollar signs and the masses jump on board with the promise of a utopia that history teaches us will collapse ever....single....time! And the rest of us? Well, we just have to endure the trip!

What do we do? Well, we do as Paul did. He sounded the alarm even though they ignored him. We remind them when the storm hits that they should have listened to us, to begin with, and hope that they will learn the lesson. We continue to minister to them in Jesus' name even when it seems that all hope is lost. Paul told them to eat so they would have the strength to endure and that they would make it even though they will likely lose everything in which they were trusting. We continue to minister the Word to a spiritually starved world so those who will can be saved. It might be that many will swim, others will cling to broken pieces of the ship, but if we trust Him, we'll make it to shore.

It's a tall order children, to try and save a sinking ship.....

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



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New Year's Resolution

By Steve Gaito
McDowell County

It happens almost every year. A time when you look back and think about what you want to change in the next year. For me, it is a time to reflect on what worked last year and what I want to change in the future. Most people think of improving health by going to the gym or changing diet, but as a CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER tm practitioner, I look at improving financial health. For almost 30 years I have worked with clients to plan for retirement. Saving in 401(k) plans, cafeteria plans, creating budgets have all been part of the process. Having lived through this past year with all its challenges I must say that my thoughts on what is important has changed. Specifically, in three areas. Saving for retirement, Efficient withdrawal strategies in retirement, and Long-Term Care.

What I have realized is that the way we should save has not changed even though the environment we are in today is much different than it was 10-20 years ago. Other than government employees, corporate pensions are few and far between. This puts the challenge of saving on employees and from what I have seen they are not doing well with this challenge. The second challenge is to employees is that qualified retirement plans such as 401(k) plans are not nearly as attractive as they once were. Employers are not matching as much of employee's contributions and the tax break is significantly less than it once was. When I started setting up retirement plans in the early 90's it was easy to show employees that it only cost them \$75 to save \$100 because of the tax brackets. Now with tax brackets being the lowest in recent memory, it is more like costing \$88 to save \$100 and for over half of Americans it has no tax break once they file for taxes. The sad part is that with all of our debt this money is likely to be taxed at a higher rate when they start to withdraw the money in retirement. This is why I believe it is a bad deal to save anything above a matched contribution in a traditional 401(k) plan. The other part that is concerning is the restrictions on withdrawals prior to 59 ½ and the penalty that may apply. As we saw this year you never know when you may need access to the money. Loans are available but are they prudent? I help people find better solutions to meet retirement needs that take taxes out of the equation.

I mentioned tax-efficient withdrawals of retirement plans. In today's current tax environment, it makes financial sense to start to pay what you owe the government in taxes on your retirement plan. Why you may ask would anyone want to do that? If you like me believe that taxes are likely to rise in the future and that 30 trillion in debt will have to be repaid then why not pay the government the least you can over your lifetime. I can show the difference and it is staggering. It also gets the government out of your income plan for the future. I can provide you with a book that shows all of this if you contact my office. Finally, by using some strategies not only will you pay less taxes but have more income for your life. Ask yourself: Why did you save the money in the first place? For most, it was to provide retirement income and I help people get more income out of what they have while paying less taxes. There is a catch. To do this you have to act now. The Trump tax rates sunset in 2026 and revert back to higher brackets so the sooner you act the more you and withdraw at the lower brackets.

Long-Term Care is the third and the closest one to my heart. The reality is that without pensions a significant drain on retirement resources will not only impact your retirement but leave a big hole for surviving spouses. There are lots of ways to address this from self-pay to leveraged insurance policies. Finding which is the best way for you requires an analysis of your unique situation. What I do know is that not having a plan is the worst route. Given what we have just seen in our nursing homes with COVID-19 is a glimpse of what not having a plan looks like. No one goes into a nursing home because they want to. They wind up there as a last resort. Seeing the deaths and lack of contact with family and friends is not an option that anyone would choose. With Long-Term Care, you can choose home care and have those you love around you. I told you this was personal to me and this is why. I hate seeing families torn apart because no one wanted to talk about options when they had a chance. For over 28 years I have incorporated conversations about Long-Term Care in my planning. It used to be just an afterthought, but now it is the primary issue for my clients and one that needs to be discussed today.

I started talking about New Year Resolutions, and mine is to help everyone understand the choices they make and get the most out of what resources they have. I provide a free initial consultation either in person or remotely to see how I can best help you.

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.



Respect and Pray for Authorities

By Shawn Thomas
Angleton, Texas

During the Christmas season, many of us were reminded of the words of Luke 2:1 *"And it came to pass in those days that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed ..."*. Caesar Augustus was the ruler of all Rome -- the most powerful empire the world had ever known. And he was considered by many to be a god. His will was done in Rome, and over a good portion of the world as well. And yet God's word shows us that Caesar Augustus was mere putty in the hand of God. This decision "he made" to have the Empire taxed -- it was all a part of God's plan to get Mary & Joseph & the soon-to-be-born Jesus to Bethlehem, to fulfill the prophecy of Micah 5:2 that the Messiah would be born there. This passage reminds us of the sovereignty of God; that HE is in charge of the rulers of this world.

Proverbs 21:1 says, *"The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes."* It doesn't matter who the king is; or who the authority is; God can turn their heart in any direction He pleases. He can place any thought He desires, into their mind:

- He can inspire a Caesar to call for a census that takes everyone back to their home town so that the Messiah would be born in just the right place.
- He can influence a secular British government in 1917 to support a homeland for a Jewish state in Palestine so that the nation of Israel would soon be established.
- The Lord can manipulate presidents, governors, judges, principals, policemen, parents -- any authority He wants to. He can turn their hearts the way a man channels water in his hand, the Bible says.

This means first of all that as God's people, we need to RESPECT our authorities. We need to adhere to the admonition that Romans 13:1 gives us: *"Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God."* The Bible says that GOD has put our governing authorities in place, so we need to recognize that and submit to them -- except when obeying them would absolutely contradict scripture. And even when we do disagree with them, we should still show respect to them, because we recognize that God has placed them in the positions they hold.

Now, sometimes people are tempted to say things like: "Yeah, but Paul wasn't writing when Donald Trump was President!" or "Paul wasn't writing with Joe Biden in the White House!", and other like comments. No, Paul wasn't writing during these times. Paul actually penned Romans 13 when Nero Caesar was on the throne in Rome! Nero was one of the evilest rulers in the history of mankind. He murdered his own mother who had brought him to the throne in the first place. He killed his wives so that he could marry new ones. He likely set fire to a whole sector of Rome so that he could build a new facility there to host his orgies — and then blamed the Christians for it, and persecuted them. It was during Nero's bloody reign that the Apostle Peter was crucified upside down. So, no, Paul wasn't writing during the tenure of Joe Biden or Donald Trump. He lived during a much WORSE reign. Yet STILL, under the reign of Nero Caesar, the instruction that God gave His people was "let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities"! That ought to say a lot to us today. Even when there is someone in office that you don't like — whether it be the President, or the Governor, or on a closer level, a principal or teacher or supervisor on your job — remember that the Bible still teaches that GOD put every person of authority in their place — which includes that person you are having such a hard time with! He has placed them there for His own purposes which are being worked out in the world. So if you are God's child, you need to respect the authorities that your Heavenly Father has placed here.

Paul goes on to say in Romans 13:7 that we are to render whatever respect and honor are due to our public officials. That means no mocking; no derisive nicknames. If we realize that God has placed those individuals there, then we as His people will be respectful of them.

Secondly, this means we need to PRAY for our authorities. The Bible reminds us in I Timothy 2 that one of our great responsibilities as Christians is to pray for our rulers and authorities. Pray that they would walk with God; pray that He would give them wisdom and direction. Pray that He would give them His thoughts, and turn their lives and decisions the way a man channels water in his hand. I hope that you have a list of authorities that you pray for regularly: our president and the governor and all of the other authorities in your life: supervisors, teachers, principals, and others. If not, resolve that starting today, you will be faithful to pray for authorities. I have a document on my computer that lists several authorities in our country, national, state, and local — and I pray for each of them every Thursday. If you haven't done this already, put a list together today, and begin praying this week for God to work in the lives of these authorities. They need the prayers, and YOU need to be praying for them!

God's word reminds us that our authorities are not the ultimate lords of our lives; GOD is! He is in charge of these leaders, and He can direct them in any way He desires, according to His will. And since He has placed them where they are, we need to respond to them with respect, and with prayer.



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

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Perfect Love

By Tim Tron
Burke County

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love him, because he first loved us.” – 1 John 4:18-19



The closeness of her body against his warmed him from within. She was too young for him, at least what he considered the difference is too significant from where he stood in life. He was not married, nor had he ever taken time to cultivate a relationship with a woman. His life had been devoted to serving others, putting other’s needs before his own. Time passed by, and now with specks of gray spattered long his temples, he knew life for him may never be like others. There may never be that “perfect” someone.

Yet, the young lady came to him seeking something she seemed to find in him. Confiding in him her deepest charges against her heart, she seemed to want more from him than he had envisioned. She wasn’t a stranger to him, so this encounter was not their first. Growing accustomed to her visits, he noticed that she seemed more amiable with each meeting than the last. So, he wasn’t surprised when she leaned into him, turning her head and pressing her lips upon his neck. There it was, an undeniable affection that stirred emotions within him that had long ago transpired.

True love knows no boundaries.
He quickly tried to dismiss it, but she moved not away but instead moved her body’s soft edges closer into his. He could feel her warmth through the clothing. Her heartbeat near his own. His mind sought only to seek that love from which emanated from this temporal beauty and to separate it from the desires of his flesh before it became a sin. The love of Jesus, from which the passion of Christ fills our soul with hope of life eternal, came to his mind, and he sought to feel that in this physical embrace. The feeling of being loved, no matter the individual that ultimately a comely breath of heartbeat which stirs one’s inner creature so profoundly that nothing else seems to matter was that which he sought. To this desire, he pushed the internal embrace seeking its purity and not that of the other. Try as he might, even that brief passing feeling, so acceptable, so revealing, so overwhelmingly needed was but merely an infinitesimally tiny speck of what he sought – God’s love.
He awoke from the dream, still stirred from the passion of its grip upon his soul.

Those fleeting moments of a desire within, to know the love of another moved him to seek the feeling now conscious. That deep burning intensity within the soul, that longing for another individual – to become one with your being, something that had eluded him most of his life, was a feeling for which he wanted to know of God. It was something beyond the sexual, something beyond the temptations of the flesh; no, it was a love from whence flowed a caring which intertwined within the heart, piercing into the very depths of one’s existence.

This perfect love like those brief moments of two sweethearts who first find what they believe to be their true love – their minds swirling with passions until it seems nothing else can permeate their thoughts than that which causeth their collective breath to escape. For on the surface, this is the reaction of the natural man. Inside, your heart quickens at the idea of that first love, and with it, all else seems lost. This is the Love for which God has for each of us, reaching farther than the natural desires but deep within. It is there for us should we awaken to its embrace upon our being. A passion for which those blissful lusts of our human comprehension find merely fleeting; whereas, His love for us is eternal. We cannot escape its reaches, for as high as is the sky, as deep as the oceans; it encompasses all that we can fathom and more. There is no escaping God’s love for us. For what we may only be able to ascertain for a few passing seconds, these can be multiplied into infinity, something beyond our ability to understand – for it is God who hath made us and not of ourselves.

Yet, man’s terrestrial love can never come close to God’s love. Like the tempest upon the sea, it too passes, and before you know it, it is gone. In its passing, there is an emptiness. Too often, we seek to fill the void, and for many, this desire leads to other addictions of the fleshless wholesome, and often much more destructive. When one finds a love of their life, they must realize that it must be seen through the eyes of faith, not the flesh. Through God, perfect love can be found. Without Him guiding our paths, our lusts rule our body and mind. In those carnal desires of the flesh, we make choices about situations, individuals, and actions that are usually based upon the sensual. These, for many, become their bondage for life on this earth. Unable to break free, they are entombed in a life that often seems to lead to dead ends. Sadly, many relationships start with such promise only to find in a short time that they are another statistic in divorce court. Had their consummation of that first love been based upon a relationship with God the Father, they would have had an entirely different lens through which they sought one another. It is through this faith in God that perfect love can be found.

This perfect love, when we can allow it to enter into our hearts, can cast out all other thoughts. Comparing it again to the first love, all other feelings seem to slip away – water through the fingertips. So enamored with us, it flows through us, seeking every ounce of our existence. With it, there is no room for darkness, for when the light shines within, all fears are cast aside. As it is said, the darkest hour is before dawn. Once the sunrise begins to paint its golden rays upon the earth’s canvas, even the most wretched moments can start to seem less doomed. It is this love within, the one that can cast out all our fears, that we can finally escape the

torments of this world.
Every once in a great while, in this life, we are afforded glimpses into those feelings of the Heavenly realm. It is in these moments, these brilliantly tiny snapshots of life eternal, that God allows us to feel, see, or sense something that can be multiplied by untold numbers for which we cannot begin to fathom. It is these moments when, either in dreams, visions, or rare glimpses during the conscious world, we are provided something of God’s creation to reach us within. There within those fractional moments in time, we can feel the love of God and can be comforted evermore. For knowing that we can love because he first loved us makes all the difference in the world and beyond.
Seek him with all your heart, and you too will find perfect love.
Thanks be to God.

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



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The Bible:
The Power of God, Yesterday and Today
By Rev. John B. Sorensen



Have you ever wondered what it would have been like to live in the first century? To hear the Gospel accounts as they happened from someone who was there? The excitement must have been contagious. The Savior had come!

This wasn't just good news – it was GREAT news! People had been waiting centuries for this day, and now it had come. Before He left earth, Jesus gave those who believed in Him one command: Share it. Even though it cost many their lives, Christians in the first century couldn't wait to tell others.

The letters and eye-witness accounts of these first-century believers aren't just a record of these historic events. There's power in the message they tell: God loves us and created a way for us to be with Him for all eternity – through Jesus Christ. That message changed the world.

For centuries, missionaries traveled to foreign countries to share the Good News. People needed to hear that they could have eternal life! Like the early believers, they put their lives in danger to tell others what Jesus Christ did for them. God's Word transcended language and cultural barriers to transform lives for eternity.

Today, the Bible still contains that power. It has traveled around the world and been translated into many languages, but the message of God's love and redemption hasn't changed. Paul calls the Word of God "alive and powerful...it exposes our innermost thoughts and desires" (Hebrews 4:12, NLT). Only God can use words written hundreds of years ago to speak to hearts in the 21st century and change people from the inside out.

As believers, we have been transformed by that power. We no longer live like we did before we knew Christ. God's Word teaches us how to live a new life. Our words and actions change. We have a higher purpose – to glorify God. That transformation goes with us wherever we go.

We especially take that power with us when we share God's love with others. The need is just as great as it was in the first century. People need to hear that they can have a new life through Jesus Christ. It's still GREAT news! But, we need to share it. Isn't it wonderful that God does not abandon us when we do? He goes with us as we step out in faith.

James 1:22 encourages us, "Do not merely listen to the Word...Do what it says." (NIV). Obeying God's Word includes following the last command Jesus left with us on earth: to share it with others.

If that is your goal for this year, I have good news for you. You can start today. If you don't know how or where to even begin, we can help. Don't let another year go by without taking that step of faith and sharing the greatest news you've ever received. May God bless you as you do.

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 evangelisexplosion.org.



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Discover Wisdom That Will Change Your Life!

By Joyce Meyer

Every day, we are faced with hundreds of decisions. We decide whether or not to get out of bed, what we’ll eat, what we’ll do, what we will think about, and what we will say. We make decisions about everything from how we style our hair to how we will react to more serious situations at work or home.

While it may seem like many of our daily choices are not that significant, the truth is they do matter.

In Deuteronomy 30:19 (NIV), God says, ... *“I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live.”*

It’s important to understand that every choice you make is a seed you sow, and those seeds produce fruit in your life—either for life or death. And if you want to have the life Jesus died to give you—a life filled with peace and joy—then you need to make wise choices.

I think many times we can be good at focusing on life’s “big” decisions only to be defeated by the small ones. The Song of Solomon 2:15 actually tells us that it’s the “little foxes” that spoil the vine. Likewise, the many small decisions we make every day add up and greatly impact our lives.

For example, I make it a habit to go to bed at 9 o’clock every night so that I can be asleep by about 9:30. If I get to bed on time, then I’m able to get up on time and spend quality time with God before I have to go on with the rest of my day. Some people might think, Does your bedtime really matter that much? Yes! Because if I decided to go to bed whenever I felt like it, I would sabotage my time with God—the very thing I need to grow as a Christian. After a few days, I would also end up feeling tired and worn-out from staying up late and begin to wonder why everything seemed so difficult.

It’s so simple, yet I believe things like this affect our lives more than we realize. We have to learn to live deeper than what we want, what we think, and what we feel.

Wisdom always chooses to do now what it will be satisfied with later on. Conversely, foolish choices are often made without any consideration of the consequences. I’ve actually seen the word foolishness defined as “without common sense.”

Now here’s the great news: If you’ve made foolish choices (and we’ve all done it) and you’re not happy with the way things are right now, you can change. The first step is to take responsibility for the wrong choices you’ve made. It’s important to be honest with yourself because Jesus says that the truth will set us free (John 8:32), and that includes the truth about ourselves.

The next step is to make a determined decision to change, to begin making wise choices for your future. We need to realize that none of us can change ourselves. Only God can give us the strength and ability to change our habits and the way we think, talk, and act. Only He can help us make great decisions for our lives. I know this because there was a time in my life when I desperately wanted to change but it was clear that I couldn’t do it on my own. I needed God to heal me, strengthen me, and make me secure and whole in Christ. Only then was I able to choose life regularly.

Whatever changes you need to make, I encourage you to go to God for help. Pray and ask Him to guide you and give you the strength to make wise choices.

Also, look up scriptures and study the Bible in the areas where you are struggling—whether it’s anger, unforgiveness, self-control, or anything else. There is power in God’s Word to change your life, and the more you read and study it, the more joy, strength, and freedom you will experience.

So, think about this: What could your life be like if you started making better choices right now? Don’t put it off any longer. The truth is there won’t be a more convenient time, and you don’t have to waste another day missing out on a better future.

With God’s help, you can do it! If your progress seems slow, don’t get discouraged because when you stay determined to make wise choices, things will eventually start to change...and you will begin to see the great life God has for you.

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



Twitter And Facebook Block President Trump: How Should Evangelicals Respond To The Threat Of Censorship?

By Jim Denison



Controversy erupted recently when Facebook and Twitter blocked President Trump from their platforms following the January 6 Capitol riots, claiming that his posts violated their rules against inciting violence. Last week, the conservative social media platform Parler was de-platformed by Amazon Web Services, citing “posts that clearly encourage and incite violence.” Apple and Google joined in blocking the platform.

What do these actions mean for the future of American media? How could they affect evangelical Christians in the coming years? How should we respond biblically to this divisive and urgent issue?

Publishers or platforms?

Let’s begin with some background. At the heart of the debate is the question: Are social media companies such as Twitter and Facebook publishers or platforms?

If they are publishers, they are liable for the content they publish. For example, if the New York Times publishes a story that defames a person, it can be sued for libel.

If they are platforms, by contrast, they are not liable for the content published by others on their sites. If someone posts a bad review of a restaurant on Facebook, the restaurant cannot sue Facebook. If it could, social media platforms would be inundated with lawsuits and could cease to function.

However, these platforms can regulate content if necessary without incurring legal liability. Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act of 1996 states: “No provider or user of an interactive computer service shall be held liable on account of any action voluntarily taken in good faith to restrict access to or availability of material that the provider or user considers being obscene, lewd, lascivious, filthy, excessively violent, harassing, or otherwise objectionable, whether or not such material is constitutionally protected.” This provision allows social media platforms to restrict child pornography, for instance.

Republicans and Democrats have both criticized the way social media platforms have utilized this protection. The former claim that conservative speech is being censored; the latter claim that hate speech and disinformation are being protected and promoted

The dangerous scope of the issue

Here’s the question for us: Will evangelicals be the victims of censorship by social media companies in the future? If they consider our stance on same-sex marriage to be “harassing” or “objectionable,” for example, will they block our content?

The issue is larger than social media platforms. Email distributors can decide to block content they find objectionable, which would make it difficult for me to send The Daily Article to our 300,000 subscribers. Conservative voices can be marginalized or blocked by the liberal bias of mainstream media.

This debate goes to the heart of our democratic experiment. Conservative commentator Jonah Goldberg is right: “Democracy is supposed to be about disagreements, not agreements. Forced unity, outside of a war or some other national emergency, is antithetical to democracy and poisonous to civility. It’s become a cliché to say we live in two Americas. If that’s true, the people running the media of each nation should do more than just live off demonization of the other nation.”

How should evangelicals respond?

In days like these, Christians must speak biblical truth with courage, passion, and grace. The more our culture rejects biblical truth, the more it needs to hear biblical truth. The harder it becomes to speak the truth in love, the more we must do both (Ephesians 4:15).

But we cannot give what we do not have. To share the truth of God, we must stay connected to the God of truth.

Jesus declared: *“If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free”* (John 8:31–32). Note the order: “abide” (remain) in his word as his “disciples” (fully devoted followers), and we will “know” (experience personally) the truth and be set free by it. Then we will share it with those we influence so they can experience the same freedom in Christ (Matthew 4:19; 1 Peter 3:15).

To this end, I invite you to make this prayer by Scottish minister John Baillie yours: “By your grace, O God, I will go nowhere today where you cannot come, nor seek anyone’s presence that would rob me of yours. By your grace, I will let no thought enter my heart that might hinder my closeness with you, nor let any word come from my mouth that is not meant for your ear. So shall my courage be firm and my heart be at peace.”

Will your “heart be at peace” today?

Jim Denison Ph.D speaks and writes on cultural and contemporary issues. His daily column is distributed to more than 113,000 subscribers in 208 countries. See more on the website www.denisonforum.org. Copyrighted and printed by permission from Denison Forum.

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Humor - Laughter is Healthy for You

By Buddy Freeman
Madison County



A Pastor was doing a children’s sermon. He asked the children a really dumb question. He asked a little boy, “How long can a man live without his brain?” The Pastor asked again. None of the children could answer the question. The Preacher put the mike and asked, “Cathy, how long can a man live without a brain?” Cathy said, “Gosh Preacher, I don’t know. How old are you?”

A grandfather took his 5-year-old grandson to a wedding. After he watched the pretty young bridesmaids walk in the little boy asked his grandfather, “Is this where the man gets to choose which one he wants to marry?”

For years we lived in a small town with one bank and three churches. Early one morning, the bank called all three churches with the same request: “Could you bring in Sunday’s collection right away: We’re out of one-dollar bills.”

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

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By David Burleson
Burke County

The last year has been one of the most difficult that any of us have ever experienced. The global pandemic has altered almost everything that we once thought was normal. Going to church, work and school have all changed.

At New Dimensions, we have been very fortunate to provide our students with a choice of face to face instruction or a remote option. The New Dimensions staff have been phenomenal throughout this unparalleled time in history. They have met every challenge they have encountered. From providing instruction through creative and challenging lessons to transitioning students to remote instruction at a moment’s notice, they have excelled. When our NDS family needed them the most, our staff was willing to do all that was asked of them.

Being a New Dimensions family has much to offer. Our school is a FREE kindergarten to an eighth-grade public charter school. We offer a rigorous curriculum through the nationally acclaimed Core Knowledge program and Eureka Math. This curriculum is taught by certified, dynamic teachers.

New Dimensions is fortunate to have large classrooms and reduced class size. The teacher to student ratio in grades K-5 is 1 to 16 and in middle school is 1 to 22. Through the financial flexibility provided to our school, we can offer PE, music, art, technology, and Spanish to all of our students. In addition to these offerings, our middle school students have been given the opportunity to select additional courses through the North Carolina Virtual Schools program. Also, our staff offers Pre-BLET, Pre-Health Occupations, American Sign Language, STEM Classes, Entrepreneurship, and Creative Writing. These offerings provide our middle school students great preparation for high school.

Open enrollment at New Dimensions began on Monday, January 4, and ends on Wednesday, March 31 at 4 p.m. Applications for the upcoming year are posted on our website and are available at the school beginning on January 4. Virtual tours will be developed and posted in January. Just give us a call (828-437-5753) or email us at dburleson@nds.school.org if you have questions about our school or would like to schedule a private, in-person tour.

At the end of the enrollment period, it will be determined if there are more applications than spaces available for each grade. If the number of applicants for a particular grade does not exceed the number of available spaces for that grade level, all students who have applied by the deadline will be accepted. If the number of applicants for a particular grade level exceeds available spaces for that grade level, a lottery system will determine admission eligibility. Students who are not offered enrollment will be placed on a waitlist. After all spaces for a grade level are filled, the lottery will continue until all applying students have been assigned a priority number on the waitlist. The waitlist will not carry into the next school year.

New Dimensions will continue to communicate with our school community in the days and weeks to come. As always, the safety of our students, staff, and families remains our top priority. We will act out of an abundance of caution to protect everyone’s health and wellbeing. We hope that you will never hesitate to contact the school when you have a question or problem concerning your child. If there is anything else that we can do, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Again, thank you for your spirit of cooperation and your concern for our students. We continue to pray for those impacted by the Coronavirus and for our entire community.

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

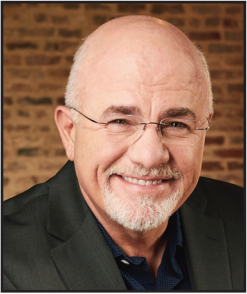


By Dave Ramsey

Do some of all three, and enjoy the ride

Dear Dave,

I was talking to a friend the other day, and I couldn’t remember what you said about the three good uses for money and why each is important. Would you go over them again? Albert



Dear Albert,

I’ve been doing this for a lot of years, and after all that time studying finance and teaching people about money, I can still find only three good uses for money—spending, saving, and giving. You should be doing all three while you’re working your way out of debt and towards wealth, and after you become wealthy.

The kid in us likes the spending part of this equation because it’s so much fun. The problem with most people is they can’t really afford the fun they have. You should have some fun no matter where you are on the financial scale, but it should be inexpensive fun in the beginning. Then, the fun can get bigger, better, and more frequent once you’re out of debt and building wealth.

The grown-up part of us likes investing and saving because that’s what can prepare you for retirement and make you wealthy. After a while, though, investing can feel a little bit like Monopoly. You can be up, or you can be down. Sometimes the market fluctuates, but a mature investor will ride out the waves and stay in for the long-term. If you have quality investments with long track records of success, they will come back up. Start investing 15% of your income for retirement once you’ve paid off all debt except for your home and you have three to six months of expenses saved for an emergency fund.

The most mature part of you will meet the kid inside when you give. Giving is the most fun you’ll ever have with money. Every financially, mentally, and spiritually healthy person I’ve ever met has been turned on by giving. I’ve met and talked with thousands of millionaires in my career, and one thing all the healthy ones have in common is a love of giving.

Someone who never has fun with money misses the point. Someone who never saves or invests money will never have any. And someone who never gives is holding on too tight. Do some of each, and enjoy the ride! —Dave

Let kids make mistakes (and learn from them)

Dear Dave,

We just started teaching our seven-year-old about money. He’s very eager to learn, and he seems to be grasping the basic ideas quickly. He’s young, though, and of course, he makes mistakes from time to time. Should we step in and fix things when a mistake he made means he can’t do something he wanted to do? Ethan

Dear Ethan,

It’s always hard on parents when they see their children suffer because of a choice the child made. But sometimes it’s best to love them so much that you’ll let them make mistakes, and make sure they learn from them, while they’re still under your protection. Reality can be a great teacher when it comes to learning how the world works, and sometimes one sting from a bad decision when you’re young is all it takes to teach a kid a lesson that will last a lifetime.

As a parent, you’re always looking for teachable moments. First, make sure you’re giving him a chance to earn some money. That means work, no allowances. We’re talking about kid-sized, age-appropriate tasks. There’s a ton of value and self-esteem that go hand-in-hand with being paid for a job well done. Once you pay him for the work he does, then you have chances for more teachable moments about saving, spending, and giving—and the importance of each.

If I were you, I wouldn’t run in and fix things. By this, I mean I wouldn’t just hand him the money he didn’t earn so he can still get or do what he had in mind. But don’t fuss at him or brush it off, either. Gently explain why things didn’t work out the way he hoped. Then, talk through what he might have done differently to help make the situation better next time.

Kids are smarter and often have more understanding and comprehension skills than we give them credit for. My guess, Ethan, is you won’t need to have this kind of conversation more than once or twice! —Dave

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

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Reflections of 2020

By Cody Penland
McDowell County

The year 2020 was a trying year. A year of division, a year of uncertainty, and a year of loss. For some, it held the aura of minor inconveniences.. while for others, it seems like their “guardian angel” gave them a two-week notice in March. It stands regardless that we all have experienced some form of loss last year. We all hurt. We all felt helpless in some way. Many of us were not sure if survival was guaranteed.

In the midst of this, 2020 was also a year that offered many of us time to sit and reflect. It forced many others to rethink and reevaluate what they thought that they knew. It forced mankind out of the normalcy of our existence; to experience loss of what we once took for granted. It made us ask questions. It made us challenge the boundaries of our own existences, capabilities, and capacities.

Last July, The Lord gave me the absolute privilege to preach a sermon from Job 19. This, the turning point of the narrative of Job, reminds us of the security that we have in Christ. Job faced the unimaginable. He lost his sons in a great wind. He developed sores all over from the soles of his feet to the top of his head. His wife tried to get him to curse God, and die. His friends ridiculed him and even claimed that his suffering was because he was not a good Christian!

Job... in the climax of his suffering, exclaims: *“But I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the end he will stand on the dust. Even after my skin has been destroyed, yet I will see God in my flesh. I will see him myself; my eyes will look at him, and not as a stranger. My heart longs within me.”* (Job 19:25-27, CSB)

You see, just as God had a plan for Job (read the end of Job!), God still had a plan for 2020. Although I will never understand the full extent of what this plan entailed, I will still praise Him, nonetheless. My hope for you all in 2021 is for better times and health, certainly. However, I pray that you look back and remember 2020. Thank the Lord for the good, the bad, and the ugly. Remember to never take our blessings and lessons for granted. Hug your loved ones tight every night.

May we all see life, not as something to be endured, but rather a journey that we are blessed to embark on. We don’t HAVE to live life friends; we GET to do it. I love you all, God bless, and Happy New Year!



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

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Dear Christian

By Phillip Greene
Avery County



Hate doesn’t fit you. It isn’t your color.

What I am seeing is not an attack on Christians from the outside...but it is an attack from the inside of each one (James 4:1-3). The battle to be right, to taste the same fruit that Adam and Eve partook of, the lies of the enemy being told to each of us that we need to pursue power and strength. It’s the literal pursuit to *“be like God.”*(Genesis 3:5)

Question: When did the pursuit of our rights and freedoms mean that we could ignore the core of Jesus’ teaching?

Sure, we want to fight and defend, but when it comes to our “rights and freedoms,” those come from God. Why would we expect a world that put Christ on a cross to be any less brutal to those who follow him? Why would they show us respect and love?

NEWSFLASH: Stop trying to change the world to be like you or see things like you. THEY HATE YOU AND THE GOD YOU SERVE!

Why should we expect comfort and ease? Jesus said it would be troublesome. Jesus told us to have no fear because He had already won (John 16:33). So why fight against one another for our opinions and earthly alliances? I would rather not argue about earthly powers or rights, and I hope you would feel the same. We are citizens of the Kingdom of God, and one day we will be with Him. Until then, we are charged to bring as many with us as we can... (Matthew 28)

How?

LOVE.

Not arguments and pushing agendas...love.

Not force and anger...love.

This is why all of this is so hard. We are losing our minds over a battle that has already ended. Let’s take a look at history. Remember the Pharisees and Sadducees?

The “Religious Right” has become today’s Pharisee order, seeking the militant Messiah that they feel will change the world and win it on the back of war... Fighting the modern Sadducee for control of a government that is evil, and blasting those who believe God when He says He is in control (IE – “You can’t be a Christian if...”, etc.). And yet, they do not see it. Both sides claiming to have a religious belief, touting a God who supports their agenda, and neither following the Word of God...it is evil. All of it.

What are we afraid of? Losing our comfortable religion? He never said it would be easy. He never said we wouldn’t face troubles and trials. He never said we wouldn’t be challenged. What He did say was, *“Love one another as I have loved you.”* (John 15)

What is that love?

It is not name-calling. It is not race-baiting. It is not breaking and entering. It is not burning down the world until someone sees things your way. It is not evil.

Love is patient. It is Kind. It is peaceful. It doesn’t brag on itself. It holds no records of wrong. It is not arrogant, rude, or self-seeking. Love endures all things. Love hopes for a brighter day. God is Love, and Love NEVER fails. (1 Corinthians 13 and 1 John 4)

That love went to a cross and gave His life for those He came to save...

That love.

Sacrificial love.

True love.

What we are seeing is not love.

The “Right” is evil. The “Left” is evil. It is all evil. We are claiming it is a spiritual war...that war is inside of you right now. Using God’s name in vain to push your political ideas and agendas is not right. It is evil...and the saddest part? Decent people are falling victim.

What have we become? We have become like Babylon.

The flag has become a graven image that we would rather worship than the one who died to give us true freedom, and we are worshipping it as such. Our rights, our freedoms, all idols, we would rather save those than love our brother.

Just remember. The “Religious” of the day missed it when Jesus came because He was not the Messiah they were looking for. What are you expecting to happen?

Is it too much to put politics aside and love one another? Is it too much to stop dividing the body of Christ over worldly issues? Is it too much to have a love for your fellow man?

We are told they will know us by our love...not our agendas. It is okay to love your country. It is not okay to put that love above the love for your brother or sister in Christ.

What are THEY seeing today?

I love you...

Your Brother in Christ

PS – *“When I was a child, I spoke like a child, thought like a child, and reasoned like a child. When I became a man I put away childish things...”*(1 Corinthians 13:11)

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

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. 1 John 4:7

Civil War Era Preacher Admonishes Christians to Work for Peace

By Rev. Mark Creech

Franklin Graham was right when he recently posted on his Facebook page that “the division in our country is as great as any time since the Civil War.” The angry mob that overtook the Capitol building while the Electoral College votes were being certified demonstrates this fact.

The malice between brothers in this country is indicative of the kind of spirit that could destroy this nation.

How should Christians seek the good of their country in this current environment of unrest? The question is reflective of a sermon preached on November 1, 1860, only a few months before the Civil War would begin. The address was delivered by Robert L. Dabney at Hampden-Sydney College in Virginia and was extensively circulated throughout the North and the South. It has been argued that if its call for moderation and justice had been heeded, it might have prevented the entire catastrophe.

Dabney took his text from Psalm 122:9, which reads: “*Because of the house of our Lord thy God I will seek thy good.*” He argued that much was at stake if the nation failed, and a robust Christianity works for peace. Dabney admonished:

A long farewell to that dream we had indulged – a dream not unworthy surely to have been inspired by the Prince of Peace – that here a nation was to grow up on this soil, which God had kept till ‘the fullness of time was come,’ wrapped in the mysteries of pathless seas, and untainted by the steps of civilized despots or organized crime; a nation composed of the strong, the free, the bold, the oppressed of every people, and, like the Corinthian brass, more precious than any that composed it; which should come, by the righteous arts of peace, to greatness such as at last to shame and frighten war away from the family of kingdoms; which should work out the great experiment of equal laws and free conscience, for the first time, for the imitation of the world; and from whose bosom a free church, unstained by the guilt of persecution and unburdened by the leaden protection of the state, should send forth her light and salvation to the ends of the earth to bring the millennial morning.

Then Dabney laid out the practical steps Christians should take.

First, Christians should everywhere begin to pray for their country... The guilty churches of all our land should humble themselves before a holy God for their Christian backslidings and our national sins...

Along with this go humble confessions of our sins, individual and social. Here let me distinctly warn you, that I am not about to point your attention to sins of fellow citizens...

from whose faults some may suppose the present fear arises. Whether they have committed faults, or how great, it is not my present concern to say. Our business today is with our sins. It will do our hearts no good to confess to God the sins of our fellow-men; He already knows them and estimates them more fairly than perhaps our prejudice will permit us to do. It is for our sins alone that we are responsible to God. It is our own sins alone that we have the means of reforming, by the help of his grace. Let each man, then, consider and forsake his personal transgressions; for as your persons help to swell the aggregate of this great people, so your individual sins have gone to form that black cloud of guilt which threatens to hide from us the favorable light of our heavenly Father’s face.

Second, we would say, with all the earnestness and emphasis which the most solemn feeling can inspire, let each individual Christian in our land, whether he sits in the halls of the legislature or rules as a magistrate, or guides public opinion through the press, or merely fills the station of the private citizen, consider his own personal concern in this matter. We would affectionately individualize each man, and say to him, ‘My brother, thou art the man. Consider what God would have you to do?’

Every Christian, whether lawmaker or law executor or voter, should carry his Christian conscience, enlightened by God’s word, into his political duty in another manner than we have been accustomed to do. We must ask less what party caucuses and leaders dictate, and more what duty dictates, for the day is at hand when we shall be brought to an awful judgment for the thoughtless manner in which we exercise our civic function.

Nay, verily, we would fain yield all reasonable party fidelity...we are partisans in the commonwealth of King Jesus, and our allegiance to him transcend all others.”

Last: Every Christian must study the things which make for peace. All must resolve that they will demand of others nothing more than their necessary rights and that in the tone of moderation and forbearance. Yea, that they will generously forego all except what duty forbids them to forego, rather than have strife with brethren. We must all be magnanimous enough to forebear the language of threatening and reproach, the language which evinces no courage, to acknowledge the excesses of ourselves and our friends, and to make reparation for it, whether such reparation be offered on the other side or not. Instead of complaining in a vindictive and bitter spirit of the extravagances of misguided men on the opposite side, each man should inquire whether there are not sinful extravagances on his own side; and when it is necessary to demonstrate [to say or plead in protest or op-



position], do it in the tone of wounded love, rather than insane threatening. In one word, let each party resolve to grant all that is right, and ask nothing else, ‘and lo, there will be a great calm.’

Though earnestly delivered and profoundly true, these words had little effect at the time, for nearly every man who either heard them or read them, only a few months later was in arms for war.

Let us not charm ourselves into disbelief that the unspeakable which happened then cannot happen today. The church may not always be able to broker peace. Nevertheless, let us demonstrate, as Dabney also said, “a love so Christ-like, so beautiful, so strong, that strife should be paralyzed by it into reverential admiration.”

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

“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” 2 Timothy 1:7



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Lessons We Can Learn
from Social Distancing
By Monica Kirtz
Mitchell County

1.) We should social distance from evil.
“Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” 2 Timothy 2:22

2.) We should social distance from hate.
JESUS said: “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another, as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye have love one to another.” John 13:34-35

3.) We should social distance from sin.
“Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.” Proverbs 4:14-15

Also, remember:

1.) We cannot social distance from GOD.
“Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.” Psalm 139:7-8

2.) We cannot social distance from fellow believers.
“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” Ephesians 4:4-6

3.) GOD will not social distance from us!
“...for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” Hebrews 13:5

Encouragement for your heart!

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



A Healthy Heart

By Ken and Jan Merop
Avery County

All the leads were attached to me correctly. Yet the doctor couldn’t get a reading from the cardiogram machine.

I lay there praying against the trepidation of what he might find.

That was many years ago. But I can still hear the doctor saying, “I don’t see anything on the screen. I don’t know what’s wrong.”

Quietly, I said, “I’m still here.”

He quickly turned and said, “Oh, it’s not you! It’s the machine.”

We laughed a bit and he eventually was able to rule out anything with my heart.

Healthy physical hearts are essential to good health. Proper nutrition, good eating habits, and exercise are vital. Our spiritual hearts need to be nurtured as well. For example, in Proverbs 12: 25, NKJV it says, “Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, but a good word makes it glad.” Proverbs 17: 22 says, “A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones.”

Many verses remind us of God’s peace and our thankfulness. For example, Colossians 3:15 encourages us to let God’s peace rule in our hearts and to be thankful.

The above verses give us the prescription for a healthy heart. Joy, encouraging words, peace, and thankfulness provide the environment in which a heart thrives...not just survives. In 1 Thessalonians 5: 16 this prescription is affirmed with these words, “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

Recently, my husband Ken gave me an acronym for the word heart. ‘H’ stands for healthy, which we just explored. Then he saw how ‘EAR’ follow ‘H.’ We must listen to God’s word so we will hear his voice and what he wants to say to us. Once we hear what he has to say we will discover a beautiful truth.

The letter ‘T’ stands for treasure.

A treasure is something of great value. That is how God sees us. In Isaiah 43: 7, the Lord God says, “Everyone who is called by My name, whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him.”

We belong to the Lord and he loves us with an everlasting love. Jesus proved that by dying a substitutionary death for me and you so that when we receive his free gift of salvation, we are born anew into his family. We are his children...and children are a treasure.

Let’s live as treasured ones. Selah



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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.

Mama's Poem

In Memory of Vida and Mason Carpenter

By Vida Carpenter
Avery County



I am home now in Heaven my dear ones
And so happy where there comes no night.
There is only perfect joy and beauty,
In this everlasting light that comes from God.
All my sickness and pain are gone
Every restless night now has passed.
The happiness here will go on and on,
For I'm safe with our Savior at last.
As I walked the valley of death,
It was Him whom I did see.
And He came and walked with me.
When my way seemed hard to tread,
Jesus was there and gave me His Hand,
All sorrow was gone and nothing to dread.
I'm home now with Jesus in His beautiful land
Where daddy, mama, sister, and Granny have waited so long
Where many other loved ones to see me come home.
Please don't worry family and don't be sad
For I'm so happy and can sing on and on
Until you, my family can join me in my new home.
Then we the Carpenter Family will sing a new song.
Continue to pray and trust God's will
And He will be there to help you climb each hill.
Keep working for him, don't be defeated.
Give Him all glory and none to man
Then when on earth your work is completed
Jesus will call you to this Heavenly Home
Where I will be waiting and watching
And what great Joy that will be,
When my loving husband, Mason, and our family
Are called home to Heaven to join me.
Where we will praise God through eternity.
And thanking Him for setting us free
When He gave His only Son, Jesus at Calvary
For all who will surrender their life to Him.
Will live here in Heaven where life just begins
After they leave the earth with all of its sins
Heaven's gates will open and Jesus will welcome you in.

To all my dear friends and relatives,
Whom I love dearly, once again I say,
Continue and walk with Jesus each step of the way
For I'm waiting to see you in Heaven someday
Where there is no sadness and no goodbyes
Jesus has made everything perfect and no one dies.
If you have not given your life to Jesus, please do
And you will walk these streets of gold too.
When life on earth for you is through
This perfect home in Heaven with Jesus awaits for you.

She lived in the Stamey Town community in Avery County and wrote for the Avery Journal for many years until her declining health forced her to quit.



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Three Spiritual COVID Rules

By Marlene Houk
Burke County



Relentless and repetitive, COVID rules firmly announce their power, extending into our new year. Signs are everywhere for the three rules:

1. Wear a mask.
2. Wash your hands.
3. Wait 6 feet apart.

As Christians, we can be encouraged during these fear-filled times by allowing these three rules to become spiritual reminders of daily power for living from the Lord.

First Spiritual COVID Rule: Wear Your Mask.

I knew that look. He’d forgotten his mask. Hungry, On a mission. Mouth-watering aromas. But he turned around to retrieve the obligatory face-covering.

Many times, the Bible uses word pictures, types, and symbols to explain spiritual concepts. The Holy Spirit is like wind, fire, and water. God’s Word cleanses like water and feeds us with manna in the wilderness. Jesus was as a lamb led to the slaughter for our sins.

We who believe in Jesus walk through our physical life with our eyes on eternity with our Savior. As people of faith, we hope for what we do not see and believe that our faith will become sight. Seeking to understand our spiritual heritage becomes life’s goal, and seeing life through the Bible lens is a reflex.

My husband’s many trips back to his truck for the important fabric oval reminds me of Isaiah 61:3. Word pictures abound, but the idea of being gifted with a garment meant to cover, protect, and nourish fascinates me. A “garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness” lifts me above my earthly troubles with its glorious beauty and rich thick folds of joy.

Through 57 years of knowing Christ, I’ve observed and experienced that praise weaves its comforting healing layers around my troubles and gently cocoons my world-weary soul. Praise shields me from the darkness of depression, fear, and anxiety. And, within its folds, I discover delightful distractions from life’s harshness.

Try on the garment of praise and feel the softness of its touch; revel in the perfect fit, and enjoy the beauty it adds to your spiritual wardrobe. As you slip on a mask to gain entrance into public buildings during COVID times, remember the importance of praising the Lord. Praise heals, creates hope, and heightens the joy of faith.

Second Spiritual COVID Rule: Wash Your Hands.

My palms waited patiently underneath the soap dispenser at the doctor’s office. After several seconds, I realized that the spout was higher on the big box. I dutifully held both hands underneath the opening, and the foam flew across my flat palms and landed on the edge of the sink and floor. I laughed and tried again, cupping them this time. I counted the recommended 20 seconds and washed my hands in the warm water until my skin glowed with cleanliness.

Water symbolizes cleansing in the Bible. Second Kings 5:14 immerses us in the miracle of Naaman’s restored health. He commanded Syria’s great host of soldiers, but he was consumed with leprosy. Elisha instructed him to dip in the Jordan River seven times, and his skin was disease-free. Luke 5:1-10 describes the healing waters at Bethesda. And we enter a story of healing through Jesus instructing a blind man to wash in the pool of Siloam in John 21:1-14.

Stories about water naturally create a rich delta in Ephesians 5:26. This verse talks about Christ who sanctifies and cleanses His disciples through “the washing of water by the word.” We wash our hands frequently, obeying the signs. But sanitizing

is a reminder that spiritual washing through Bible reading, memorization, and study cleanses our minds of worry and sets us apart from the fears of today. (I counted the seconds required to say the whole verse. You can say Ephesians 5:26 THREE TIMES in about 20 seconds!)

Try it. The next time you turn on the faucet, say this verse and reflect on its truth. As we cup our hands under the fountain of living water, we wash away the germs from daily living.

Third Spiritual COVID Rule: Wait Apart From Others.

A new culture of waiting in our cars and standing six feet apart in line awaits us in the new year, at least until we get through the pandemic. Isolation became the new threat to peace and happiness in 2020, and we see its effects in 2021. The Bible switches the idea of waiting physically to a spiritual meaning with such verses as Isaiah 40:31. The promise begins, “They that wait upon the LORD” and continues by declaring the power that comes from waiting.

What are these perks of the pandemic wait? We look around while we’re waiting and observe things that we wouldn’t normally notice. We talk to people outside our circles. Our mutual concern with COVID enables us to discuss numbers, vaccines, and regulations with strangers as we wait. Professionals such as teachers notice more about their children with smaller class sizes and can get to know them better through small virtual meetings.

Perhaps the slower pace during these uncertain times enriches our lives with the ability to point others to Jesus while they wait. Spending precious time in God’s presence during times of isolation enriches our relationship with Him. The opportunities to linger in prayer, to learn more about God, and to vaccinate our souls with His Word become priceless memories.

We can notice Jesus illuminated in our isolation and draw closer to Him while being forced to distance from others. Mark 9:2 tells us that Jesus took three disciples apart, separating them, and they saw Jesus transfigured, glorified, and full of power.

May we see Jesus and marvel at his shining presence in stark contrast to our raging fear and division. During our alone times, we can linger in His amazing presence, waiting on Him for the strength and power to fly above the storm of the pandemic and seeing the Lord, high and lifted up!

As we follow the pandemic rules for wearing a mask, washing our hands, and waiting apart, let these be spiritual reminders. Wear the garment of praise. Wash our souls clean with His Word. Wait on Him and enjoy His presence.

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



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Reflections - Christmas 2020

By Jim Smith
McDowell County



Christmas, whether through Zoom, Facetime, or actually being together, hopefully, we were all spending time with loved ones, and surely there was some good food involved. When we think of Thanksgiving and Christmas, so often we might reminisce about grandma's pumpkin pie or mom's stuffing. We all have enjoyed having a warm meal during a special holiday.

This Christmas, Executive Director Danny Hampton came to the staff and said, "Let's roll up our sleeves and see if it is possible to put a special gift bag together for the over 170 men and women being housed at the McDowell County Jail, and while we're at it, let's go for the real miracle stuff and see if it is also possible to raise the funding to feed all 600 men being housed at the Marion Correctional Institution a Chick-fil-A meal." "We need to show these men and women that they matter, that they are valued, that they are not forgotten by God, by us, or by the McDowell community." The staff began working like elves to make this happen.

Through the help and donations of gracious community individuals, businesses, churches, and the staff at Freedom Life, this goal was met within two weeks.

The men and women being housed in the McDowell County Jail were provided: deodorant, crackers, peanuts, raisins, several soups, a box each of Little Debbie's, and some candy. It also included information about how they could receive the services offered by Freedom Life while incarcerated, and as they also look to the possibility of a new life outside the prison. A local church also donated a study book for each inmate from the book of Mark about the life of Christ and how to receive salvation.

The men being housed at the Marion Correctional Institution received a hot Chick-fil-a sandwich, along with chips, cookies, some candy, and the same Bible study book received by men and women at the McDowell County Jail. Freedom Life would like to express its deepest gratitude to everyone within the community who help make this Christmas expression of God's love possible.

Freedom Life is a non-profit located in downtown Marion. The founder and current Executive Director, Danny Hampton, has significant experience when it comes to helping hurting people. In 2012, while serving the needs of current and formerly incarcerated individuals through his capacities as chaplain and case manager, Hampton saw the potential and need to create an entirely new ministry corporation designed to specifically address the many unique needs of men and women who are currently inside jail and prison and also of those who are reintegrating back into the community from jail and prison. In November of 2012, Freedom Life Ministries was born. Hampton's vision, and that of all those involved in leadership at Freedom Life Ministries, was in the beginning and still is today, that need and ministry focused organizational framework can be put into place that will bring all aspects of community involvement together by building an interconnecting support network of churches and other community agencies and organizations.

This community support system is the backbone of an overall effort to provide help and support to men and women currently incarcerated, while also addressing the many spiritual and practical needs of men and women who have been released from incarceration.

The goal is to help justice-involved individuals discover new and transformed life that expresses itself in the ability to make positive and productive contributions to their families and their community, and also have the opportunity to learn how to walk in healthy authentic relationship with God.

Much has grown and changed in powerful and positive ways over the years, but the mission has and will always continue to be the same, helping people whose lives have been impacted by incarceration live in new hope and lasting freedom.

Wrong decisions and past mistakes can haunt and press in on our lives in unrelenting ways. One of the goals at Freedom Life, with our justice-involved clients, is to allow them to see there is hope beyond the bars. Hopelessness ends here.

You can be part of Freedom Life by volunteering, being a donor, a monthly donor, and a prayer partner. www.freedomlifeministries.org and on Facebook and Instagram

Jim Smith is an area Worship Arts Director; He is the Development Director at Freedom Life Ministries, and run a production company wjscreativegroup.com



The Coming Market Crash

By Jack Sielaff

"For the essence of prophecy is to give a clear witness for Jesus." Revelation 19:10 (NLT)

As COVID-19 spread across the world in early 2020, economic activity froze. Entire cities in China were put on lockdown, and the lockdowns soon spread to Europe, the United States, and the whole world. With people confined to their homes, many businesses closed. The global economy came to a grinding halt. Global supply chains broke, airlines canceled flights, and an oil glut drove down petroleum prices as supply outstripped demand.

The economic shock of the coronavirus hammered global markets. Bond markets went into freefall, stocks plummeted, and global trade slowed to a near stop. The abrupt impact of COVID-19 on the global economy caused panic around the world, and this panic forced governments and central banks to take unprecedented measures. As a result of trillions of dollars in stimulus, the U.S. stock market and markets around the world reversed course, and they've been on an upward trajectory ever since. Second-quarter U.S. Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which measures the economic output of the U.S. economy, was the worst on record at negative 31.4%, but third-quarter GDP was the best ever at 33.4%. Throw in the rollout of several vaccines in November/December 2020, and boundless optimism continues to drive markets higher on the idea the economy will reopen and the pandemic will end. But is this really what will happen?

The Health of the Global Economy

As we begin 2021, global markets signal a rebound in economic activity. The widely held belief is everything will eventually bounce back to pre-pandemic levels once COVID is vanquished. At least, that's the consensus. Unfortunately, it's not reality. The global economy is in terrible shape, maybe even in a terminal condition.

Right now, the global economy is much like someone who just survived a bad car wreck. Immediately afterward, they walk away. They feel and look fine, and they think they've escaped unharmed. They don't yet realize the extent of their injuries, and only discover how serious they are hours or days later. This is where we are right now with the global economy.

Government programs have covered up the true extent of the damage, but they can't do so forever. Business bailouts, direct government payments to individuals, and rent and mortgage moratoriums have delayed the pain. Because of them, many people can't see the true extent of the economic damage. But these government band-aids won't prevent the inevitable. The economy won't "spring back" due to pent up demand. Yes, once the pandemic ends, more people might decide to take cruises or eat out at restaurants. But they won't book two cruises for the same weekend or order 15 meals in a single night to make up for the cruises they would've taken or the meals they would've eaten. Those transactions are lost forever.

In many cases, the economic damage from COVID-19 is permanent. The National Restaurant Association reports more than 110,000 U.S. restaurants permanently closed their doors in 2020. This is compared to 2019 which saw an increase of more than 10,000 restaurants, and the carnage isn't over yet. Many of the 2020 survivors will go out of business in 2021. More than 15,000 retail store locations closed their doors in 2020 in the United States alone. The list of companies impacted includes iconic brands like Pier 1 Imports, Lord & Taylor, and Neiman Marcus.

Rent and mortgage forbearance has kept many from losing their homes, but what about the landlords and bondholders who haven't been paid? Eventually, someone has to pay for all those who have lived rent and mortgage-free in 2020. And what about the commercial real estate industry? With restaurants and retailers not making their lease payments, commercial real estate firms face ruin. With many employees successfully working from home, many commercial real estate leases won't be renewed. This leaves vast amounts of office space vacant in big cities throughout the world. And this is just one example of the coming debt defaults and bankruptcies that will soon ripple throughout the entire global economy.

Right now, the world is drowning in debt - \$277 trillion in debt. Much of that will never be paid back. When the defaults and bankruptcies start to take place, they'll cascade throughout the global banking system and create another financial crisis. The only way to avoid a massive deflationary spiral like the Great Depression will be for governments to print and hand out currency to keep people and businesses from going under. But this will create its own crisis - a hyperinflationary crisis. In other words, there's no way out. We're on the brink of a major financial crisis. Government policy can delay it, but any delay is simply the calm before the storm.

The Asset Bubble Collapse

Over the long-term, stock markets cannot outperform the economies they operate in. Yet that's what we've seen since the COVID crisis. Global stock markets are up. Economic growth is down. By almost every measure, U.S. stock markets are more overvalued than at any time in history.

Warren Buffett's favorite metric for the valuation of stocks is to divide the total value of the stock market by the GDP. When the market is fairly valued, this ratio is between 75% and 90%. Right now, the ratio is hovering around 190% - the highest in recorded history. This means the stock market is now in its largest bubble ever. This includes the 1929 bubble which led to a three year 89% crash and ushered in the Great Depression. It includes the Dot Com Bubble which caused a mania of speculation and irrational exuberance and ultimately ended in a 78% crash of the NASDAQ.

And this isn't confined to U.S. markets either. According to Sibilis Research, the

continued on page 35

YOUR GOVERNMENT PAGES

NC Senate District 47



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

The 2021-2022 biennium of the North Carolina General Assembly opened on January 13th, and I was honored to be sworn in for a sixth term in the North Carolina Senate to represent my constituents in the 47th District. In addition to being sworn in for my sixth term as a state senator, I was sworn in for a second term as Deputy President Pro Tempore by Supreme Court Justice Tamara Barringer. For this legislative session, I have been appointed by Senate President Pro Tempore Phil Berger to the following standing committees: Appropriations/Base Budget (Co-Chairman), Finance, Health Care, Pensions and Retirement and Aging, Redistricting and Elections (Co-Chairman), and Rules and Operations of the Senate. As legislative work gets underway this year, I look forward to keeping our state on the sound fiscal path we have maintained over the past decade and am honored to serve in these important leadership roles.

On January 12th, the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Medicaid and NC Health Choice met to hear not only updates on Medicaid Transformation but also to gain information about the COVID-19 vaccine distribution currently underway. The committee heard from and asked questions of DHHS Secretary Mandy Cohen and others. I, along with other committee members, questioned Secretary Cohen about the slow pace of our state's vaccine distribution; we are ranked 48 out of 50 states – better than only Georgia and Alabama in the percentage of doses administered. Secretary Cohen responded that some counties are doing a good job of getting their citizens vaccinated, while others are struggling. This is true. However, DHHS's inadequate plan for executing the vaccine rollout has, unfortunately, resulted in a low number of North Carolinians receiving their first vaccine and even fewer receiving their second vaccine.

On a positive note, a recent NC-focused study conducted by UNC and Duke and published January 8th in Pediatrics, the official journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics, "examined 11 school districts with nearly 100,000 students/staff open for 9 weeks of in-person instruction, tracking the secondary transmission of SARS-CoV-2," concluding "Within-school infections were extremely rare...If secondary transmission were as common in schools as in the community, we would anticipate 800–900 secondary infections within schools; however, only 32 within-school SARS-CoV-2 transmissions occurred," and "no instances of child-to-adult transmission of SARS-CoV-2 were reported within schools." Although some teacher unions push to keep schools closed, the researchers used science and data to conclude, "Our data support the concept that schools can stay open safely in communities with widespread community transmission."

Another January study conducted by the National Center for Research on Education Access and Choice analyzed data from all US counties and established a safety metric for reopening of schools: 36-44 new hospitalizations per 100,000 persons per week. The study authors said, "We found no evidence that reopening schools in-person or in a hybrid form increased COVID hospitalizations in the 75 percent of counties that had low COVID hospitalization rates during the summer, before reopening schools. Our results suggest that it seems safe to reopen schools when there are no more than 36 to 44 total new COVID hospitalizations per 100,000 people per week."

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

NC Senate District 46



Sen. Warren Daniel
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919-715-7823

Dear Friends, I hope your 2021 New Year is off to a great start. Here's a little bit about my January. On January 4th, 2021, I was sworn-in for my sixth term in the NC Senate and will continue to represent NC District 46, Avery, Burke, and Caldwell counties. My swearing-in ceremony was held in the new community room of the Avery County Agricultural Extension Building in conjunction with the first 2021 meeting of Avery County Commissioners. Because of COVID restrictions, this was the first time that this new facility has had the opportunity to be used. I was sworn in by newly elected NC Supreme Court Justice, and former state senator, Tamara Barringer, who I served with in the Senate for six years. I am honored that Justice Barringer's first official duty as a Supreme Court Justice was to present my oath of office. The following week, on January 13th, the NC Senate and NC House convened for a one-day organizational session to appoint the officers of each body; which on the Senate side included the Senate Principal Clerk, Sergeant at Arms, and Senate President Pro Tempore. Sen. Phil Berger was re-elected to the President Pro Tem position for the 6th straight time and will continue leading the Senate in that capacity. Each Senate member also received their official committee assignments, in which I was appointed as Co-Chair of the Finance Committee, Redistricting and Elections Committee, and Appropriations Subcommittee on Justice and Public Safety (JPS). I will continue to serve as a member of several other committees, including the Appropriations/Base Budget Committee, Judiciary Committee, Rules Committee, Transportation Committee, and the Select Committee on Prison Safety. My colleagues and I anticipate a productive session in the coming months. Some major policy items that I will be working on include, COVID-19 relief, broadband funding, election law reforms, hospital patient visitation, redistricting, and others. I think you will see some encouraging changes in North Carolina law and policy over the coming months.

My office building and room number in Raleigh will remain the same: Room 627 of the Legislative Office Building. In closing, I am honored and humbled by the tremendous responsibility the people of the 46th district have given me to represent you in the General Assembly. Our state continues to face great challenges, as well as many opportunities for positive change, and I will work diligently to represent the people of Avery, Burke, and Caldwell counties to continue making North Carolina a better place to live, work and raise a family. Former Governor McCrory led our state out of the last recession in what he called the "Carolina Comeback," and in 2021 we will need to duplicate those efforts in the sequel, the "Carolina Comeback 2.0."

NC House District 85



Rep. Dudley Green

Rep. Dudley Greene Seated as Representative for 2021-22 Legislative Session Raleigh, NC —State Representative Dudley Greene was officially sworn-in and seated on the House floor today to serve the people of House District 85 which includes Avery, McDowell, Mitchell counties. This will be Rep. Greene's first term in the North Carolina General Assembly. "As I've said before, I am humbled more than words can express and honored more than I can say to serve as a Representative for the area I am privileged to call home," said Rep. Greene. "I look forward to getting started in this new role to help meet the challenges and expand the opportunities for our district and state." The Opening Day Ceremony marked the official start of the 2021-22 legislative session. Legislators took the oath of office, agreed-upon chamber rules for the session, and elected leadership for each chamber. The legislature is scheduled to return on January 27th to begin the long session.

God Bless America

YOUR GOVERNMENT PAGES

NC House District 86



Rep. Hugh Blackwell
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Closure of our school classrooms and in-person instruction because of the COVID-19 pandemic is causing never-before-experienced harm to students in our schools. Recent scientific assessments by the Center for Research on Educational Outcomes (CREDO) at Stanford University and by the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) are confirming what the anecdotal evidence has indicated: devastating learning losses. The loss is especially true in mathematics where it appears most pronounced. Math learning, perhaps especially, is cumulative, meaning that it depends on what has been learned and retained from earlier in a student's education. But, in all subject areas, when learning is interrupted, delayed, incomplete, or stopped, students lose much of what was learned before. Additional research from other major assessment organizations is expected to confirm the findings from CREDO and NWEA.

What these assessments do not address is the policy decisions that need to be made to respond to student learning losses. Returning to pre-COVID classroom remedial instruction approached will not adequately address the losses. Creativity, boldness, and a true commitment to individualized student learning is required. For each student individually, at all grade levels, the question of "What can be done to help this child realize his or her potential?" should be our goal. That, in turn, involves frequent, honest assessments of where each student is and what he or she needs. Sadly, for most, learning losses will not be easily, successfully remediated. Many students will require two to three years of targeted, individualized instruction and support to overcome their accumulated learning losses. An absolute, top priority of the North Carolina legislature as we convene again in late January will be to wrestle with what needs doing to help our students recover from their educational losses.

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price-to-earnings ratio of the global stock market is over 27, considerably higher than the 30-year average. Combine these record valuations with an ailing global economy, and you have a recipe for disaster.

A Dangerous Economic Crisis

So what does all this mean? It means a major economic crisis is on the horizon. It may be the worst global economic crisis ever – worse than the Great Depression. This is cause for concern for more than just financial reasons.

In times of chaos and economic instability, dangerous political leaders and demagogues capture the public imagination. Past economic crises led to the rise of Napoleon, the launch of the Bolshevik Revolution, and the consolidation of German state power in the hands-off Adolph Hitler. All these events had grave consequences for the entire world, not just the individual nations in question. Why should we believe this time will be any different?

Why This is Relevant to Bible Prophecy

The Bible describes terrible economic conditions in the end times. Revelation 6 tells us an entire day’s wages will barely buy enough food to survive (Revelation 6:5-6). This describes a world ravaged by hyperinflation, and it’s the backdrop against which the Antichrist makes his drive for global conquest (Revelation 6:3-4).

Ultimately, the Antichrist will implement a global economic system that requires the people of the world to worship him. The Bible says he will require everyone on earth to receive a mark, and no one will be able to buy or sell without the mark (Revelation 13:17). We see the beginnings of this system today. Central banks openly discuss plans to replace national currencies with new cryptocurrencies, giving their governments unprecedented power. With such power, not only will the government be able to track everything you buy or sell, it will be able to kick you out of the economic system – just as the Bible says.

What You Should Do Knowing all this, what should you do? A global economic crisis is coming. How can you best prepare for it?

The most important thing you can do is to build your life on a firm foundation. Jesus says anyone who listens to Him and follows His teachings is wise, like a man who builds his house on solid rock. When the storm comes, his house won’t collapse because it’s built on solid rock. But anyone who hears His teachings and doesn’t obey is like a man who builds his house on shifting sand. When the storm comes, his house will collapse with a mighty crash (Matthew 7:24-27).

Be like the man who builds his house on solid rock. Build your life on the unmovable rock – Jesus Christ. If you do, not only will you survive in a global economic crisis, you’ll thrive. In fact, with Jesus, you can weather any crisis the world brings. Remember, in this world, you will face many trials and sorrows, but take heart for He has overcome the world (John 16:33). The days ahead will be tough for the whole world, but those who trust in Him will not be disappointed (Romans 10:11).

What do you think? Are we currently on the verge of a global economic crisis? Copyright © 2021 End-Times-Bible-Prophecy.com, All rights reserved.

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Medical Patient Modesty

No Visitor Policy at Hospital Is Inhumane

By Misty Roberts
Haywood County



As the founder of Medical Patient Modesty (www.patient-modesty.org), a non-profit organization that works to educate patients about their rights to dignity, privacy, and freedom from abuse in medical settings, I was very heartbroken that many hospitals including Mission Hospital, McDowell Hospital, and many other hospitals in North Carolina implemented a zero-visitor policy in March when the coronavirus pandemic began and again in November/December.

While it is wonderful that most hospitals allow pediatric and labor & delivery patients to have one support person with them, all patients have the same right to one support person at all times as well. No patient should have to recover or even die alone.

Thankfully, most hospitals east of Marion such as Carolinas HealthCare System Blue Ridge-Morganton have a more compassionate visitor policy. The hospital in Morganton allows one designated visitor for most patients.

Hospital administrators are responsible for controlling the spread of COVID-19, but the zero-visitor policy is too extreme and violates a patient’s rights.

- A better solution would be requiring all patients’ visitors to:
- Undergo health screenings with temperature checks and special questionnaires
 - Remain with the patient they are supporting and no interactions with other patients
 - Wear masks

Because of the limited time devoted to each patient, it’s impossible for even the best medical professionals to provide personalized attention to each patient. Technology cannot substitute for in-person interaction, respectful advocacy, and the protection from abuse which (despite even best efforts by hospitals) can only be guaranteed by the constant presence of a loved one.

The zero-visitor policy, even during a pandemic, is inhumane and should never be implemented.

The truth is this policy does more harm than good. More people will die from non-COVID health issues such as heart attacks now because they will forego potentially life-saving medical procedures because they do not want to recover alone. Also, more patients, especially the elderly, will give up the will to live since they do not have a loved one present to support them in their recovery. Also, patients who were forced to recover alone at the hospital may forego medical care in the future because they were so traumatized by recovering alone.

For many years, husbands were not allowed to be present for their wives’ C-Sections until several people challenged this policy. In the 1970s and 1980s, this policy changed because so many people voiced their opposition to this policy.

I encourage everyone especially patients & their families and caring medical professionals to challenge hospitals with the no visitor policy. We need to unite our voices and put pressure on hospital administrators to abandon this horrible policy. Also, I encourage everyone to go to hospitals east of Marion if possible if they need medical care to show the hospitals that have no visitor policies that we do not support their visitor restrictions.

I encourage everyone to read the article, No Visitor Policy During a Pandemic at <http://patientmodesty.org/novisitorpolicy.aspx> and watch the video, Zero Visitor Policy During Coronavirus at www.youtube.com/patientmodesty.

If you would like to help advocate to end this inhumane policy please email me at info@patientmodesty.org

Misty Roberts is the president of Medical Patient Modesty.



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Trails End Log Church

The World's Largest Log Church

By Joseph Wardlow
Oregon City, Oregon



Trails End Log Church, “The World’s Largest Log Church” is being built at the end of the Oregon Trail in Oregon City, Oregon.

Fourteen years ago, God said to me “Build me a church” and I have stood faithful all these years seeking the timing and His direction. Doors have opened and now is His timing and I want to introduce you to what God is doing. The name is “**Trails End Log Church**”.

When completed, Trails End Log Church will be turned over to the NW Southern Baptist Convention.

Historic Significance

The historic significance and impact of Trails End Log Church being “The World’s Largest Log Church” at “The End of the Oregon Trail” in Oregon City, **Oregon will be far-reaching.**

The church will be built out of Cedar; which is God’s favorite tree. There are 28 verses in the Bible referencing Cedar.

Oregon City

Oregon city is God’s chosen location for Trails End Log Church because it is the historic location of the end of the Oregon Trail where Jason Lee and Robert Booth, ‘Circuit Riding Preachers to the West’ brought the Word of God to the far side of the nation - Oregon.

The Log Church represents the time period when Christianity was founded in Oregon.

The Contractor

Pioneer Log Homes, headquartered in BC, Canada, will be our contractor. We will



be working with their US Representative out of New Mexico.

A Draw to Hear the Gospel

Trails End Log church will draw in many souls to see this beautiful wonder God has told me to build. While there, they will hear the Gospel.

The project is not to honor a building, but to bring honor and glory to the Lord and save souls.

The Purpose

The purpose of the vision of Trails End Log Church is to teach the “truth” of God’s Word and

Help people find a personal relationship with Jesus Christ

Help believers grow in their relationship with the Lord.

Become disciples of Jesus Christ to further His kingdom.

(Mark 16:15)

The Need

God’s light is needed more today than ever before in our nation, and around the world.

Trails End Log Church will be a beacon of hope at “The End of the Oregon Trail”.

Please check out our website at trailsendlogchurch.com

Joseph Wardlow grew up in poverty in logging camps in Northern California. My family’s home was not a Christian home, but quite the opposite. When we retired, we moved to Redmond, Oregon, and as a lay pastor, I started a ministry called “Trails End Ministry.” It was an evangelistic outreach in the trails and parks that run through the center of Redmond.

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Mitchell County Safeplace

Kate's Story
By Noah Sedberry
Mitchell County

Mitchell County SafePlace serves Mitchell and occasionally surrounding counties but, like all domestic violence shelters, also is part of a larger network of shelters, crisis management providers, hospitals, and law enforcement. For their own safety victims of domestic violence often come to shelters from out of state or from counties a safe distance away from their abusers. These women and men who come into the shelter are often in crisis and need special care and attention. This is a large part of the mission of SafePlace which is tasked with helping to eliminate domestic violence and sexual abuse through education, advocacy, and crisis services.

Kate, whose name has been changed, is one such survivor of domestic violence who reached out and sought help and is someone we feel, ultimately, that we had the honor to serve.

"I came to SafePlace with three children and a lot of fear and anxiety. Leaving my husband was really scary but staying with him was even more frightening. I thought I stayed with him all those years and put up with the abuse for the children. On reaching SafePlace however, I started learning about the effects the abuse was having on the children as well as on myself. SafePlace helped me to understand the effects of abuse and ways to prevent abuse from happening to my children and me again. For the first time in a long time, I felt safe. Thanks to the staff at SafePlace I was able to regain my confidence enough to go back to school and seek a degree. The counseling I received there was very helpful. SafePlace helped me with a deposit on my home and helped with furniture and food till I could get on my feet. I am grateful that SafePlace was there when I needed them" (Kate, client testimonial).

When Kate came to SafePlace she had no home and was basically living out of her car with her children. Kate was running from her abuser and had no idea where to turn to next, she was frightened and uncertain about what the future would hold. With the staff and resources available at SafePlace we were able to offer her immediate emergency shelter. After taking care of her immediate needs, we went to work with other local agencies and programs to begin rebuilding Kate's life. Through North West Regional Housing Authority, we found Kate a new home for her and her children. Working with our local community college Mayland, we were able to get Kate enrolled in classes to complete her GED. Kate later went on to receive an associate's degree in the medical field and is working on her bachelor's. Finally, through our working relationship with our local DSS, we were able to get Kate TANF benefits as well as food assistance. While still a client of SafePlace Kate attended every support group and made use of every facility and benefit that she and her children could take advantage of.

Using this new strong foundation Kate was able to make a new life for her and her children. Lately, she has been working a part-time job and will be receiving her bachelor's degree this year. Kate ultimately came to us hurt, afraid, and with three children who she needed to protect. However, after coming to SafePlace and being reunited with hope for a new life she has blossomed into a wonderful caring woman who still attends our support groups and spreads that hope to other survivors.

Noah Sedberry was born in *Loafers Glory NC* and currently lives in *Bakersville*. He is the prevention education coordinator at *Mitchell County SafePlace*.



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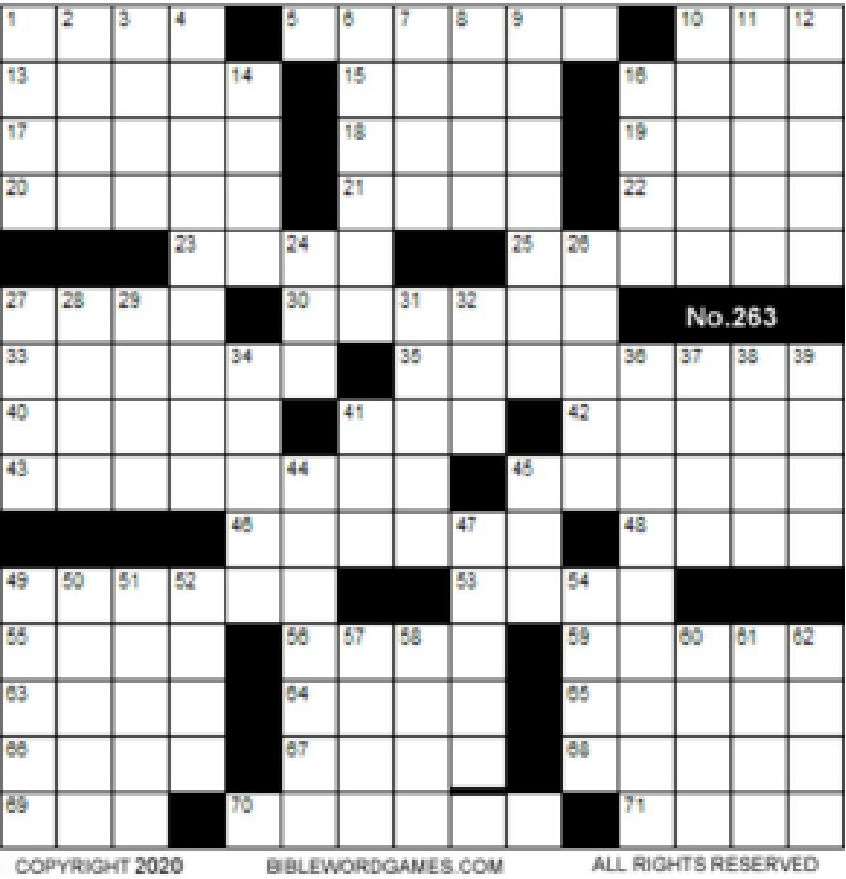
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Crossword

Crossword 263 and Solution
ACROSS
1 All streams ____ into the sea, yet the sea is never full (Eccl 1:7)
5 we understand that the ____ were framed by the word of God (Heb 11:3) KJV
10 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will ____ God. (Matt 5:8)
13 Whosoever sins ye ____, they are remitted unto them (John 20:23) KJV
15 he made a ____ of cherubim of olive wood (1 Kings 6:23)
16 Because thy lovingkindness is better ____ life (Ps 63:3) KJV
17 In the beginning God created the heaven and the ____ (Gen 1:1)
18 fetch olive branches, and ____ branches, and myrtle (Neh 8:15)
19 a great company of the heavenly ____ appeared with the angel (Luke 2:13)
20 Father, keep through ____ own name those whom (John 17:11) KJV
21 foolish ____ took their lamps but did not take any oil (Matt 25:3)
22 said unto the king, Let the king live for ____ (Neh 2:3)
23 son of Seth (Gen 5:6) KJV
25 he shall make even a ____ riddance of all them (Zeph 1:18) KJV
27 Her people all roar like young lions, they growl like lion ____ (Jer 51:38)
30 the ____, the rat, any kind of great lizard (Lev 11:29)
33 and singers joined in ____, as with one voice (2 Chron 5:13)
35 God did extraordinary ____ through Paul (Acts 19:11)
40 the whole herd rushed down the ____ bank into the lake (Matt 8:32)
41 ``son of`' in Hebrew
42 Wherefore the people did ____ with Moses (Ex 17:2) KJV
43 the Egyptians and their chariots and ____ (Ex 14:26)
45 Take heed, beware of the ____ of the Pharisees (Mark 8:15) KJV
46 ____ and thread (Matt 19:24)
48 a time to tear and a time to ____ (Eccl 3:7)
49 ____ the devil, and he will flee from you (James 4:7)
53 if his hands are ____, the house leaks (Eccl 10:18)
55 ____ are creatures of little strength (Prov 30:25)
56 were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their ____ (Dan 3:21) KJV
59 and offered burnt offerings

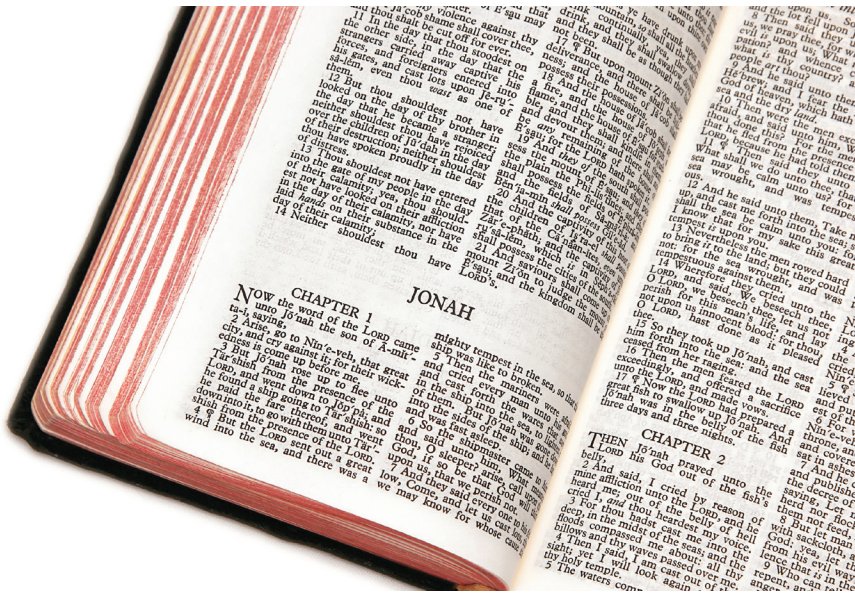
on the ____ (Gen 8:20)
63 they consult a wooden ____ and are answered by a stick (Hos 4:12)
64 Tell them everything I command you; do not ____ a word (Jer 26:2)
65 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth ____ to men (Luke 2:14)
66 no remedy for your ____, no healing for you (Jer 30:13)
67 they will ____ out the bread by weight (Lev 26:26)
68 appointed priests from all ____ of people (1 Kings 12:31)
69 Abraham set apart seven ____ lambs from the flock (Gen 21:28)
70 the prophets declare good to the king with one ____ (2 Chr 18:12) (KJV)
71 The owl will ____ there and lay eggs (Isa 34:15)
DOWN
1 Do not ____ because of evil men or be envious of the wicked (Prov 24:19)
2 Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was ____ (Gen 29:16)
3 Ahab son of ____ became king of Israel (1 Kings 16:29)
4 since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of ____ (Heb 12:1)
6 He will ____ and will exalt himself over everything (2 Thess 2:4)
7 the ____ was upon the earth forty days and forty nights (Gen 7:12)
8 go to the lake and throw out your _____. Take the first fish (Matt 17:27)
9 Then said he unto the ____ of his vineyard (Luke 13:7) KJV
10 push roughly, jostle (Ezek 34:21)
11 I mean not that other men be ____, and ye burdened (2 Cor 8:13) (KJV)
12 She crieth at the gates, at the ____ of the city (Prov 8:3) KJV
14 that appeareth for a little time, and ____ vanisheth away (James 4:14) KJV
16 Also unto ____, O Lord, belongeth mercy (Ps 62:12) KJV
24 So God created man in his ____ image (Gen 1:27)
26 Take off your sandals; the ____ where you are standing is holy (Acts 7:33)
27 ____ was the father of Nimrod (Gen 10:8)
28 He came ____ his own, and his own received him not (John 1:11)
29 King David himself walked behind the ____



(2 Sam 3:31-32)
31 Therefore now ____ your ways and your doings (Jer 26:13) (KJV)
32 Lord, lay not this ____ to their charge (Acts 7:60)
34 key to the house of David; what he ____ no one can shut (Isa 22:22)
36 the wall lizard, the skink and the ____ (Lev 11:30)
37 Jesus replied. "Do this and you will ____." (Luke 10:28)
38 the LORD God planted a garden eastward in ____ (Gen 2:8)
39 The Lord needs it and will ____ it back here shortly (Mark 11:3)
41 and for the ____ that is in the land of Assyria. (Isaiah 7:18)
44 The scoundrel's ____ are wicked, he makes up evil schemes (Isa 32:7)
45 I have ____ thee in right paths (Prov 4:11) KJV
47 ____, O isles, unto me; and hearken (Isaiah 49:1)
49 Heal the sick, ____ the dead,

cleanse those who have (Matt 10:7-8)
50 God did not ____ her with wisdom (Job 39:17)
51 Wise men ____ up knowledge, but the mouth of (Prov 10:14)
52 was in the ____ that is called Patmos (Rev 1:9) KJV
54 I will measure into their ____ the full payment for (Isa 65:7)
57 the book in the Old Testament after Joel
58 son of man, take thee a ____, and lay it before thee (Ezek 4:1) KJV
60 weed (Matt 13:40) (KJV)
61 To make known to the sons of men his mighty ____ (Ps 145:12)
62 thou mayest give him ____ from the days of adversity (Ps 94:13) KJV

Solution on page 14



School Nurses To Help Vaccinate
Community Against COVID-19

By Cheryl Shuffler
Burke County

Burke County Public Schools nurses continue to work on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since March they have been instrumental in educating schools on how to prevent COVID-19 and how to recognize symptoms; in communicating with parents and staff when cases impact schools; and in working with the health department to contact trace and track data. Now that the pandemic is in the vaccination phase, Burke County Public Schools nurses will help the Burke County Health Department give out vaccines.

Burke County Public Schools Head Nurse Miranda Michaels said, “Our nurses will be going out into our community to help whenever and wherever we are needed to assist in administering vaccines to the community. We are available and willing to help with vaccination distribution.”

Burke County Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Larry Putnam said, “I cannot say enough about Mrs. Michaels and our entire nursing staff and their leadership in seeing us through this pandemic. They have put in countless hours, including on nights and weekends, to serve students, parents, and staff. As if runny noses, bee stings, and med administration isn’t enough in a regular school year, our nurses have gone above and beyond during this anything-but-normal academic year. They have been on standby to take their nursing expertise into the community as needed during this pandemic and are now answering the call to administer COVID-19 vaccines.”

Michaels said the nurses have been trained to give the vaccines and will start this week. “We have a great relationship with the health officials in our community and are proud to continue that relationship through this next phase.”

Putnam said the school system is here to help in other ways as well. He said, “We are here to provide assistance in any capacity needed. We have offered not only our nurses but also other staff to help with logistics, as well as resources and even building space to conduct vaccination clinics. We continue to be in this together and take action to help mitigate the effects of this pandemic to get us closer to our new normal, which means ultimately getting our staff and students back into a full-time, healthy learning environment.”



Regarding the status of the vaccine, the health department released information last week that Burke County is currently in Phase 1A of the vaccine rollout. In a week or two, those in the community who are 75 or older will be eligible for the vaccine as part of Phase 1B-Group 1. Teachers are part of the second phase of the state’s vaccine rollout plan, and Putnam and Michaels said Burke County Public Schools is working with the Burke County Health Department on a plan to vaccinate school staff as vaccines become available.

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

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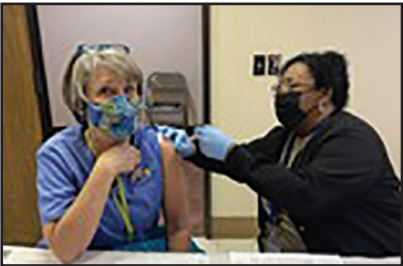
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