

#### Bear Creek Baptist Church

#### Hallelujah, What A Savior!

By Bruce Cannon Mitchell County

I love everything about Easter! What a tremendous demonstration of the love of God! Paul stated in Romans 5:8, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." How amazing! How wonderful!

As I think about all that took place during those few days my mind goes to the tremendous intercessory prayer

Jesus prayed. Just hours before His arrest our Lord was praying for us. Check out these main points to the prayer:

• First, He prayed for Himself:

That the Father would receive Him back into Heaven, and restore the glory He had before the world began. (John 17:4-5).

• Then He prayed for His Disciples:

That the Father would protect, guide, and be with them as they delivered His message. (John 17:18).

• Then he prayed for all Christians:

He prayed for each child of God to have the same unity as exists between He and the Father. A unity, which allows for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and oneness with God, (John 17:20-21).

Shortly after the prayer, Jesus is arrested, nailed to the tree, and left there until dead: the Innocent suffering for the guilty. Again, how amazing! Near the point of death, He said with a loud voice, "It is finished!" (John 19:30). Salvation had been made possible! The Lamb paid the price!

Upon His death, Heaven and Earth were shaken with violent earthquakes, and the earth was covered with darkness. People who had previously died were seen walking about, and the veil in the temple was torn from top to bottom. (Matt 27:51). Having accepted the payment His Son made for sin, the Father tore the veil which made possible our coming to His Throne of Grace. Thank You, Jesus, for making it possible for me to do so!

Jesus had executed the mission given Him by His Father, and in doing so had opened the "Kingdom of Heaven" to all who would receive Him. He was the new Passover Lamb. Never again would there be a need for animal sacrifice. The Lamb of God had shed His blood once and for all!

And then comes the morning! I love this part of the Resurrection Story! Mary

had gotten up early to visit the grave of Jesus, but to her surprise, the body of Jesus was missing. In His place were angels, real angels, and they said to her, "He is not here, He is risen." (Matt 28:6). Surely the words of the angels at the empty tomb, "He is not here, but is risen," are among the most significant words ever spoken, (Luke 24:6),

What do His death, burial, and resurrection mean? No longer does mankind need to be separated from God. We can be forgiven, accepted in the beloved, and declared righteous all because of Him!

How Satan tried to stop this! From Jesus' birth, all through His ministry and even to the Cross Satan tried to keep this from happening. But God....!

The chief priests and Pharisees had tried to stop the inevitable, but neither Roman soldiers, government seals, nor large stones could prevent the King of Kings and Lord of Lords from accomplishing His mission!

Jesus is the true message of Easter, and Because Of Him mankind can have a relationship with their Creator, and be with Him for eternity. Easter brings hope, new beginnings, and Eternal Life, made possible by the One who loved us enough to die in our place, Jesus Christ.

For much of the world, Easter is only a tradition celebrated by colored Easter Eggs and the Easter Bunny. To the Followers of Christ, the true message of Easter proclaims the greatest act of love known to man. God's infinite love for mankind is the true message of Easter, a love that will continue into Eternity.

Amen! Do you see why I love Easter so? From my heart to yours...Happy Easter!

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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#### What We Believe

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

#### $h_{\alpha}^{\Gamma}$

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 Corinthi-

ans 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, emoinal, 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)

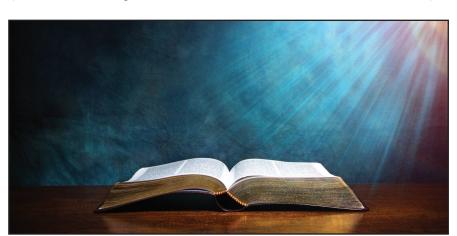
#### **Eternity & Eternal Security**

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)



#### **BLUE RIDGE CHRISTIAN NEWS**

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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



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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..."

#### **Landis Orthodox Presbyterian Church**

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

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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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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

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www.pleasanthillbc.church

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#### **Burkemont** Baptist Church

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

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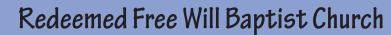


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#### A Promise Honored

By Patricia Jackson McDowell County

When I was a six-year-old girl, two couples from Oshkosh, Wisconsin, stopped by our home. They wanted to see a field of cotton stalks with cotton bolls. They planned to take them back home to show other farmers. As they returned home, they promised to send me back a gift for helping them.



Each day I ran to the mailbox, looking for my promised gift. Weeks passed, October and Halloween came, Thanksgiving and Christmas, but the hoped-for gift never came. My mom explained that many people make promises, but very few keep them.

In 2 Samuel, Chapter 9, we read a promise between David and King Saul's son Jonathan. Jonathan asked David to show kindness to him, not only while he lived but to his house forever. Jonathan was to be second in command in David's future reign, and David was to protect Jonathan's family (I Samuel 20: 14–16 and verse 42). Jonathan loved David as he loved his own self.

After Jonathan, his father King Saul, and two brothers died in battle; King David inquired if there was any left of Saul's house. He desired to keep his promise to Jonathan. Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son, lived in a secret location, knowing he might be a threat to David's throne. It was a tradition to kill all relatives of the previous King.

David reassured Mephibosheth that he had nothing to fear and that he would restore to him all the land of King Saul and his father, Jonathan. David honored Mephibosheth by telling him he and his son Micah were to eat at his table continually. King David extended kindness to Jonathan for the sake of his father, Jonathan.

In Luke 22:30, Jesus told his disciples, "they may eat and drink at his table in heaven." It is based on a promise covenant; accepting the Lord Jesus Christ as Our Savior. If we honor our covenant with Jesus, we will eat with our Lord and Savior, Jesus. God will extend his kindness to us for the sake of his son Jesus.

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

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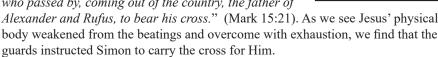
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#### Mt. Carmel Baptist Church

#### Bearing The Cross - Simon of Cyrene

By Toby Crowder Mitchell County

As we celebrate the Easter season each year, many stories and characters from the Bible claim our attention that we may not otherwise consider. One such person is Simon of Cyrene; the man who was compelled to carry the cross of our Lord. In Marks's account of this event, we read "And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of



The Bible says that Simon was compelled to carry this cross: This means that he was probably ordered to do it by the Roman guards. The Greek word is angareuō and means "to employ a courier, dispatch a mounted messenger, press into public service, compel to go" It is actually a Persian word that details a courier who was commandeered to carry precious cargo. At this point, we do not know whether Simon was a follower of Christ, but he was constrained by the guards. As Simon was pushed into this decision that would forever change him, we observe a change in his direction. Notice that he was coming out of the country... but was compelled and made to go in a different direction. To carry the cross of Christ requires that we have a total change of direction. Notice Jesus' words to the disciples when they were called:

Matt 16:24-25 "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall

Also, consider Paul and his conversion on the Damascus Road. When He accepted Christ, he had a definite change of direction in his life and only wanted to follow the leading of the Savior:

Acts 9:6 "And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do."

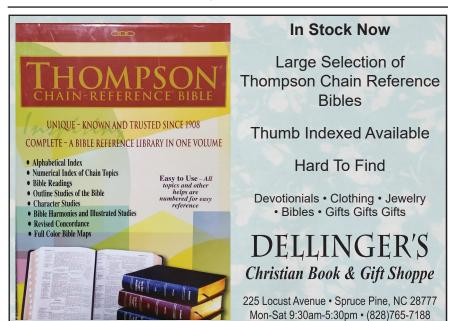
As with Paul, I believe that this was a great "turning point" in the life of Simon. Spiritually speaking, no one can bear the cross of Christ without a change in their life and direction. In order to get under Jesus' cross, Simon would have had to have a change of his plans... he had to deny himself and what he wanted. He was on his way out of the city, but he was compelled and turned back. For many who claim to be Christian today, there has been no true change of direction in their lives. If we are to be totally committed to carrying the Cross of Christ, it is going to cost us some things in life.

To the young person, it may cost them socially to be different from the crowd. To the older adult, it may cost you the "big job" or social connections and influence. Regardless of our age or station in life, carrying the cross of Christ in today's world will cost us something!

Jesus repeatedly let his disciples know that by bearing His cross and following Him that they would be despised by the world: Luke 6:22 "Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake." James Calvert was a missionary to Fuji. The captain of his ship warned him of the coming dangers and that he would risk his life among the savages there... Calvert's reply was "We died before we came here."

On the day that Jesus fulfilled the will of the Father at Calvary, I believe that Simon the Cyrene died to himself... his wishes... and his direction, as he fell under the cross of the wounded Savior. Are we willing to die for Christ? Are we willing to submit to a change of direction and become what He wants and compels us to become? Are we willing to bear the cost of the cross?

Toby Crowder serves as Pastor of Mt. Carmel Baptist Church in Spruce Pine. He and his wife Leslie have been married for 26 years and have two daughters, Emilee, and Katy. He can be contacted via the church's website MCfamilyforChrist.org or mtcarmelsprucepine@gmail.com



#### Pleasant Hill Baptist Church

#### For the Joy

By Caron Cline Burke County

The average individual possesses an inaccurate understanding of joy. Webster defines joy as 'the emotion evoked by well-being, success or good fortune or by the prospect of possessing what one desires. The world's definition would indicate that joy is quite transient, coming and going based on life's happenings. The word of God provides a promise of abiding and enduring joy available for every follower of



Jesus Christ, regardless of circumstances. However, this is no mere emotion, but a state of being in the midst of pain, adversity, and confusion. The secret to experiencing God's joy is setting our hearts and minds on the things above, focusing on our future inheritance, both in this life and in the one to come. Throughout the Old Testament, glimpses of joy arise. Nehemiah received an assignment from the Lord to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem after the Babylonian invasion. Once the wall was completed, the people were gathered together while Ezra, the priest, read the Law of the Lord to the crowd. The people began to weep at the sound of God's words, but Nehemiah said, 'Do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength'. (Nehemiah 8:10) The word of God has the power to convict of sin as well as to convert and cleanse from sin. Rather than mourn over past iniquities, we must receive the joy offered in the grace, strength, and mercy of God. In Psalm 30, David penned this song of thanksgiving for the Lord's deliverance from his enemies. The situation seemed hopeless; death seemed imminent. Yet David trusted in the goodness and faithfulness of God. He said, 'Weeping may remain for the night, but joy comes in the morning'. Whether David lived or died, he was confident that in God's presence there was the fullness of joy. (Psalm 16:11) He looked forward to a gloriously joyful future. Psalm 126 is another song describing God's deliverance of His people from Babylonian captivity after seventy long years. During those years of struggle and sorrow in a foreign land, many tears were shed. However, God had tucked a promise into the writings of the prophet Jeremiah which stated that after seventy years, the people would be released. Psalm 126:5 says 'Those who sow in tears shall reap with joyful shouting. 'Joy sprouts when tears water the seeds of God's promises.

If ever anyone painted a portrait of joy amid tribulation, it was Jesus. Isaiah 53 describes Him as the suffering servant. "He was despised and forsaken of men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief...Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried...He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities...He was oppressed and He was afflicted...But the Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief'. Who could experience joy in the face of such horror? Jesus! How? He looked ahead to a joyful future with His bride. Jesus is our example and the writer of Hebrews reminds us once more of the secret to experiencing abiding joy. Hebrews 12:2 says, 'Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has set down at the right hand of the throne of God'. The price for our souls was Jesus' life and yet He endured the pain and suffering by focusing on God's promise in John 3:16. 'For God so loved the whole world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him would not perish but have everlasting life'. Nothing brought Jesus more joy than the prospects of redeeming humanity from the slave market of sin, death, and the devil. Every strike of the whip and every bang of the hammer could not compare to the moment when He would be resurrected and Satan would be forever defeated! How can we endure with joy the many tribulations that come from existing in a broken world? First, by receiving Jesus' sacrifice on the cross as the payment for our sins; secondly, by loving Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength; lastly, by taking up our cross daily and following Him. On the night that Jesus was betrayed He made this promise to all who followed these steps: 'These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy made be made full'. (John 15:11) Joy is always within reach; just grasp His nail-scarred Hand.

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



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#### Glenwood Baptist Church

"Something to Think About" -Don't Be Like A Donkey

By Dennis Love McDowell County

David instructs us in Psalm 32:9a; "To not be as the horse or as the mule, which have no understanding." It's interesting to study the Bible to see how often God uses animals to teach us spiritual truths. He says in Proverbs 6:6; "Go to the



ant and consider her ways." An ant is an example of hard work. Did you know that ants can lift fifty times their own weight? If I could do that I could lift 9,000 pounds. WOW, The Bible also instructs us to learn from the rabbit. Even though the rabbit is feeble, it will build his home in the rocks or the ground. The rabbit, being weak and defenseless against larger animals, must use wisdom in building his home in safe places. God holds up the rabbit in His Word for us as an example of wisdom. Jesus said; "Behold the fowls of the air." Why? Because they teach us to trust God for our daily provisions. Jesus also advises us to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves in Matthew 10:16.

But here in Psalm 32:9, we are told NOT to be like the mule. The one trait that we commonly connect with a mule or a donkey is one of stubbornness. David is simply warning us against stubbornly refusing to obey the Lord.

One of my heroes is the late Amos Alonzo Stagg. He coached football at the University of Chicago until he was 70 years old. Then he moved to The College of the Pacific where he coached for another 14 years. He was then 84 years old. A guy named Eddie LeBaron, the first quarterback of the Dallas Cowboys, was the last All-American athlete to play under Coach Stagg. When Coach Stagg retired from The College of the Pacific, he joined his son's coaching staff for another six years, until he was 90 years old. Then he coached one more year, as a junior college assistant, finally retiring at the age of 91.

Early in his life, Coach Stagg, a devout Presbyterian, felt called into the ministry, but feeling that he was unsuited for the pulpit, he went into coaching. He said, "My ministry is the young men of America." As a Christian, Coach Stagg never used profanity. The worst word he ever used was jackass. If a player messed up he would call him a jackass. If he really messed up he would call him a "double jackass." If he did really, really badly, he called him a "triple jackass." When there was extreme provocation he would call the unfortunate player "the king of all jackasses." His players said he never left the practice field with humans on it. He always left the entire squad grazing.

Sarah Churchill told in her book Keep on Dancing that her father Winston once commented to her that we had, to a large extent, succeeded in the civilized world in erasing the lion and the tiger from the human soul. But we had not succeeded in removing the donkey.

What about you? All of us are occasionally accused of acting like a donkey. Sometimes the charges are justified. I know I'm guilty. How are we to respond to those charges? Someone put it like this: Solitary shots should be ignored, but when they come from several directions, it's time to pay attention. If one person calls you a donkey, ignore them. If two call you a donkey, check for hoof-prints. If three call you a donkey, find a saddle! David's warning to us is clear. "Don't have a stubborn and rebellious spirit. Don't force God to drive you and chasten you into doing what is right. In other words, it's better to be an ant, a rabbit, a bird, a serpent, or a dove than to be a donkey! To me, this is something for each of us to really think about.

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

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#### High Country Prison Ministry

By Jody Griffin

Avery and Mitchell Counties

"And there are also many other things that Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen." (John 21:25 KJV)

Paul Harvey was an American radio broadcast personality who was renowned for his infamous depictions of people and products that had humble beginnings which he would describe in captivating detail. Just as listeners were



ready to move on from the harsh circumstances he spoke of, Mr. Harvey would allow a brief interruption of the broadcast to accommodate the show's sponsors. Returning after the commercial break, he would draw the listener back in with the phrase, "And now...the Rest of the Story". Often this portion would include a reversal of fortune for someone.

One of the more overlooked verses in the New Testament is this declaration found in the conclusion of the Gospel of John. It indicates that there is so much more to the story of Jesus Christ than what we have contained for us in the pages of the Bible. As a matter of fact, John claims that if we knew everything Jesus did before His crucifixion and His subsequent resurrection that there would be no way to contain the record of His marvelous deeds!

The significance of this Truth cannot be overstated. The very reason there are Professional Clinical Chaplains deployed by the North Carolina Department of Public Safety and the Division of Prisons inside the institutions of incarceration is that fundamentally, no one's story is completely written. Our task as Chaplains is to remind the incarcerated community that everyone can begin writing a new chapter of their story every day. Every. Single. Day.

This new chapter presents us with choices that affect the trajectory of our lives. And every day each of us has the opportunity to create a legacy to the One Who offered Himself as a sacrifice on a hill called Calvary. The choice He made to yield to the Father's Will, means that the Works of Jesus keep on going as He demonstrates Grace and Love and Peace and Blessing to all willing to experience the unspeakable joy of a life lived in His Name!

The point is that our story is not completely written! Every day we can choose to live by faith that our story is a small part of His story! SO many books could be written, SO many lives touched and changed if we would simply see that there IS a Rest of the Story for all of us! No matter where we are on life's journey, no matter what we have done in the past, no matter our personal weaknesses...the "Rest of the Story" of the Lord's miraculous presence at work within us makes the future ripe with possibilities!

Paul Harvey died in February of 2009. But it seems that his contribution to the world is still inspiring others to this day. If we could find in this passage the motivation to start from where we are and work at making choices that reflect the Presence of the Lord within us, we can share in the humbling, joyful work of lifting others up! We can influence "The Rest of the Story" for someone else!

Commit yourself to see the possibilities for good in others. In doing so, you will secure a part in the greatest story ever told. Imagine the books that could be written to the Glory of God!

Thank you for your prayers and support of the Community Funded Chaplain at AMCI! You are helping affect the trajectory of the lives of so many! May God Bless You and may "The Rest of Your Story" be blessed by the incredible works of the Living God in Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.

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



#### Life Lessons

#### He Arose!

By Doug Harrell Mitchell County

The two words, "He Arose", make all the difference to those of us who are Christian and are followers of Jesus Christ. As we go into the Easter season remember the reason we celebrate, it is not for the bunny rabbit or the Easter eggs, it is to remember the fact that on the third day Jesus arose from the dead. He and He alone conquered death and its sting.



"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians 15:55-57 KJV

There are hundreds of religions in the world but there is only one that has a risen savior, that Savior is Jesus Christ our Lord. Let us remember that as we go through each day and let us continue to pray that our nation and our leaders will be grounded in that very fact which has distinguished this nation from other nations in the world. We need to always remember that it was the principles of Christianity that were the foundation blocks on which our great nation was built.

"And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep." 1 Corinthians 15:4-6 KJV

While I give thanks for the greatest gift ever known to man, I also worry about the future of our great nation and where we are headed this Easter season. The entire tenet of our constitution was founded on Judeo-Christian values and principles. All through the letters and writing of our founding fathers are found numerous references to these Biblical foundations and I see these being eroded so quickly that it is astounding.

As we celebrate a risen Savior this month, also stop to pray for a falling nation that appears to be moving at breakneck speed toward trying to remove any reference to our very core of foundational building blocks. Our very society is being challenged to the point that we cannot trust God as the creator of our very gender. We can no longer look between our legs at birth and determine if we were created male or female. We are doing worse than the heathen civilizations of old that sacrificed their children to different gods of the supposed universe.

Stop whatever you are doing and give thanks for a risen Savior, our Lord, and Savior Jesus Christ, and while you are on your knees, pray as never before for this nation, one nation under God, to be turned back to "In God We Trust".

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." 2 Chronicles 7:14 KJV

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





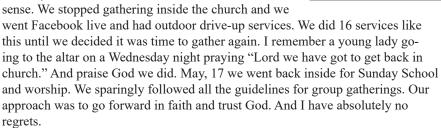
#### Snow Hill Baptist Church

#### We are a Better Church because of COVID

By Dean Honeycutt

Mitchell County

A year ago, the COVID-19 pandemic was declared, and we went into a tailspin. We prepared for the worst and tried to make decisions as best we could. It seemed like everyone had an opinion about what to do, but honestly, some of the state mandates did not make much sense. We stopped gathering inside the church and we



Some things you just cannot control and a virus is one of them. I learned that you cannot stop something that you cannot see. As a pastor, I could not prevent people from getting sick, but what I could do is be faithful and encourage God's people to live by faith. In Acts chapter 5 the Jews are trying to stop the Apostles from preaching in the name of Jesus and a doctor of the law named Gamaliel says if this work is of God you "cannot overthrow it." How true that is. Mandates and orders could not stop us from meeting and worshipping our Savior. Sure, we had some sickness and experienced some difficult times but what Christian era has not had its share of tribulation? The Lord He is God and what He purposes cannot be stopped. As Job struggled in his sickness, he said "who can hinder God, or who can question what God is doing?"

COVID-19 is a birth pain that Jesus told us was coming. Yet the church was unprepared. I praise God that He helped me navigate these difficult waters. If I would have listened to what the experts were saying we would still be out of the church. It is better to obey God rather than man. Navigating these turbulent times was by no means easy, I have seen the hand of God move and the Holy Spirit Guide decisions and the weather. On one occasion we had some sickness, and I did not feel well but praise God we had two Sundays of bad weather and slick road conditions where we could not gather. This two-week period allowed many of our members including myself to stay at home and get to feeling better. This was the hand of God helping me and our church. God has been so good to me and I praise Him.

In Acts chapter sixteen the Holy Spirit of God forbid Paul to preach in Asia, and then God did not allow Paul to go to Bithynia. Instead in a Vision, Paul saw a man of Macedonia saying, "come over into Macedonia and help us." God is sovereign over all things. God can stop events from happening and God can start them. My adult child was sick and not feeling well. They had lost their taste and smell, and I just knew it was COVID. I did not want to miss church, and I did not want to stop gathering. I just knew that if my child were positive for COVID then we would all be quarantined. So, they went and got tested and the test result came back negative. Praise God. The Lord took care of that and blessed me and my family. I am not saying that I may never be quarantined, but praise God so far, the Lord has delivered us. The Lord has been so good to us this year.

The Lord has blessed our little church. We do things a little differently now but honestly, I praise God for the changes we made. We are honestly a better church because of Covid. I thank God we will not go back to normal. We try to focus on what is important, prayer and preaching. The Bible says it is by the foolishness of preaching that people are saved. I have seen God move this year and work in the lives of those who love Him. If God chooses to use a birth pain to do a "little weeding in the garden" then praise God. He knows what He is doing. It is not my job to keep people in Church. If the Holy Spirit does not convict them, then they do not belong in the family. That is what the Bible says, "the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the child of God."

I have seen faithful men and women with compromised immune systems and diabetes come to church Sunday after Sunday. You know God has a remnant. Did you know that not a single person passed into eternity without God's permission? Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life." We spend so much trying to save our lives than lose them for the Lord Jesus Christ. God is in control and He alone sits on the throne.

I want to encourage you to live by faith trusting in God alone. The Bible says, "Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it." True Churches will prevail because they are supported by overcomers. Overcomers like you and me who love the Lord so much that they will gather and worship the Lord Jesus Christ during adversity. Jesus Christ will "present to Himself a glorious Church." COVID-19 is part of that process of the Lord Jesus purging His Church for His glory. That is why we can honestly say true God-fearing churches will benefit from this pandemic. We will be stronger. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" For we are more than conquerors through Jesus Christ who loves us.

God bless you and we love 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.

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#### Morganton Seventh Day Adventist Church

#### The Easter Surprise

By Steve Bietz Burke County

Supper was on the table but nobody reached for a fork to take a bite. Why not? No time...not with the news that had just come to light. Yes they were weary and yes they were hungry, but because of what they had just discovered, their tiredness and hunger vanished. And the two of them jump up from the supper table and immediately begin running, in



the dark, all the way back to Jerusalem. When they arrived at their destination, no amount of knocking would bring anyone to the door which was locked tight. Finally, they gave their names and gained entrance. The followers of the Teacher who had been executed on Friday were assembled behind bolted doors. The Bible informs us that these followers of Jesus were not gathered together to have a worship service, no sir! They were gathered out of fear. They were afraid that what the Jewish leaders had done to their teacher Jesus, would now come and do to them. At any moment they expected to be arrested.

The two men who had just run all the way back to Jerusalem from Emmaus, are let in the partially opened door but no one noticed that a third individual came in at the same time. The two men from Emmaus could not get their news out fast enough. He Is Risen From The Grave!! Those assembled are blown away by their story. Suddenly, the individual who had slipped in the door unnoticed with the two from Emmaus turns off His invisibility button or whatever it is that allows Him to be seen with mere mortal eyes. Jesus speaks and says Shalom, my friends. What happens next we find recorded in Luke 24:36,37. "Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, Peace to you. But they were terrified and frightened and supposed that they had seen a spirit." It is pure shock and awe. The disciples had secluded themselves behind bolted doors because they were expecting to get arrested. They had been intimate companions of the one who had been executed for sedition. The room was tense. Now they hear the unbelievable report that Jesus is alive. Apparently, they are completely unprepared for a personal encounter with the risen Christ. After all, He had not knocked on the door. One moment He was not in the room and then there He was. And what is the response of those present? It's a ghost!! Run for your lives! That is the welcome Jesus gets from His friends. Stunning! Jesus quickly says please don't run, instead, put your hands on me. I am real, it is I, Jesus. Then it is that Christ asks an extremely provocative question. We see it in Luke 24:38. "Why are you troubled?"

Let's look at three passages in the scriptures and we may begin to understand Christ's question, "Why are you troubled?" In Mark 8:31 we read "And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again." And then in Mark 9:31, we read "For He taught His disciples and said to them, The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day." And again in Mark 10:34 we find these words, "and they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again." Again and again and again and who knows how many agains, did Jesus tell His disciples that He would rise from the grave on the third day. And there the disciples are in the upper room when Jesus turns off His invisible button and what do the disciples do. They go completely nuts! He is a ghost run for your lives! And Jesus asks, why are you going berserk? Why are you troubled? I told you and I told you and I told you again and again that you would see me on the third day after I was executed and this is how you greet me? Now if those followers of Jesus, if they would have been honest, could only have replied with one answer. We went nuts because we did not believe you. Jesus had been very specific and did not say I will come back to life someday or I will rise soon. Jesus said I will rise on the third day.

To so many today, Jesus is not real, just a ghost. Just a figment of the imagination of those crazy Christians. We each must handle Jesus for ourselves, or He will never be real. And how do we handle Christ? We handle Christ thru the Word. Why are you troubled? Well, honestly we did not believe your Word. Now yes, we live in a world that is in trouble. Yet Jesus makes it very clear that if we will believe and follow His Word, the Bible, then although we live in a world of trouble, we will not have troubled hearts. Jesus gave His word that He would rise the third day, yet when He did, His followers went nuts and were sure they had seen a ghost. It was an Easter Surprise that did not need to be a surprise. You and I can handle Jesus in His Holy Word and even though we are surrounded by trouble, we will not be troubled. After all, Jesus said in John 14:1 "Let not your heart be troubled." I will let you read the rest so that you can handle Jesus yourself. That way you will not be surprised or troubled.

Steve Bietz, Pastor, Morganton Seventh day Adventist Church.



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#### Dropped Passes and Fallen Humanity

By Tracy Jessup

"But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ - by grace you have been saved - and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:4-6)



In his book Fearless, author and pastor Max Lucado tells the story of Noble Doss who was haunted by one particular dropped pass in 1941 that he says cost his team the national championship and haunted him until the day he died. In Lucado's words, "The University of Texas football team was ranked number one in the nation. Hoping for an undefeated season and a berth in the Rose Bowl, they played conference rival Baylor University. With a 7-0 lead in the third quarter, the Longhorn quarterback launched a deep pass to a wide-open Doss.

'The only thing I had between me and the goal,' he recalls, 'was twenty yards of grass.'

The throw was on target. Longhorn fans rose to their feet. The sure-handed Doss spotted the ball and reached out, but it slipped through.

Baylor rallied and tied the score with seconds to play. Texas lost its top ranking and, consequently, it's chance at the Rose Bowl.

'I think about that play every day,' Doss admits.

Not that he lacks other memories. Happily married for more than six decades. A father. Grandfather. He served in the navy during World War II. He appeared on the cover of Life magazine with his Texas teammates. He intercepted seventeen passes during his collegiate career, a university record. He won two NFL titles with the Philadelphia Eagles. The Texas High School Hall of Fame and the Longhorn Hall of Honor include his name.

Most fans remember the plays Doss made and the passes he caught. Doss remembers the one he missed" (pp. 31-32).

What a predicament in which to live one's life. In today's passage, the Apostle Paul sets two words against three vivid images depicting the desperate predicament of fallen humanity – "But God." We were the objects of God's wrath, but God had mercy on us. We were dead in our sins, but God made us alive together with Christ. We were enslaved to the world's way of living, but God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly places.

Paul reminds us of our past, not to reawaken guilt, but to help us appreciate our inclusion in the remarkable story of God's salvation through Jesus Christ. John Stott writes, "It is essential to hold both parts of this contrast together, namely what we are by nature and what we are by grace, the human condition and the divine compassion, God's wrath, and God's love" (The Message of Ephesians p. 80).

Prayer: Lord, thank you for your amazing grace that saved a wretch like me.

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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#### New Writer

#### God's Fruit

By Christopher L. Scott Exeter, California

"Yummy, yummy, strawberries" my two-year-old son often says when walking out onto our back patio. He knows mom's garden is just around the corner where ripe strawberries await him. He looks for the red ones and eats them as fast as he can pick them. When they are all gone he smiles with strawberry juice dripping from his chin onto his shirt. He's happy with the fruit from mom's garden.



Every person on this earth produces fruit and God wants there to be good fruit in our Christian lives. The apostle Paul talks about the fruit of Christians in Romans 7. The Greek word for fruit is karpophoreo and it's used in two ways in the New Testament. One use is as literal fruit (see Mark 4:28) and the other is a metaphor for conduct, which is used in Romans 7:4, 5.

Before becoming a Christian the fruit of following sinful, passionate desires was death, "For when we were in the realm of the flesh, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in us, so that we bore fruit for death" (Romans 7:5, NIV).

The New Testament Greek scholar, A.T. Robertson, called this the "seeds of sin working for death" because the non-Christian doesn't know God and he's controlled by his sinful passions. Those sinful passions lead to sinful activities, and the fruit of those activities is death.

But when we become a Christian those sinful passions die and are replaced by God's presence in our lives. This is described in Romans 6:4: "We were therefore buried with him [Jesus] through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life." Now we are united with Christ. "For if we have been united with him [Jesus] in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his" (Romans 6:5).

This was done so that we could bring forth fruit. "So, my brothers and sisters, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God" (Romans 7:4).

The fruit is showing love to others when they don't deserve it. It's sharing our faith with others and telling them about the gospel. It's being kind to someone that is mean to us. The purpose of our Christian life is "so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God" (Colossians 1:10).

God is happy when He sees fruit in the lives of His people. He looks at them and says, "yummy, yummy" for His people are pleasing to Him.

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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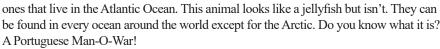
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#### Kids Corner

#### A Siphonophore

By Christy Lowman Burke County

Did you know that there is an animal that is named after an old eighteenth-century warship from Portugal? Can you imagine an animal that resembles an old wooden ship with sails? People in the Pacific Ocean call them Blue Bottles instead, due to their blue and purple color. The ones that live there tend to be smaller than the



Portuguese Man-O-Wars are not just one animal, but instead, four colonies of organisms called zooids that work together. This type of animal is called a siphonophore. Each colony in the siphonophore has its own special job to do. They must do it to their best ability and work closely together because one colony cannot survive on its own.

The Portuguese Man-of-War is made up of four polyps. The first one is a carbon monoxide gas-filled sack or float that is like a bladder. It sits on top of the ocean water. This see-through blue float can deflate their bag and submerge in the water for a short time to avoid threats and predators on and above the ocean surface. This part of the Man-O-War is where it got its name from. They cannot swim on their own, the wind and ocean drifts decide where they are going to travel. At full sail, it looks like the Portuguese warships.

The second organism that makes up this unique animal is its tentacles. They extend below in the ocean anywhere from 30 feet to over 165 feet in length. This part is what makes the animal poisonous. The tentacles are filled with venom that is used to paralyze and kill fish, plankton, and small crustaceans it uses as food. They also use their tentacles for self-defense against predators like loggerhead sea turtles, ocean sunfish, Janthina janthina, the violet sea snail, and sea slugs from the Glaucus family. Humans can also feel their excruciating, painful sting but it is rarely deadly for them. Even a dead Man-O-War can sting so be careful.

The third colony is the gastrozooids. The muscles in the tentacle colony draw prey to this third polyp. This colony is the digestive organism that digests the food for the Man-O-War.

The last polyp is the reproductive organisms. This is where baby Man-of-Wars are made. Several Man-O-Wars, sometimes thousands, gather in the ocean for this part. A lot of fertilized eggs and babies are unfortunately consumed by predators. Those that survive and are born, can take care of their own from birth.

In a nutshell, Portuguese Man-O-Wars are carnivorous invertebrates that are made of several different colonies that work together to survive. The Man-O-War's float can grow up to 6 inches high, five inches wide, and 12 inches long. Even though they have long venomous tentacles they are not considered jellyfish due to their colony structure.

This fascinating creature reminds me of the Trinity of God. The Trinity is made up of God the Father, God the Son (which is Jesus), and God the Holy Spirit. The Father created everything in the heavens and earth and is ultimately God over the universe.

The Son, Jesus, came to the earth as a person, born to the virgin Mary. He came to save us all from our sins by dying on the cross. His sacrifice was the ultimate sacrifice. His death paved our way to heaven, where we join God when we die if we are believers.

The Holy Spirit is the part of God that comes down from heaven that joins our soul in our body when we accept Jesus as our personal Savior. It is our helper that leads and guides us to do the right thing. It helps to act more Christlike.

The Trinity is like the Man-O-War in the fact that the Trinity is made up of three different parts but work together also as one. They work together to save us from our sins so we can join them in heaven. Is that not awesome?

Dear Lord, I want to come today to thank you for caring so much for us that you pursue us with three separate entities. You created us, you made a pathway for us to be able to spend eternity with you, and you send a guide to live inside of us to help us live like Christ. Thank you for wanting a personal relationship with each one of us. I pray that we can live by Christ's example to the full extent so others will want to become Christians. Help us bring others to you through our example. Draw them closer to You like moths to a flame. In Jesus's name Amen.

"I and my Father are one." John 10:30 KJV

"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you." John 14:26

16 When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and [a]He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. 17 And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Matthew 3:16-17 NKJV

19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," Matthew 28:19 NKJV Bibliography

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Christy Lowman is a Christian author and illustrator that lives in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains with her husband and two children. She enjoys writing and illustrating books for all ages. Some of her short stories are published with Guideposts and HCI.. Christy gives all the glory to God in everything she does. A portion of every book sold from the Small Bible Character Series will be donated to battle human trafficking. You can buy her books at https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=dp\_byline\_sr\_book\_1?ie=UTF8&field-author=Christy+Lowman&search-al ias=books&text=Christy+Lowman&sort=relevancerank. You can reach her at https://www.facebook.com/authorChristyLowman/or christyssoaps@yahoo.com.

#### Pleasant Hill Baptist Church

#### An Encouraging Word: Intimacy from Aloneness

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

A couple is sitting in my office. Their marriage is in trouble. Their relationship is in shambles and they are both wondering if there is any hope at all. The hurts, rejections, criticisms, unmet expectations, anger, and fear have mounted up and tears begin to flow down the cheek of a young wife. She can't



speak. Her tears choke down her words. After a moment, she buries her head in her lap and begins to sob. It starts slowly and quietly, but soon her sobs become audible and her shoulders begin to heave up and down. Pain and despair have overtaken her. But the outward signs don't tell the whole story. She is alone in her misery and pain.

The husband doesn't know what to do—so he just sits motionless. He can't bear to look at her pain, so he stares off into space. He fixes his eyes upon a blank spot on the wall. It's not that he doesn't care for her or love her, he just can't see beyond the tears and sobs to understand what the real problem is—she is alone! Perhaps lost in his own pain, sorrow, or fear, he doesn't know what to do—so he does nothing! He leaves her alone. Even though he desperately wants to hug and comfort her, he feels numb and paralyzed; so he is paralyzed. He can't move and as his own fear mounts, he is tempted to bolt. Just get out and getaway! Convinced he can't fix it, he figures the only solution is to abandon it. But he takes one last quick glance at her...and that's when I say to him, "What do you see?" He responds in a voice that can barely be heard, "She is hurting!" And then I ask, "What do you want to do about that?" He says, "I want to reach out and take her hand. I want to make it all go away!" I say, "Then do it! Lean in and take her hand. Lean in and hold her! Don't say a word—just lean in and stay there a while!" He decides to risk it and leans in and gently takes her hand. We sit silently for a while. He is focused and committed at that moment to simply being present with her.

It may take a minute, perhaps even five. But soon the heaves and the sobs stop and she can lift her head, look into his eyes and hug him. They stay there for a little while. No words are needed. The experience is powerful.

All of the problems between them have not magically disappeared. But something incredible, inspirational, and powerful happened. I call those "holy moments." Something wonderful has happened—she's not alone anymore!

I can't tell you how many times that scene has been played out in my office. This world is alone! Lonely people in lonely marriages, in lonely families, in lonely communities, and in a lonely world.

Amid humanity's loneliness...in our loneliness, God leaned in! He heard our cries, saw our sorrows, felt our pain. Although sometimes it felt like He was far off and remained silent—He was listening, He was seeing, and He was near! When He did speak, He spoke with a still small voice so as not to startle or frighten us. But there were and will be times when it is necessary for Almighty God to speak loudly with a thundering voice that shakes the heavens and causes all to stop what they are doing and take notice—and even cower with fear. My friends, God desires to be close and intimate with His most wonderful creation. But His beloved has rejected Him, choosing to seek their own way, live by their own standards, and pursue the things of the flesh and the world. Oh, how the loving Creator grieves as His beloved sink into loneliness and aloneness. Oh, how a Heavenly Father sorrows when He sees the results of humanity's destructive behavior.

But wait for it! In the fullness of time—in the right time, in that tense moment when all seems lost—God leans in! Max Lucado captured the phrase in one of his books, God Came Near. He notes that God did the unimaginable, the incredible, the mysterious, and a completely unexpected thing—He came near. He leaned in! God became one of us. He took on human flesh and dwelt among us. John wrote in John 1:14, "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us; and we saw His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth." This Word was from the beginning. This Word was with God and this Word was God. John goes on to explain in John 1:2-5, "He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him not even one thing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of mankind. And the Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not grasp it."

God leaned in! He leaned in because He saw the pain, the confusion, the misery, and the tears. He came near because He was the only one who could do anything about it! For only God, our Creator, could take our hands, touch our hearts, place His loving and accepting arms around us and pull us up close to Him. Only He could promise to never let us go—no matter what! Only God, our Savior, and Redeemer, could offer us hope for tomorrow. Only He could keep that promise throughout all of eternity. So, He leaned in!

He leaned in because His beloved was alone! He came near so that we would no longer be alone. He leans in for the Heavenly Father yearns for deep, intimate relationship and fellowship with His beloved.

As you experience the deep, agonizing feelings of being alone, know this today—loving, gracious, and merciful God is leaning in and drawing near to you right now. Feel His presence and bask in the warmth of His love.

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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#### Crossword Solution

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#### Sudoku Solution

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6	5	2	8	7	1	4	9	3
4	1	9	2	3	5	8	7	6
7	3	8	4	6	9	1	2	5



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By Jim Smith McDowell County

#### **McDowell Substance Use Coalition**

Freedom Life is now serving as the backbone organization in support of the McDowell Substance Use Coalition (MSUC), formerly known as the McDowell Substance Use Workgroup. MSUC was formulated several years ago out of great work done within our community through the McDowell Health

Coalition. From its first full year of operation in 2013, Freedom Life has been part of MSUC's effort to help bring a greater understanding of, connection to,

and solutions for individuals within our community who struggle with substance use disorder and other addiction needs. This effort includes working together with the community in creating immediate help, resourcing, and treatment support for individuals and family's struggling with addiction as well as creating effective programs for prevention and recovery sustainability. Through a grant provided by Kate B. Reynolds, Freedom Life and MSUC are currently working with the North Carolina Institute for Public Health to provide research, data, and strategic plan formulation to organizational capacity development and community engagement programming. Please pray the God will grant the wisdom needed for Freedom Life and MSUC in this critical community opportunity, and that He will move powerfully over the lives of those within our community who wrestle so deeply with substance misuse and addiction struggles.



#### **Darryl Strawberry Update**

Tickets are available NOW on our website or by stopping by the office at 130 North Logan Street in Marion NC. Call our office for more details or promotional materials to help us spread the word on this spectacular community event. 828.559.2224. Adults \$5, Children 12 and under are free. Dinner with Darryl is also available and is very limited. To be a sponsor of this event and have your dinner reservation, please reach out to Jim Smith, Development Director.

#### Jason Wallace

Jason is the newest recipient of Freedom Life's Car giveaway! When asked what FL means to him. Jason says, "Freedom Life has given me the opportunity to fix my life in a healthy and spiritual way, that will last, and it has provided me help spiritually, physically, emotionally and financially." While Jason was incarcerated, Heart Cry came in December 2019 and shared a song that touched his

heart so much, that it made Jason want to make a change. The song was called "40 Days and 40 Nights." Jason says within his first hour of being released from prison, the Parole Officer dropped him off at the front door of Freedom Life. He then began his new journey, by taking Cognitive Behavior Classes, attending Men's Bible Study, and started a job at Marion Fabric and Upholstery. Jason's story is one of many that Freedom Life touches.



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

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#### New Writer

#### Difficult Situations

By Joe Sturz Shenandoah, Virginia

Christians are often faced with difficult situations. It is important to take time to ask and seek (Luke 11:9-10) wisdom about how to deal with the situation (James 1:5). This can be done by talking to God and asking in the name of His son Jesus Christ (John 16:23-24). In this way the Holy Spirit may quicken to us:



- --Bible verses that apply showing God's will that He wants to be done (John
- --examples of Bible characters faced with similar situations and how God led them to deal with such a situation (Judges 6:36-40; I Kings 3:5-14; I Kings 18:36-
- --boldness and faith in the power of the blood of Christ shed on the cross to put over the situation (Revelation 12:11) and Satan's interference resisted until he flees (James 4:7).

So let us pray through to victory and peace in these difficult situations knowing God desires us to pray at all times (Ephesians 6:18) Let us pray often and fervently with the confidence that the Lord hears and will answer our prayers as He has promised when you ask in faith in and through Jesus Christ's name (John

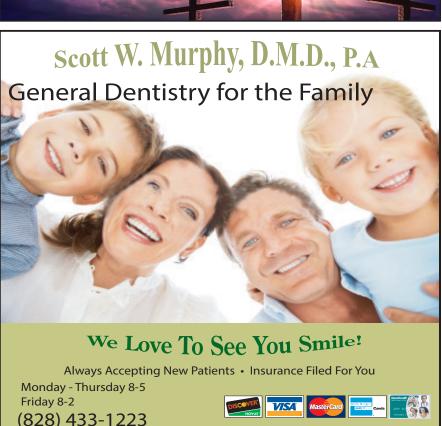
Brother Joe "taking time to pray" Sturz Tuesday, March 9, 2021, www.sturzchristiancounseling.com on my website look through my "Workbook for Couples" that prepares singles for marriage as well. Sharing what the Lord has taught me as a Biblical counselor applying all of the Bible to all of life. Also, look for my daily Bible counseling messages on Facebook or receive them by request through your email at joe@sturzchristiancounseling.com to be put on my daily email list. Please feel free to use them in sharing with others.

My prayer for those that read this message: "Father God, please make all who are Your own who read this to be able and willing to know, obey and submit to Your will and call on their life (Luke 11:2). Let them receive the Holy Spirit's drawing power (John 3:6-8) to find freedom from their bondage to sin (Ephesians 2:1-6) through Your crucified and risen Son Jesus Christ (I Cor. 15:3-4; Titus 3:5-7). Enable them to repent and confess their sin and receive Your forgiveness (I John 1:9) as they trust in Christ alone for salvation (Romans 10:9-10). Empower them to glorify You and be faithful to Your calling from now on." "In Jesus Name" (John 16:23-24) "Amen."

If you have prayed to receive Jesus Christ as your Savior then follow Him in daily prayer and reading the Bible and obeying His direction. 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) and sharing 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.



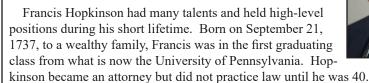


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#### Foundation Forward

Foundation Forward Fathers and How They Served Our Country – Francis Hopkinson

By David Streater, PhD Burke County





His first attempts of earning a living left him broke, but he found his way by writing poetry, plays, and music. He was the first to write enduring nonreligious songs and satirical plays about the British. His plays and songs did a lot to lift morale during the Revolution, but his government positions were his most memorable. Francis was a judge of the Admiralty Court, served on the Navy Board, and the treasurer of the Continental Loan Office. Hopkinson designed the New Jersey state seal and claims to have designed the first Stars and Stripes flag.

As a delegate to the Continental Congress, Hopkinson signed the Declaration of Independence. Because the invading British despised the signers, they looted and ransacked his home. Hopkinson died from a stroke and seizures at age 53. A dying act was writing a letter to Thomas Jefferson. Francis wrote, "I have but a few words to spare. If I had but six left, three of them would be spent in saying I love you".

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 to 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 information 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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#### New Writer

#### Values that Christians Should Practice

By Edith Biddix McDowell County

Some Christians cannot go to church or meet in homes to worship God. They cannot sing gospel songs, read the bible, attend preaching, praying, and having fellowship because of

COVID-19. We miss this strength as it inspires us. We can call each other, send text, email, and send Bible verses. We can give a message of hope and encouragement, especially to widows or others who are alone. Try to lift up those who are depressed in this difficult time we are experiencing. It is easy to get busy and forget about others.

Another value is in these times we should not neglect to pray from our heart, really seek Jesus to help us and to show us His will. Paul said, "to pray without ceasing." Another value is parents that have young children need to spend time with them, show you are concerned about their life, you want to listen to their problems and help them. So many parents work and neglect family time. This time is important and can result in the children having a change in behavior and disrespect for their parents. Children must be taught Christian principles. In Proverbs it says "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Parents should set a Christian example for their children. Failure to do this often results in youth rebellion against the laws and rules of our country or turning to drugs for answers. Without Christian values, our youth may fail to turn to Jesus for guidance.

The last value is that we as Christians need to have more love in our families and for our neighbors. The bible says "love your neighbor as yourself". That is a lot of love. Our neighbor can be anyone in need. We should reach out to those who do not have food or other necessities. Jesus gave us all His love by dying on the cross. Why can't we care now more than ever? Try to encourage those who are lonely or feel left out. Show compassion by doing things to make others feel loved and wanted. Be kind and forgive others that may hurt you. In Proverbs, we read: "a friend loveth at all times." People are hungry for love, it is our duty to give it to them. This way they see Jesus in our lives. Give a hand and give a smile to those in sorrow. Having Jesus in our lives means He comforts us in our tribulations, so we may be able to comfort others in their troubles. Another value is to study your Bible daily. Learn all you can about living a humble and sincere life for Jesus.

Let's not allow electronics to control us, but let us control them. Practice these values in daily life. Your churches will be stronger and your community more united in Jesus. When visitors come to see the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains, they will see the light of Jesus also

Miss Biddix attended Cornerstone Bible College in South Carolina. She took bible courses at home. Miss Biddix was a member of N.C. Poetry Society and the Christian writers League. She has had Christian articles and poetry published in newspapers and books. Miss Biddix wrote and published a book of poetry. She is a licensed minister and travels to different churches teaching about Jesus saving Grace and healing people if they believe and receive.





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#### Grand View Baptist Church

#### A Relationship With-In Believers

By Glenda Ward McDowell County

"We are all dependent upon God's grace for every good thing in our lives, including our growth." (James 1:17). Measuring our progress in accordance with God's standards and walking with-in His will, reaching out in compassion, and witness to others as Christ would is a part of the Law of Christ. And we must all bear the consequences of our choices for a long time – whether it be for the good or for bad. We cannot carry the burdens of those we never interact with. Therefore, we must continue to participate in the work, fellowship, and worship of the church to fulfill our role as part of the Body of Christ. We must be careful to live in loving obedience in relation to Christ so we can be sure that our loving obedience will produce a harvest of blessings that will bring us great joy. Jesus Christ shows us His glory when we keep our focus on all that He has done for us. God makes us totally new people through His Son Jesus Christ by making us into completely new creatures (2 Cor. 5:17). He then gives us His nature by sending His Holy Spirit to indwell in us and transform us into His likeness (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

When we take our eyes off the cross, we get into trouble because we dabble in things that do not endure eternally. I have seen first-hand how believers object to the idea of accountability because they don't see how their actions or behavior is anybody's business! They don't want anyone else to know their personal nature, therefore refusing to allow anyone into what they call "their personal space or business". Although our relationship with the Lord is personal in nature, it is not true that it is completely private. The Bible teaches that we are first accountable to God and then to one another when it comes to our character and conduct in our daily life! Relating is an important factor in Christian accountability.

Accountability is a relationship between believers where one has invited the other to observe the development of character in one or more areas of their daily living. One area of accountability that can truly make a difference and is in the recurring temptations. Paul taught if a believer is trampling in sin, the strong members of the church (the Body of Christ) are to work with the person to help them get back into the Will of God. You who are spiritual should restore him gently. But we are also to be careful and watch out so that we are not tempted ourselves. Seriously and earnestly, we are to consider ourselves because no one is above temptation. If someone you know has done something contrary to what the Bible teaches, you are called to confront him gently, forgive him, and comfort him. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the Law of Christ. (Reference Galatians 6:1-3)

Sometimes people don't know how to break free when becoming trapped in activities that are too powerful for them to overcome on their own. It is our duty in obedience to the Law of Christ to remind individuals who have strayed from the comfort zone of God's promises to pray for them, share Scripture with them, and listen when they struggle, offering support and compassion.

In all reality, there may be someone that is in relation with the person caughtup in sinning temptations that sees and knows what is happening but has the need
of outside support, compassion, and comfort from fellow Christians to bring
the situation into reality. As Fellow Christian believers, we are to confront the
individual who has drifted in their faith and is out of Christian fellowship with the
truth and encourage them to live in a manner that is pleasing to God. Other areas
of accountability may be to check with an individual from time to time about their
consistency of quiet time and prayer or check how often they share their faith or
how much time is being devoted to family time, etc.

No one should ever think they are totally independent and don't need help from another fellow Christian and no one should feel excused from the task of helping others because they don't want to get caught up in other people's affairs! When a Christian brother or sister needs correction or encouragement, we are to be humble and gently reach out to offer help to lift their burden. Encourage each other to grow in spiritual maturity. This is a commandment of God (Reference John 13:34-35) and this is accountability. We are accountable to one another for our conduct and character, being responsible to be available for the Lord to use us to carry out His Will – telling the truth and loving that person who is out of fellowship through the process. We must grow and help others to grow in spiritual discernment and the wisdom of God. One's faith must be strengthened and used so that our prayers and our actions can more effectively build up the Lord's Kingdom. The Bible in its entirety is our rule of faith and practice, "The Law of Christ".

Today's world is full of enticements. Daily we are confronted with both subtle pressures and obviously misguided half-truths, or lies. Our only way to escape these destructive influences is to ask God's help to crucify any interest we may have in them trusting in His promises. But beware for concern of the inward condition of the heart. Living a "good" life without an "inward change" leads to a spiritual walk that is shallow and empty to God! We are to be completely changed from the inside out. Reference to (2 Corinthians 5:17). The Christian life is not a matter of trying to behave like Christ, but of allowing Him to live in and through us; The Law of Christ! The Spirit of Jesus that is living within will never fail or forsake us!

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.

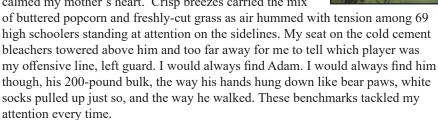
#### Marlene's Meditations

Easter: We Are Living Words.

By Marlene Houk Burke County

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." John 1:1

He trotted onto the field, his football pants freshly whitened. A red and white helmet protected his head and calmed my mother's heart. Crisp breezes carried the mix



In his later teens, his grandma called one day, and Adam answered the phone. When he passed the phone to me, and later during our conversation, she asked, "Who is that man at your house?" Since my husband worked full-time during the day, she was confused. I quickly assured her that the deep bass voice belonged to her 16-year-old grandson!

His body language, rich baritone, and that sneaky grin while joking adds depth and laughter to my memories three decades later, enriching his words. What I enjoyed daily (nonverbal cues), an entire profession of scientists and researchers have studied for years.

David Matsumoto, Ph.D. is a professor of psychology and director of the Culture and Emotion Research Laboratory at San Francisco State University. As a renowned expert in the field of nonverbal behavior, emotion, and culture, he talks about why nonverbal communication is so important in everything from police investigations to intercultural exchanges. He said in a tweet recently, "The face is the most representative channel of nonverbal behaviors, and it is the channel most studied by scientists."

Emily Cosgrove of Conversation Space, who empower leaders and improve conversation, says, "When communicating with another person face to face, we have the best hope of all of truly communicating our message, because we have all three elements of communication at hand: words, body language, and tone of voice."

Jesus revealed His message perfectly and powerfully while on earth, embodying the best use of present and future scientific research in communication. His words, body language, and tone of voice enlarged the meaning of His purpose in coming to earth—eternal life and living hope. Through His death on the cross and His resurrection, He created the breathtaking possibilities that we call Easter. But when He ascended back to heaven, we were bereft of His physical body and could no longer hear the tone of His voice, the pitch or timbre of His speech, or the cadences of His culture.

However, Jesus showed us a door of truth in His leaving. In His physical absence, we, His disciples, become the other two parts of communication. We are the body language and tone of voice as we share the knowledge of Christ in a dark and hopeless world.

Jesus exampled our nonverbal role as His ambassadors. As we speak His words, our nonverbal cues create the remaining critical parts of communication that Ms. Cosgrove mentions in her article.

Nonverbally, we extend our hands to others, smoothing the Balm of Gilead (Jeremiah 8:22) on their soul wounds as we simply sit and grieve with them. We smile, hug, and face them with a posture of intense empathy, listening carefully. We walk into their isolation, opening the door wide to Sonshine. We may even sing or hum in gentle reminders of the power of godly music to lighten burdens. Jesus invites us to add nonverbal communication as we proclaim the Word of John 1.1

He tells us that faith without works doesn't mean anything to people without hope and light. (See James 2:26.) When we provide shelter, clothing, food, and prison visits, we show our love for Christ by helping others. (See Matthew 25:40.) Tabitha shows us a shining example of her faith as she labored diligently for her community of folks in need. (See Acts 9:36.) God's Word overflows with stories, instruction, and ways to proclaim Christ's message nonverbally.

As we go throughout the day, let's remember that Christ beckons us to help Him communicate His message with our nonverbal abilities and skills.

Like my son, with non-verbal cues that shouted his parentage, may our body language and tone of voice live out that we are born of God.

For further discussion and a walk through open doors of truth, sign up for my email newsletter at http://eepurl.com/dwldpv or discover my website: https://www.MarleneHouk.com

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

Who [is] he that condemneth? [It is] Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Romans 8:34

#### First Baptist of Marshall

#### Humor

By Buddy Freeman *Madison County* 

A man said, "I don't go to church while on vacation. I can't sleep in a strange pew."

There was an earthquake. One couple sent their little boy to stay with an uncle. A day later the parents received a telegram that said, "I am returning your boy. Send earthquake here."

"What am I suppose to do with this, grumbled the motorist as the Patrolman handed him his traffic ticket." The Patrolman said, "When you get four of them, you get a bicycle."

A six-year-old girl praying, "Dear God thank you for my baby brother, but what I have been praying for is a little puppy."

Some people are kind, polite, and sweet-spirited until you try to sit in their pew."

The doctor said, to the patient's wife, "I really don't like the looks of your husband." The wife said, "I don't either, but he is sure good to the grandchildren."

People ask when they learned Jesus had fed the 5,000, whether the two fish were bass or catfish and what bait did He use.

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

# John's Precision Auto Body

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#### Morganton Baptist Church

A Balanced Perspective By Dan Qurollo Burke County

Most likely, you have had moments in your life when you questioned if things were truly worth it. To be sure, these moments were probably not moments of great answers to prayer in which God showed Himself to be God. These moments were probably not when the bank account had more than sufficient funds to meet the immediate demands. Nor were these times when God gave you the amazing privilege to lead a soul to Him. These were times when nothing seemed to be going right.



A man by the name of David can truly identify with this reality, and he recorded much of his feelings in the book of Psalms. One of the reasons we love studying Psalms is because of the candor with which the various psalmists wrote. They wrote what we often think. David was appointed by God to be the next king of Israel. This was not the result of some selfish ambition or aspiration of David; this was God's choosing. But the years leading up to his eventual assuming the throne were anything but favorable. He was forced to flee into the wilderness and to live in undesirable locations. He was not granted the privilege of any degree of security, including the place from where his next meal might come. As we read through the book of Psalms, we find many examples of the inward struggles this man faced.

But David balanced these struggles with the reality of who God is and what God does. He wrote, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way" (Psalm 37:23). He acknowledged that every step he took was ordered by God. Therefore, God knew all that he was experiencing, including the internal struggles that perhaps nobody else knew.

We most certainly do not know what the future holds. America is on an alarming path of spiritual digression. The freedoms that many have taken for granted are being threatened. It seems in many ways that wickedness is winning. However, the resurrection of Jesus Christ reminds us that He will ultimately win. Paul commanded believers, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Are you struggling today? Keep a balanced perspective by remembering it's not your problem; it's God's!

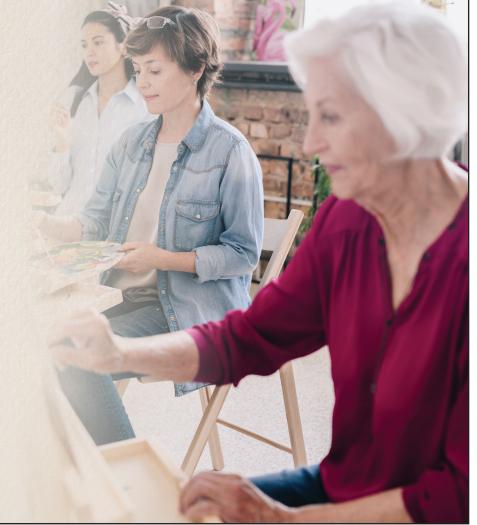
Pastor Dan Qurollo is pastor Morganton Baptist Church. Check us out on our website www.morgantonbaptist.net or find us on Facebook and YouTube.



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#### Landis OCP

#### Radical Corruption

By James Stanley McDowell County

To all my beloved brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus our Lord, greetings, I pray that this article finds you well. I also want to thank you for taking the time to read this humble article on Radical Cor-ruption or more commonly referred to as Total Depravity. Why write about this subject? To tell the truth, I can't really write about this in its



entirety in this article's space. There are hundreds of books on the subject by men who have studied more and write far better than I do. However, I wish to write to the readers of Appalachia personally. Born and raised in Avery County's mountains, I have a unique perspective on this and I wish to commend this doctrine to you personally. See if this anecdote rings a bell.

You're a young man or woman who's been raised in the Church all your life, you hear your preacher and your parents tell you over and over again that you must be saved! You listen to the ser-mons and then after a compelling alter call you go up and you say your prayer asking the Lord to come into your heart. Or you go up and are baptized and congratulations you're saved. Then you carry a Bi-ble with you that you've never (or barely) read so out of conviction you open it up and start reading Genesis. You read the familiar stories of Adam and Eve, Cain and Able, and Noah. Then you put the Bible down because the language is hard to understand, you start doing exactly what you were doing before, you even live exactly like you did before, rebelling against your parents, lying, etc. Then after some time, you go with your youth group to a revival where your soul is set on fire and you start trying to read the Bible again and do the right things. You start climbing that mountain all over again. Then within a week, you slip back into your comfort zone and once again you realize there hasn't been any change in you at all. Then you look around and realize that there hasn't been a change in anyone be-cause you're living exactly the way they are and they call themselves Christians as well. Why is this? Is Christianity just a word only faith? Why did I do all of that and absolutely nothing changed?

Sound familiar? That was me. That is so many of us. We take on climbing God's Holy Mountain only to realize it's too steep. Why? Because, my friends, (and I pray God will open your hearts to hear what I am about to say) on your best day you will never even set foot on the base of God's Mountain. Why? Because you put your faith in yourself, you put your faith not in God, but in that "prayer, you prayed at the altar. You put your faith into your works. My friends, open the scriptures and let the Spirit open your eyes and see what God has to say:

As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become un-profitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin."

Romans 3:10-20 KJV

So long as you depend on yourselves for salvation you will never succeed. "But I want to be saved," says one. You can be saved but you cannot under any circumstances save yourself! "Well then why bother," says another. Because there is a way to salvation through the Lord Jesus. "I really want to be saved but I'm tired," says a third. Jesus' load is light. Have you not read that? "Take my yoke up-on you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Matthew 11:29-30KJV With Christ, you don't have to worry about getting there, because Jesus brings you there. There is no mountain to climb with Jesus because He has already brought you to the top! My friends, have you been striving? Have you been running to get to the top of the mountain? Have you thought that the only way to God was to work for His love? Come with me and hear of His Son Jesus. Not the one you only heard about on Easter and Christmas who died to give you the possibility of salvation so that you can struggle and earn your way to salvation, but the true Son of God who imputed His right-eousness to you and took your sin to Himself so that there is no struggle, but only glorious salvation.

I would love to see you at Landis Orthodox Presbyterian Church so that we may grow in our faith and come to more and more love the Lord Jesus Christ who has delivered us from our radical cor-ruption and saved us even as we stand at the bottom of the mountain. 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 opcmikecloy@gmail.com

James "Blake" Stanley is a member of Landis Orthodox Presbyterian Church located at 4975 US-221, Marion, NC 28752

Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. Romans 6:4



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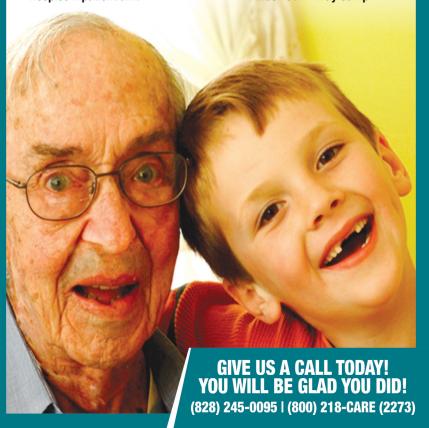
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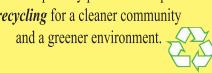
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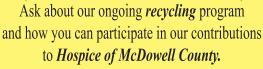
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#### Obedient Heart Fellowship

Springtime Savior

By Jim Huskins McDowell County

All cultures have festivals, feasts, and special days. Children of God are blessed with a number of events which the Bible describes as "God's own" days. These



Biblical celebrations are more than marvelous opportunities to experience God's presence. They are also powerful, prophetic shadow pictures that point directly to our

The Bible gives extensive coverage to these occasions. In Hebrew, they are called Moedim. That word means "appointed times." In Leviticus 23 and other places, God instructs His people to gather in His presence for special events seven times each year: four in the spring and three in the fall. The Spring Feasts are Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits, and Feast of Weeks. Each of them points to Jesus. As a child, I was confused by the notion of the year beginning in the dead of winter. I thought that the year should begin in Spring when winter's grip is broken. God's calendar starts in Spring. He calls the first month of each year Aviv which now means spring in Hebrew. On the fourteenth day of that month, at twilight, He instructs His people to celebrate Passover. The Hebrew term is Pesach.

Passover commemorates God's final act of delivering His people from Egyptian slavery. Pharaoh eventually allowed Israel to leave because of the death of the firstborn son of every family in Egypt. The only people who escaped this slaughter were those who sacrificed an unblemished lamb and sprinkled its blood on their home's doorposts and lintel. Egyptian slavery is a type or shadow of the bondage of sin. Israel was redeemed from its captivity by the sacrifice of a perfect and innocent lamb. God gave us Passover to remind us that He has delivered us from bondage. It also promises that He will deliver us from ultimate bondage.

The connection between Passover and Jesus is undeniable. "Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed." (1 Corinthians 5:7)

CHRIST IS OUR PASSOVER LAMB! Those words should be shouted from every rooftop. We who were hopelessly bound to the slavery of sin have been set free because a perfect Lamb died in our place. When John the Immerser saw Jesus of Nazareth, he proclaimed: "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." (John 1:29)

Immediately following Passover comes the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Leviticus 23:6 says, "And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the LORD; for seven days you shall eat unleavened bread." In scripture, leaven represents sin or false doctrine. Once leaven is introduced to a lump of dough, it spreads until it takes over. In 1 Corinthians 5:7, Paul prefaces his assertion that Christ is our Passover Lamb by admonishing us to purge the leaven of sin from our

The Israelites were commanded to eat the Passover lamb with bitter herbs and unleavened bread or matzah. They left Egypt in such haste that they did not have time to allow the dough to rise. The seven-day Feast of Matzot celebrates the lives of those who intentionally turn away from the influence of sin. It also reminds us that only our Messiah is able to fully remove the power and corruption of sin. It is fascinating that Orthodox Jews, who deny that Jesus is Messiah, eat matzah that is pierced and marked with stripes.

The third Spring Feast, First Fruits, always falls on the first Sunday after Passover. On that day, the High Priest offered to God a sheaf from the first of the year's barley harvest. No one was allowed to eat from the new grain until after that sheaf was

The symbolism here is powerful. From the beginning, God planned to redeem us from our sin through the perfect sacrifice of His Son. That redemption makes possible our resurrection to eternal bodies. Jesus is the "first fruit" of the resurrection. He is proof that God's promises are real.

After First Fruits, we are instructed to count seven weeks and then celebrate the Feast of Weeks or Shavuot. The Greek language refers to this event as Pentecost. Shavuot celebrates the giving of God's divine instructions for living at Sinai. It is also the event God later used to pour out His Holy Spirit on Jesus' followers. The Spirit empowers us to fulfill the Great Commission. In the process of "making disciples of all nations," we flesh out God's oft-stated promise to bring the Gentiles into His family, Israel, through the Messiah.

The Spring Feasts are interwoven. First comes salvation through blood sacrifice. Then comes the unleavened bread of repentance and righteousness. Faith in Jesus and turning from sin lead to new lives characterized by obedience and empowered by God's Holy Spirit. In His first coming, Jesus fulfilled and revealed the purpose of all four Spring Feasts. When He comes again, He will do the same for Feast of Trumpets, Day of Atonement, and Feast of Tabernacles.

Most Christians dismiss the Moedim as "feasts of the Jews." The Bible calls them "God's appointed times." The Jews are only one tribe. We no longer require animal sacrifice to atone for sin. We no longer have the Temple or the priesthood. Modern celebrations of Passover and the other feasts are memorials, not reenactments.

But God says that His Moedim is for all generations. He never changes. We who want nothing more than to lead lives that honor Him should decide whether we will observe His Appointed Times or continue to take part in events that celebrate pagan idols. Joshua's imperative is still vital: "Chose this day whom you shall serve."

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.

Jim & Beverly Huskins are members of Obedient Heart Fellowship.

#### The Inspiring Word

By Pastor Terry Cheek Th.D. McDowell County

Luke 24:1-7 "Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulcher, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. (2) And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulcher. (3) And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. (4) And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold,



two men stood by them in shining garments: (5) And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? (6) He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, (7) Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again."

Many of us have our hearts turned to the resurrection. Speaking of the resurrection have you ever considered that resurrection is one of the three main answers for the question; what happens after we die? Some folks, for example, our atheist and secularist neighbors believe nothing happens after death, it is an absolute end. Do you realize the Sadducees mentioned in the Bible believed in this (see Acts 22:30 – 23:9)? This view is sometimes called nihilism (nothingness). Another view of death is reincarnation, or the soul being recycled into a new body to begin a new life after death. Today this view is practiced by many Eastern religions including Hinduism. This view was taught by well-known Greek philosophers such as Pythagoras and Plato and many first-century Jews were followers.

You already know the view of resurrection is held by Christians. Did you realize the Pharisees of the Bible also believed in resurrection (See Acts 23:8), along with most of the Jewish people of Jesus' day? As we reflect on the resurrection let's keep in mind that (1) the resurrection of Jesus was a victory of death, He will never die again (Romans 6:9), and (2) Jesus' resurrection opens the door to eternal life for all (Philippians 3:21). It is easy for you and me to look back across history to learn about the bodily resurrection of Jesus but for a little while let's try to see what the disciples saw. Notice with me...

From verses 1-3 in our scripture and applying to our current calendar we acknowledge Jesus' death and burial to have taken place late Friday afternoon. The burial was done quickly because the Sabbath was to begin at sundown (Luke 23:53, 54). These women were not satisfied with a hasty burial, they were determined to honor Jesus by giving His body a fitting preparation (Luke 23:56), just as they had ministered to Him during His life among them (Luke 8:1-3). Mark 16:3 tells us these women were worried about getting the tomb opened, getting the seal broken and the large stone rolled away. We read there was no obstacle to Jesus; the stone was rolled away when they arrived. I would like to ask you something right now. Have ever sought Jesus, with determination and obligation, and witness the moving of obstacles that you knew stood in the way? I assure you I have, and many others have testified to the same. The first and most important was the obstacle of not knowing Him as Lord and Savior, the Holy Spirit called, I responded by seeking Him and nothing could stand between me and my Savior. You too can experience this. These women didn't find the body of Jesus; they were met by two men with awesome appearance.

In verses 4-7 we learn the angels were there to comfort them and inform them they would not find the living among the dead. I am amazed at how many people today actually believe Jesus is still dead. There was no grave robbing, there was no trickery, there was only a resurrection. There was no corpse to minister to. Today we do not visit a memorial for Jesus, there is no gravesite to weep besides, the only tears we shed are the ones that victory brings to us because of His resurrection and our salvation. It is my sincerest prayer that you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and that you can share in the joy of the resurrection.

Finally, we are reminded of the promise Jesus made to rise again after His crucifixion. We have a record of it and those of us who know Jesus as Lord and Savior have personal knowledge of it. I truly hope you and your family can celebrate Easter as the resurrected Savior who redeems lost sinners and reconciled those who accept Him to the God who created us.

Consider this, there is eternal life after death. We will all spend eternity somewhere, either with Jesus in Heaven or in torment and darkness eternally separated from God in Hell. God will honor our choice, what will yours be?

Until we meet again, in print or in person, may God keep you firmly in His grip.

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



#### NC Baptist Aging

Nc Baptist Aging Ministry Appeals To Churches To Help Seniors "Find Their Spot" By Carol Layton

The COVID-19 vaccine rollout has exposed a digital divide in North Carolina – a chasm that makes many older adults, those most at risk from disease, least likely to secure a vaccination appointment. The state

has a search tool at myspot.nc.gov, but successfully securing an appointment from that site requires web-navigation skills, high-speed internet access, fast typing skills, and sometimes a printer to print required forms.

Hundreds of older adults have contacted NCBAM's Call Center seeking assistance with locating vaccination clinics and making appointments. Call Center Specialists respond by navigating the web for callers and sharing information for making appointments. For callers without web access, they assist with making appointments whenever possible.

Because of its partnerships with Baptist churches, the NCBAM Call Center can help meet other special needs of seniors. Recently, a 79-yearold Boone resident phoned the Call Center. Melanie Beeson, Call Center director explains, "This man's driveway was covered in snow the day



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before his vaccination appointment. We can't always find volunteers so quickly, but thankfully, an ASU student was able to clear the driveway and the man got his vaccination. We were all very grateful, and so was the caller; his wife made cookies for the student as thanks.'

With tens of thousands of seniors statewide struggling to make appointments, NCBAM can help only a fraction of those in need. NCBAM Director, Dr. Sandy Gregory sees the church as playing a key role in the solution. "We appeal to Baptist churches for help. If every Baptist Church in North Carolina helped, it would make a tremendous difference."

Gregory has outlined steps churches can take to help in their communities. 1. Pair elderly church members with a "vaccination buddy" to assist however necessary to make (and be transported to and from) appointments. (NCBAM is

available to provide resources and advice on locating vaccination providers in your area.)

2. Reach out to the elderly in your community who may need assistance. To find people who need help, contact NCBAM, your local senior services, or your regional Area Agency on Aging. Advertise your offer to help on social media or local news outlets.

3. If your church is spacious or has a large parking lot, volunteer to host a community vaccination clinic. Contact your local health department to get started. These partnerships allow churches to outreach to their congregants and community. They are designed to serve 50-200 individuals – particularly in priority populations where the burden of COVID-19 has been greatest.

4. Educate your seniors on how to protect themselves from vaccine-related scams. The NCBAM Call Center is open Monday through Friday, 9:00 am – 5:00 pm (877.506.2226). NCBAM will host a virtual State Leadership Conference on April 13 to explore ways churches can minister in their communities by outreaching to older adults: helping them to avoid scams, obtain vaccine information, and make appointments. Register for the conference at ncbam.org/events.

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

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#### 4 Risks in Retirement

By Steve Gaito

There are 4 risks that every retirement plan needs to address

Retirement Resource Management

- 1. Longevity How long you will live
- 2. Market The ups and downs of the investments you have
- 3. Health The impact of aging on our health
- 4. Taxes How much the government taxes

With the change in the way that companies provide retirement plans the "Market" seems to get all the attention when it comes to retirement. The reality is if you do not address the other risks they may have a significant impact on your retire-

ment. Let us take a look at each of these risks and how I create a complete retirement plan.

Longevity is one of the biggest challenges that you face. In fact, there is a joke in the financial planning world that if you could tell me exactly when you will die, I can tell you exactly how much you can spend each day. The reality is no knows exactly how long they will live. Most planning is based on a life expectancy of 85 years for men and 90 for women. But there is a 25% chance that a healthy 65-year-old will live past 90. Given this information how do you manage Longevity risk? The answer is Social Security, Pensions and Annuities. All of these provide income for life. In my practice I provide analysis of Social Security for every retirement plan I create. The reason is Social Security provides one of the best resources to deal with Longevity risk because it provides income for life, you have already paid for it and it usually provides some cost-of-living adjustment.

The second risk is the market. When I started in the retirement planning business 28 years ago there were usually 4 asset categories in most retirement plans. Large

Cap funds, International funds, Bond funds, and fixed interest. Depending on your tolerance you would divide your account between these choices. This has changed with modern portfolio theory and Monte Carlo simulations that help address the risk you are taking. Between the years 2000 to 2003 we learned that this does not always work and that some of the market risk must be taken out of the market in retirement. Recently fixed investment returns have been so close to zero that creating income portfolios very difficult. Fixed annuities can help with some of this risk, and there are other insurance products that have been created to help as well.

The third area is health. As you are probably aware health cost continue to rise and for those on fixed income this becomes a big risk. You can help your cause by staying active and seeking preventative healthcare to stay healthy. This is just part of the risk. Long-Term-Care has become a big risk to the point that I tell people that you do not have a retirement plan unless you have a plan to deal with Long-Term-Care. Fortunately, there have been great plans developed to help almost anyone address this issue. There are traditional plans that are use it or lose it like homeowners insurance. There are Life Insurance policies that have long term care riders on them and there are asset-based policies that are either annuity or life insurance based that basically just allocate some money to be leveraged for care.

The fourth area is taxes. Taxes are the most overlooked risk in retirement. Considering that the majority of people have money saved in qualified plans like a 401(k) plan this risk is real. Knowing when and how to pay these taxes can make a significant difference in the net income you receive in retirement. It is critical to compare the cost of paying taxes now vs paying them later when they are likely higher. One area that is not usually considered is the change when a spouse passes away and they change from a married filing status to single filing status. When this happens taxes likely increase and net income decreases.

I work with clients to help address each of these areas and provide a free initial consultation. To learn more or schedule a meeting go to my website www.retirerm. com for details.

Steven W Gaito is a certified financial



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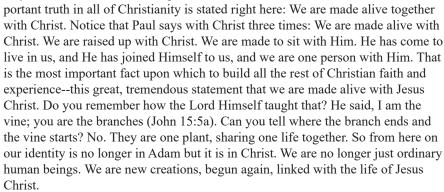
American Quality

#### Evergreen Church

#### Alive In Christ

By John McCoury Roan Mountain, Tennessee

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions. It is by grace you have been saved. God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus... Ephesians 2:4-6 The most im-



Later in this letter, Paul likens the church to a body, of which Christ is the head. Have you examined your body lately? Have you noticed that your fingers don't come off if you merely twist them a half-turn and pull? They are tied to the body, and they share the life of the body. They are not attached by any mechanical process, but rather they are an organic part. These figures are all given to us to show us the intimate way we are united to Jesus Christ, to tell us that He is our life. So never think of yourself in any other way, because the whole work of the enemy is to get you to disbelieve that and to go back to thinking that you are just an ordinary individual, struggling on through life, trying to make it the best way you can, needing to mobilize all your human resources to try to get ahead of the other fellow and to achieve as much of the fulfillment of life as you can. Any time you believe that you go right back to acting as you once did--back to the misery, back to the heartaches. You can escape that only when you come back again to this central truth--we are alive in Jesus Christ! There is one final thing to notice here. These verbs are all in the past tense. This is something that has happened, not something that is going to happen. It has already occurred when you believed in Jesus Christ. You don't have to work toward it. It is not something that great saints achieve after years of effort. It is something that is already true, and every Christian has this experience. We were made alive in Jesus Christ. We cannot be the same again. Even if we try, we won't be able to. This is why I sometimes say to people who get discouraged with their Christian life, well, quit then, go back, try not to be a Christian, and see what will happen. They can't do it, and they know they can't because they are new creatures, made alive in Jesus Christ.

Father, thank You for this great truth. I pray that You would make plain to me who I am and that I will never be able to handle life alright until I understand this. Experientially, the most important truth in all of Christianity is that we are made alive in Christ. Considering this reality, have we discovered His life which is our life?

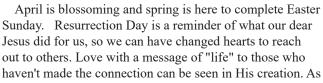
John McCoury is pastor of Evergreen church in Roan Mountain, Tennessee and also chaplain at Roan Highlands Nursing Center.

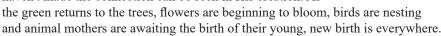
Blessed [be] the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 1 Peter 1:3

#### Notes from the Shire

#### New Life

By Nancy Malik *Avery County* 





Rebirth in Jesus is calling from His Creation! Walking this path called life is hard for most of us. But to have His Word, the Bible, to guide us, good preaching and counsel in a new life in Christ is heaven bound! I pray for each of you who read this, to know that you are loved with an everlasting love! Become refreshed in warmer days, creation waking up from the winter season and lots of beauty in the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains. Thank the Wonderful Lord for it!

As we watch the wonder of spring unveil, there is a critical matter at hand. Children used in the sex trade is a growing humanitarian injustice. We need to go before the Lord in prayer for the end of this travesty. The US is the number one country to go to for this ungodly event. Groups are trying to help locate and rescue these children. The pictures of missing children now include mostly children who have been taken into this crisis. Prayer will be held for them this National Day of Prayer in May. The Sheriff and Police Departments are well aware of this horror. As I am writing this, I am watching the news on TV reporting on how many unoccupied children are crossing the border. Where are they going without their parents?

The world is a different place for the past year with COVID. A great percentage of the children of this world have been home alone or with siblings since their schools are closed and parents need to work. Please pray for the safety of the children who have not been in school during this time and the ones coming for protection. Pray for the children!

April is a new start for a new year. 2021 is a year that needs prayers for issues, safety, truth, peace, joy, love, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. A harvest of great fruits!

The National Day of Prayer will be Thursday, May 6th at Newland Square. Please plan to attend here or if you reside in another county be there and pray for local, state, country, and the world needs with other believers. These are amazing times we live in. It is letting us see many verses in the Bible coming alive. Seeing Jerusalem and Israel together after almost two thousand years apart is another blessing. God is working and in control!

I pray you have a blessed church home. That is one thing that is so important in our walk, the Body of Christ working together. Be blessed, be hopeful, and love one another. You are loved with everlasting 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.



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#### Mine Creek Baptist Church

#### No More Wimpy Preaching!

By Chris Rathbone Mitchell County

There are many nights that I'm what some would call a "Night Owl". Often after the family goes to bed I'm wide awake. Though there are times that I really want to sleep, I just can't. I often workout, run on the treadmill or read and study for a while. Sometimes I often go to bed and doze for a while and suddenly I'm wide awake. After someone has done this for as many nights as I have, you learn to



simply get out of bed and use the time for other things (and, yes, sometimes I just watch TV, don't hang me!). Prayer, study, and often just sitting quietly in the den and thinking things over and trying to listen to the Lord is what I end up doing.

There have been numerous times that the Lord has used this time to speak to my heart. Sometimes it's a sermon He wants me to prepare to preach. Sometimes I feel as if He just wants me to read His word, listen, and contemplate for a while. There have also been those times that He wants to straighten out something in my life personally. These times are difficult but I know He loves me and that it is for my benefit.

Last night was a night that I just couldn't go to sleep. After dozing for a while, I suddenly woke up with a heavy burden on my heart. Without any sugarcoating, I will just share what I feel the Lord flooded my heart with as I lay there in my bed. It was as if I was almost jolted from my dozing with my heart racing and immediately our country was on my mind. My heart felt as if it was truly going through mourning. There was a sinking and empty feeling in my soul. Please understand that when I write these things that I truly love our nation. However, I am ashamed of the direction that our nation seems to be going. Hearing our president and other leaders speak of same-sex marriage, abortion, etc. as if they are somehow civil rights to be defended or legalized makes me worried for the future of our nation. The TV news, newspaper, and internet are full of stories of how certain legislation is forcing Christians to surrender their personal religious convictions or else pay the penalty! What has happened to our nation?

We haven't just strayed away; a lot of our nation's leaders have completely abandoned God and His word. Somehow they have concluded that we can figure this thing out on our own. The only time many of our leaders want God, prayer, or "religion" is when tragedy strikes. We as a society have gradually abandoned God and then blame Him when terrible things happen. I hear the comments all the time. "If God really loves us, why did He let this or that happen?" Folks, there is something that I believe we better be very careful of; and that's blaming our Holy God with the sinful and ungodly choices that man makes.

We have forsaken God and His word and do exactly the opposite of what it says and then we wonder why our nation is in such shape. Our leaders speak

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very little of God and how He has made our nation great in the past. What I call "Historical Amnesia" is running rampant in this country. In our schools, we refuse to teach that this country was founded on Judeo-Christian values. Somehow our forefathers were not speaking of freedom of religion but of freedom from religion. The use of the name of Jesus has become pretty well a crime not to mention the reading of or even referencing the Holy Bible. We teach our children and adults that they really evolved from lower forms of life and that we are really just more evolved animals. And we wonder why people have no more respect for human life than to senselessly walk into a building filled with children and just start shooting. After all, aren't we just animals, according to the school curriculum?

The church has tiptoed around these issues so long that we have really in a sense lost the influence that we should be having in our communities and our country. We have allowed this materialistic, selfish, and godless society to somehow make the church feel that we are not supposed to say anything. "Well, we aren't supposed to judge, Preacher", many will say. We aren't supposed to judge if we are doing the same thing. If we are judging others and we are doing the same thing or worse, the same judgment will be handed down to us. Read the Bible folks! Standing for what is right according to scripture is not wrong.

There are probably pages that I could write about what is going on in our nation that is causing its downfall. But let me get to the burden that God laid on my heart last night; it is for the pastors and preachers in our land. The television is full of messages of prosperity, money, and watered-down gospel preaching. "Send in your seed money and God is going to bless you financially!" they will say. Sermon after sermon is preached on how to feel good, how to be happy, etc., etc. There aren't many preachers willing to stand and challenge from the Word of God what is going on in our nation. Many churches will dismiss Sunday after Sunday, with a message destitute of eternal truth that has rocked to sleep the congregation. We have listened to this tolerance and acceptance gibberish the to extent that we are afraid of challenging issues from the scriptures for fear of being labeled intolerant, judgmental, or a hate-monger. If our nation does not repent from the direction it is going, the nation that you and I once knew, the nation that our forefathers and servicemen and women have fought to preserve will be gone. We as a nation cannot continue to condone sexual immortality, the killing of babies in the womb, the oppression of the poor, the fraud of governmental spending, the expulsion of God and righteousness from the public square, and expect to continue to enjoy the blessings of a Holy God.

The problem in our nation is a spiritual one, not an economic one. This is not about a political party but about our leaders returning our nation to follow the God of the Holy Bible. If we do not repent as a nation, judgment will come and I believe has already started. But first, it begins at the house of God. And in the house of God, it begins with the Man of God who stands and proclaims the eternal Word. This mess of avoiding issues because of offending someone because of their position in church, politics, or what other excuse preachers can come up with, has got to stop. We have been called, you have been called to preach what "thus saith the Lord" and not what may or may not be popular. When you and I stand at the final judgment, we will not stand before a president, congress, a political party, etc. We will stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ and give account for what our Savior has entrusted to us. Are we going to preach what God has given us in His Word or are we going to cave into the ungodly society around us? Preach my brother! Stand for what is right! Exalt the message of God's word as it is given to us. Don't be afraid, ashamed, or compromising on God's eternal truth. Call our churches to repentance and then we can call our nation to repentance. May God help us to have the courage and strength to stand during these troubling times. If our nation chooses to continue on this path of destruction, I pray it won't be because the pastors of this nation have failed to be the watchmen God has called us to be. It is time we stand on the authority of the Eternal Word of God! No more wimpy preaching!

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

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#### Poem

Madison County

In Memory of Joy Baldwin
I SAW
By Joy Baldwin



#### I SAW

I saw God this morning
In the Volume of a tree
The Oak was strongly standing
With its shadow protecting me.

I felt His love in the sunshine As its warmth lit up my heart Lovely blue skies tell of His peace The mountains show His art.

The green is everlasting
For this our Savior came
He was first and lives for ere
Great mountains glorify His name.

Cool springs of water give to us life The Spirit is the same God's wisd<mark>om is</mark> untouchable So to mankind He came.

Living creatures great and small Breathe air our God provides Ferns and flowers grow beautiful Tho for us our savior died.

#### Spiritual Health

My Back Problem Is Inherited...

By Miguel Cruz Yancey County

Here are 3 reasons why it probably wasn't!

1: I often hear from patients that their problems may be inherited since their parents, uncles, and aunts had similar problems. Truth is that statistically, most Americans will

suffer at least 1 debilitating back problem by the time they are in their 30's. We do, however, learn from our parents, things like poor posture. Ask yourself the question, do I stand upright most of the time? If not, you may be setting yourself up for back problems. Do you or your family members participate in any regular exercise or stretching program? Research has shown that regular stretching/exercise is preventive for debilitating injury. The problem may be more in our inherited habits than our genes.

2. A recent research paper published in the Journal of the American Medical Association was looking at the differences between acute and chronic low back pain. It has always been thought that acute low back pain will resolve by itself with rest in about 30 days. The most recent study followed these patients with acute low back pain over several years and discovered that 32% developed chronic back pain, In other words not only did the pain return but it continued to get worse. So the lesson learned here is to do something about it sooner rather than later, don't just assume the pain will go away. A regular exercise & stretching program will help.

3. Lastly I occasionally encounter someone who is just constantly inflamed. They are always hurting all over and doing just about anything physical makes them worse. Often these poor folks have to change their lifestyle habits including their foods. Many of us have food sensitivities that are making us chronically ill. There is food testing available for this and I have seen lives changed simply by avoiding a few foods.

I hope the above 3 reasons why your backache may not be inherited are helpful. If you would like more free information on stretches and exercises to strengthen your back you will find lots of short videos on my website at cruzlifecenter.com. This is where I send my patients for self-help.

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



#### Foothills Baptist Bible College

#### Walking With God

By Dr. Tom Walker *McDowell County* 

Gen 5:22-24

"And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him." Gen 6:9-12

Gen 6:9-12 "These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God. And Noah begat three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth."

There are two very important statements which we are going to carefully consider in our study today. The Bible says, "Enoch walked with God" and also that "Noah walked with God."

The opposite of walking with God is to walk according to the course of this world. Ephesians 2:2 says, "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Of course, in that statement, Paul speaks of our past life before our conversion to Christ. The course of the world is the course of sinning. Before our salvation experience, we lived a life of trespasses and sins. That separated us from God putting us in a state or process of death. It is while people are living in trespasses and sins they are spiritually dead, or separated from God.

If someone were to put an epitaph on your tombstone, could they rightly and correctly put the words, "He (she) walked with God." No greater statement can be said of anyone than for it to be said of him that daily he "walked with God."

There are two men put before us in the text verses we have chosen for our study today. Their names are Enoch and Noah. The name Enoch means trained up or dedicated. The name Noah means rest or quiet. We are going to consider both of these men and their walk with the Lord.

#### The Walk of Enoch

Notice the conditions he faced. He lived shortly before the days of Noah as described in the Scriptures. Genesis 6:5-6 describes those days. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart."

Enoch lived in a wicked day. It was such a wicked time that it was called great wickedness. Even men's thoughts were so corrupt that they thought evil in their hearts continually. The evil was so great that God had second thoughts about even creating man and putting him upon the earth.

Hebrews 11:5-6 speaks of Enoch and says: "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

Hebrews 11 tells us that Enoch was translated or moved from one place to another. He was on the earth, went walking with the Lord one day, and was taken to Heaven without having to die.

Bob Sorge wrote the following about walking with God. "God is looking for not only a clinging bride but also a walking partner. From the very beginning, God had a relationship with Adam and Eve that found them "walking in the garden in the cool of the day" (Genesis 3:8). God created man for the enjoyment of a walking relationship that involved companionship, dialogue, intimacy, joint decision-making, mutual delight, and shared dominion. God longs to walk with you, which is why His arms of grace have been pulling you into a closer walk with him. It is designed by God to establish us in an intimate friendship with him that is walked out through the course of our everyday lives. The goal we're after is an everyday walk of unbroken communion with our Lord and friend."

What does Hebrew 11 reveal about Enoch's life that proved he walked with

God?

See his translation. God was so pleased with the patriarch one day as he walked with God, God simply decided to take him home to Heaven, without his servant having to face physical death. Enoch did not have to die a physical death, there were no funeral arrangements that had to be made and there was no burial. God took him on to the glory world to be with Him without his servant having to die. I believe this is a picture of the rapture or the catching out of the church, Christ's bride, one wonderful, future day.

See his testimony. It is said of him, "Before his translation, he had this testimony that he pleased God." Walking with God is living a life of not pleasing self but instead a life of pleasing God. No one is walking with the Lord who is not pleasing Him in attitude and action.

See his trust. What is God more pleased with than anything else in our lives? It is when we have faith in Him to do what He has promised to do. If we do not have faith in God's promises, we call him a liar, which is a very solemn and serious matter. It is very clear in the Word of God that God cannot lie. Titus 1:2 says, "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began."

In context with Enoch the Bible says in Hebrews 11:6, "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

If you are pleasing God and trusting His promises you are in the desirable condition of walking with God. It should be our goal each day of our lives to have unbroken communion with our precious Lord. Living a life of faith is an important part of walking with God.

#### The Walk of Noah

The days of Noah are described somewhat in the Bible by Jesus in Matt 24:37-39- "But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

What is it that Christ says will characterize the age? It is not stealing and murder and immorality, but eating and drinking and marrying time after time. When the earth was destroyed the first time, it was because "the earth was corrupt... and...filled with violence" (Genesis 6:11). However, the sins that bring the second destruction of the earth seem to be eating and drinking and marrying time after time. These are the sins stressed by Christ.

Gen 6:5 says, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

"Great" wickedness means man's wickedness multiplied. Man committed more and more sin, more and more acts of wickedness. Society was not getting better, not becoming more and more righteous and godly; society was becoming more lawless and crime-ridden. Lawlessness and crime, immorality, and corruption were increasing more and more every year, not decreasing. The wickedness of man had swept the earth—swept every place where man was. That description fits our age so well. Great wickedness means that sin became more extreme and

But great wickedness does not only mean that sin multiplied, it also means that sin became more extreme and terrible.

We must compare what is said about Noah in Heb 11:7, "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."

Putting together what information we have of Noah, how does he reveal he walked with God?

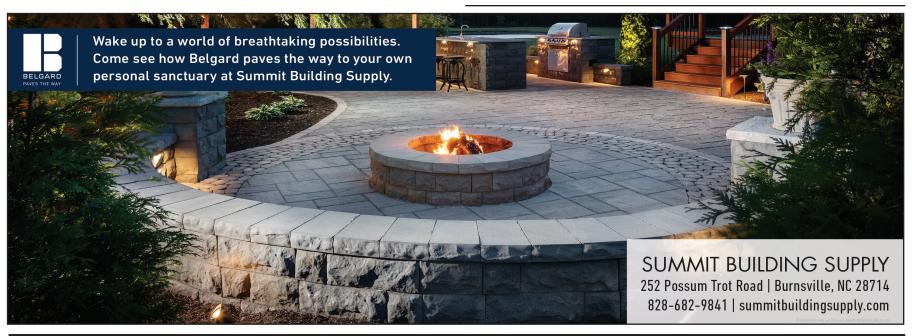
He lived by faith and not by sight.

He built the ark at the command of God.

He possessed the fear of God.

Let's live our lives not to please ourselves or to please others, but to please the Lord. It is then we will be in the state of walking with God.

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



#### A Pastor's View

#### Christians Are Always "In Uniform"!

By Shawn Thomas Angleton, Texas

In Matthew 5, Jesus told His disciples, "You are the salt of the earth ... You are the light of the world," indicating that we are to be witnesses and good influences in this world for Him. The light shines His truth. Salt enhances what it comes in contact with.



But He also warned us in that chapter that we can fail that calling by "letting our salt lose its savor" — that is if we fail to be the godly influence He intended us to be. Sadly, this happens way too often, doesn't it? We ALL know someone who has turned away from the Lord and His church, by someone who claimed to be a Christian, but whose life didn't back it up. Their "salt lost its

Christians, we need to remember that our purpose here on earth is to glorify God, NOT just to do whatever we feel like doing. And we have to remember that however we do choose to act always impacts other people. The old saying is: "No man is an island." Your actions always impact others: your family, your kids, your neighbors, your work associates; whoever is watching. If you claim to be a Christian, you are representing the Lord in this world, and everything you do either influences people for or against Him. We've got to be conscious of that ALL the time.

Lillian Parks Leighton worked as a maid at the White House for many years, and afterward, she wrote a delightful book about it (It Was Fun Working At The White House). In it, she tells how during World War I her brother Emmett ran off and joined the army. He wasn't old enough, but he sneaked in without his mother's permission because he was big for his age and he told them he was 18. When he came home that night in full uniform, Lillian said at first, her mother turned pale but then she looked at Emmett and said: "Don't ask me to get you out, and never disgrace that uniform." (P. 53)

That's a big deal, isn't it — not to disgrace the uniform of the United States of America! But as Christians, we need to realize we are not merely representing our nation when we go out into the world, we are representing the Lord Jesus Christ. If you claim to be a Christian, you are in essence "wearing His uniform"! And here's the thing that many of us don't realize as well as we should: IF YOU ARE A FOL-LOWER OF JESUS CHRIST, YOU ARE ALWAYS WEARING HIS UNIFORM! You are not just "in uniform" when you are sitting in the church, or off on a mission trip; or when you happen to be wearing a church tee-shirt; you are "in uniform" all the time, wherever you are — and people know it. If you're living one way in church and another way out in the world, it will turn people away from the Jesus you say you follow.

You may think you're not "in uniform" when you're at Wal-Mart or getting a meal at the restaurant, but you are! I was SO dismayed not long ago to see a server at a restaurant post on social media about what poor tippers the Christians are who come in after church. And then DOZENS of servers from other restaurants responded to her post, saying, "YES, that is exactly how it is here too; our restaurant HATES to see the Christians come in, because we know they are going to treat us like dirt, and they aren't going to tip well.'

THIS SHOULD CAUSE ALL OF GOD'S PEOPLE TO FALL ON OUR FACES BEFORE GOD AND REPENT! That is the reputation we have in the world? That is how we're representing Jesus in our community? Our Lord Jesus Christ is so gracious; He is so generous: He is so loving; He is so merciful to us — and THAT is how we turn around and treat the world in His name? We need to remember that Jesus said better than a heavy millstone is hung around our neck and that we are drowned in the depths of the sea than to cause one of these little ones to perish! Our salt has lost its savor when we've lost our witness in the community that way.

But this is about a lot more than just tipping, isn't it? It's about everything we do, everywhere we go, all the time.

We've got to understand is that you don't just come to church and put on your little "Christian uniform", and take it off when you leave that building. You are wearing His "uniform" ALL THE TIME. You are wearing His uniform in that restaurant — don't disgrace it by your stinginess and meanness. You tip generously and treat people graciously — yes, better than they deserve — because that is how He has treated you! And you have His uniform on — you are representing HIM!

- You have your "uniform" on when you're making that business deal.
- You have your "uniform" on when you are talking with your neighbors.
- You have your "uniform" on when you are in line at Walmart.

You've got to understand: you are never "off duty" as a Christian; you are AL-WAYS "in uniform." That's why I Corinthians 10:31 says "WHATEVER you do, do ALL to the glory of God." You are always "in uniform"; everything you do reflects on the glory of your God.

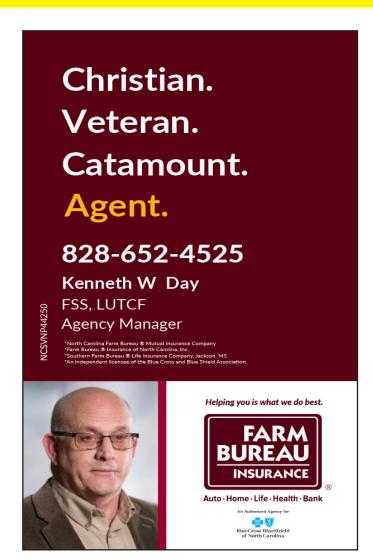
One of the biggest problems we have in evangelism here in America — especially in regions like ours that have had a Christian presence for some time — is that too many folks here have seen too many people who claim to be Christians, but who have dishonored God with their lives. And now these people are totally closed to the message of the gospel because the "so-called" "Christians" they've seen are "salt that's lost its savor.'

That's why we've got to take this seriously. That's why we have to remember that our whole purpose for being here on earth is to glorify God and that we are always His salt, and His light, 24 hours a day; 7 days a week. Do not "let your salt lose its savor"! Remember, Christian person: "You are always in uniform"!

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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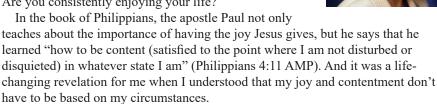


#### Enjoying Everyday Life

#### The Key to Being Truly Content

By Joyce Meyer

It seems there are very few people who are consistently content with life. It's more common to be up and down mentally and emotionally, depending on what our circumstances are. So I want to ask you: How content are you? Are you consistently enjoying your life?



#### What does it mean to really be content?

Being content doesn't mean you never want anything to change or to have anything else in your life. It means you can be satisfied to wait with a good attitude for whatever God chooses to do in your life. It means that even when you want something to happen, you still trust God enough to believe that if He doesn't give you what you want, He has your best interest at heart. And you'll find that what He gives you is better than what you thought you wanted to begin with.

The world is full of problems and we all have times when things don't go the way we planned. So it's wonderful when you get to the point that you can be happy even when you don't get your way!

I've learned that since the world probably isn't going to change, then I need to change my approach to circumstances—my attitude and my expectations. And it was a great breakthrough for me when I discovered that God wants me to have great expectations of Him. He wants me to put all of my hope in Him and exercise my faith in Him to do great things in my life.

#### What does God want to do for you?

Ephesians 3:20 says that God's power that is working in us "is able to [carry out His purpose and] do superabundantly, far over and above all that we [dare] ask or think [infinitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts, hopes, or dreams]" (AMP). I love these words: superabundantly, far over, and above ALL that we dare to ask or think!

It's so important for us to put our expectations in the right place—in God. We serve an awesome God, and I want to encourage you to ask Him to do great things in you and through you.

What are you asking God to do for you? Do you believe He loves you unconditionally and He has great plans for you? Do you trust Him to take care of your needs and that everything He asks you to do is for your good?

We need to resist thinking that God can't do anything for us because of our weaknesses and faults. He isn't expecting us to be perfect; He wants us to have faith in Him.

God wants us to put ALL of our hope and ALL of our expectations in Him. He wants us to trust Him to do what's best for us in the way He chooses to do it. He wants us to give Him the credit for the good things He does in our lives.

#### Are you putting your expectation in God?

Sometimes we are discontent and disappointed because we think we're expecting something from God but in reality, we're expecting someone else to give it to us. For example, we pray for a raise or promotion and don't get it so we get mad at our boss. Or we ask God to make our children behave better or our spouse to be more sensitive and thoughtful and when they don't do what we want, we get mad at them.

continued on page 33

#### Sudoku

Solution on page 14

		6		9	4			
	8				7			
5	7		6	8				9
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	4						6	
		1	7			5		
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			4	6		1		

#### Pause...and Consider

#### Forgiveness... A Sweet Fragrance

By Ken and Jan Merop Avery County

We entered the sanctuary of the church and immediately breathed in the sweet fragrance of the Easter Lilies. Not only was the air scented, but even the graceful, pure white blossoms seemed to invite joyful praise.

While celebrating the glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ, we can't forget the forgiveness of

Good Friday. Without the excruciating pain of Friday's betrayal and unforgiveness by the mobs, we wouldn't have the Sunday celebration of the empty tomb.

Forgiveness was the hallmark of Good Friday and made it 'good' for all who would believe in Jesus Christ's finished work on the cross; past, present, and future

From the cross, Jesus cried, "Father forgive them for they don't know what they are doing," Luke 23: 34 NLT. As He shed His blood in our place, He opened the way to forgiveness and restoration; deliverance and hope.

Even the thief on the cross recognized Him as the only way to eternal life and asked Jesus to remember him when He came into His kingdom. And Jesus replied (vs. 43), "I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise."

Forgiveness is its own reward.

Without it, the seeds of bitterness, resentment, and anger build and fester within the heart of the one withholding forgiveness. But once we realize that forgiveness is a decision, not a feeling, we take the first steps to embrace what God offers us. Now, we can be willing to forgive another and, when we do, the weight of unforgiveness is lifted.

It's not pretending you were not hurt. It's not rationalizing inappropriate behavior. It is getting my heart right with God and releasing the other person to his authority.

And then we come to the empty tomb.

It does not smell of death. It is pulsing with fragrant life. He who overcame sin and conquered death has burst forth offering us the gift of new life in Him.

Forgiveness is costly. But in Colossians 3: 13 NLT we are reminded, "Make allowance for each other's faults and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others."

A saying attributed to Mark Twain says it superbly. "Forgiveness is the fragrance the violet sheds on the heel that has crushed it."

I like to imagine deep purple violets and pure white lilies miraculously blooming as Jesus walked out of the tomb. With open hands and hearts, let's spread the fragrance of his forgiveness and joy.

Extravagantly given forgiveness results in joyful praise.

He has risen. He has risen indeed! Selah

#### Awakened to Life

The sweet fragrance of the Lily perfumes the air and calls to us; while also awakening the Bumble Bee's awareness that sweet nectar awaits.

God's call on our hearts gives new life while nourishing our souls.

Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life..."

John 11:25



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.

#### Berry Chapel Baptist Church

What Do You See When You Look At Calvary Cross

By Steve Williams Mitchell County

What I have found out in life is whatever you see depends on where you are standing. Think about it. Whenever a crime is committed or an accident or some calamity takes place, one of the first things we see happen is the investigating officers or people start asking what happened or what did you see. In life, we all expe-

rience many different things. Some things we can understand and other things are hard and difficult to make any sense of. We see this all the time in the days we are living. Just imagine what you would have seen if you would had living in Jesus Day. What would you say if you were asked, what could you tell us about this Jesus that hung on Calvary Cross?

If you were to ask the Religious people in that day how they viewed Jesus they would say that Jesus was a fake. They would tell you he was a problem maker, a winebibber, a man possessed with demons. He claims to be king of the Jews but He was from Galilee. How could this be? He makes claims to be the Messiah and that's impossible. If you were to ask the average person in that day they would have mixed views. They would say he's a Good man. We don't know just who He really is. We don't understand His sayings, but He seems to go around helping those less fortunate. We think he's a good guy. If you were to ask His followers how they viewed Him they would tell you He's the Messiah, He is a miracle worker, He healed a wither hand, lame leg, a deaf ear, makes the dumb to talk, and the blind to see. He is a life changer. There was a man possessed with demons and he spoke to the demons then they left the man's body. They would tell you that He is a life-giver. There was a widow who was on her way to bury her only son but Jesus stops the funeral prerecession of death and said "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise, and he that was dead set up and began to speak. And Jesus delivered him to his mother alive." The disciples would tell you that He was a weather changer. They would say one night a terrible storm was upon us and we thought we would die but we woke Jesus. Jesus spoke to the winds and the waves and said "peace be still" and there came a great peace upon the waters. But even those who followed Jesus had different views of Him. If you were to ask Mary and Martha how they viewed Jesus at their brother Lazarus' death, they would tell you that Jesus was late getting there. But if you were to ask them after Jesus arrived at Lazarus' tomb four days late, and spoke "Lazarus come forth", they would tell you that Jesus was right on time. The disciples would say He hangs around with sinners. But Jesus told us that it was the sick people that needed doctors, not the ones who were well. The disciples would also tell you that the words that He speaks are hard to understand.

All three groups had a different view of who Jesus really was. And the reason is where you stand with Jesus in your life, is what you see. See the closer you stand to Jesus the better your view will be of Him. But the problem so many people have today is they stand at a distance trying to get a close-up of who Jesus really is, and that will never happen. See, when you stand at a distance you'll never see what the person who is standing close up will see. The reason so many Christians fail to have victory in their lives is because of their view. You can't stand at a distance or walk at a distance with Jesus Christ and expect to have the correct view of who Jesus Christ really is. As you stand at the cross this Easter at sunrise, let me ask you what will you see?

#### Words Of Wisdom:

- God proved His love on the Cross. When Christ hung, and bled, and died, it was God saying to the world, 'I love you.' Billy Graham
- There is only one secure foundation: a genuine, deep relationship with Jesus Christ, which will carry you through any and all turmoil. No matter what storms are raging all around, you'll stand firm if you stand on His love. Charles Stanley
- To a Christian, Easter Sunday means everything, when we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Bernhard Langer
- Love always involves responsibility, and love always involves sacrifice. And we do not really love Christ unless we are prepared to face His task and to take up His Cross. William Barclay

#### Something To Smile About And To Think About:

- A Sunday School teacher asked her class on the Sunday before Easter if they knew what happened on Easter and why it was so important. One little girl spoke up saying: "Easter is when the whole family gets together, and you eat turkey and sing about the pilgrims and all that." "No, that's not it," said the teacher.
- "I know what Easter is," a second student responded. "Easter is when you get a tree and decorate it and give gifts to everybody and sing lots of songs." "Nope, that's not it either," replied the teacher.
- Finally, a third student spoke up, "Easter is when Jesus was killed, and put in a tomb and left for three days." "Ah, thank goodness somebody knows," the teacher thought to herself.
- But then the student went on: "Then everybody gathers at the tomb and waits to see if Jesus comes out, and if He sees His shadow He has to go back inside and we have six more weeks of winter."
- Could you imagine what Calvary looks like through the eyes of those that were there?

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

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#### New Dimensions School

By David Burleson Burke County

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

Our calendar committee and school board have worked very hard to develop the school calendar for 2021-2022. The recommended calendar has been approved and adopted by our school board at their March meeting. The 2021-2022 calendar is very similar to this year's calendar. One notable exception is the absence of remote learning days. The students at New Dimensions will head back to school on Wednesday, September 1, and the scheduled last day for students is Friday, May 27. Our calendar allows for a two-week Christmas break and a six-day break at Easter. With the calendar flexibility allowed charter schools, we can increase the amount of time per day and reduce the number of school days per year.

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

- Friday, April 2 to Friday, April 9 Easter Break for New Dimensions
- Tuesday, April 22 Earth Day Celebrations
- Monday, March 3 to Friday, March 7 Teacher Appreciation Week

Even though we are not finished with this school year yet, we are already planning our summer programs. Our goal is to provide our students who need a little extra help and support, the opportunity to get that during the summer months through a reading camp if state funds are available. The Read to Achieve legislation requires additional support for students in third grade who are not proficient in reading. Students who fail to meet this requirement will have the opportunity to attend our reading camp. Students in all grades who need additional support in reading and/or math will also have the opportunity to attend. We will have an excellent staff in place, and based on our previous summer camps it has been a very rewarding experience for our students. Our goal is for this to be supportive and helpful, not punitive in any way. We stand ready to answer any questions you might have about summer camp.

Coach Brooks is also planning his athletic camps for the first few weeks of June if possible. He is looking at other possible camps, so if you have any suggestions please let him know. The YMCA is planning an exciting summer for our students who need child care. Each week will have specific themes like STEM, water activities, outdoor activities, along with many other fun-filled events. Be on the lookout for information and registration forms soon.

Not only are we planning for summer activities, but have also geared up for next school year by having our enrollment lottery on April 1. The staff of New Dimensions will be more than happy to provide individual tours of our school. Just give us a call (828-437-5753) or email us at dburleson@ndschool.org to schedule a tour

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

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

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

Romans 10:9

#### Evangelism Explosion International

God Gives us Hope in a Crisis

By Rev. John B. Sorensen

Let's face it. This past year has been a difficult one. While some of us may be doing okay, others are struggling – financially, physically, and perhaps, even spiritually. As believers, we know that our hope is in Jesus. But how do we keep that hope amid troubled times when we are tired and ready to give up?



First of all, God has given us hope through the gift of salvation. Jesus died on the cross and rose from the grave to secure a place in Heaven for us. We can know that whatever happens here on earth, we can spend eternity with our Creator. Paul writes in Philippians 1:21, "to live is Christ and to die is gain" (NIV). That is our eternal hope.

The Bible also assures us that our trials are for a purpose. In Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, he writes that "our light and momentary troubles are achieving an eternal glory that far outweighs them all" (4:17, NIV). This changes our perspective. Whatever we are going through today is temporary. Our troubles will last only for a moment. They will pass. And as we endure them, those troubles grow perseverance, character, and hope in us (see Romans 5:3-4). They can make us stronger in the end.

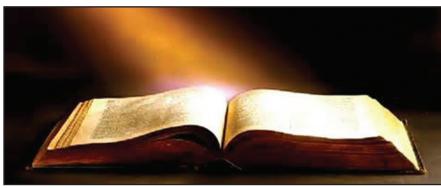
But what about the here and now? How do we endure when we are in the midst of the trial? When life gets hard and overwhelming, it's natural for us to withdraw and want to hide. But although this feels right, it's exactly the opposite of what we need to do. Not only do our trials have a purpose (in growing us), but we have a purpose amid those trials. We have hope because we have a job to do.

Every person who has the hope of salvation through Jesus has also been called to a ministry – specifically the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:1) – reconciling the world to God. We are His ambassadors. Our job is to plead to the lost on Christ's behalf...to share the Good News to a world who needs to hear that there's hope, to people who need that hope in their personal crisis.

We cannot have hope today without God's mercy and salvation, and we can't have God's mercy without His ministry. He has given us a task to do because He's merciful. As we minister hope to others, we are strengthened. We are made whole. We find our meaning and purpose. That keeps us going because it gives us hope.

You see, our hope has nothing to do with our present circumstances – a virus, our finances, or how we feel. Our hope doesn't change when we're in a storm. Our hope is in God and God alone. That hope is so critical. With it, we can endure against all odds. It makes us brave to share that hope with others. Time is short, so let's make today the day of reconciliation.

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





#### Christian Action League

#### Little Lives Matter

By Rev. Mark Creech

It's been approximately six months since Cannon Hinnant was gun downed in Wilson, North Carolina. The five-year-old boy, innocent as a lamb, was shot in the head at point-blank range by Darius Sessoms. Cannon was on his bike in Sessoms' front yard at the time. The boy was taken to Wilson Medical Center, where he died of his injuries. No motive for the shooting was



The outrage at such senseless killing of innocent life became an international story, but something that never made the news is what happened afterward. This murderous act, incomprehensible in its moral gravity and with its many witnesses as to who did it, had its defenders.

National File reported about a Facebook group with more than 20,000 members who supported the alleged killer. The group's opening statement, "Justice for Darius Sessoms," said Sessoms did not commit the murder and that the accusations against him were "propaganda from the far-right Trump propaganda machine." They argued that because Sessoms was black and Hinnant was a white child, the whole thing was meant to make black people look bad.

"One internet sleuth managed to infiltrate the group – that was reportedly started as a troll, but attracted various Black Lives Matter supporters - and nab screenshots of member's posts," reported National File.

One of the many, who commented on the page, called Sessoms "a political prisoner" and a victim of unjust persecution. Other comments portrayed Sessoms as a victim of systemic racism.

Still, one person, most insensitively, said, "I'd feel worse about his death if he didn't have such a stupid name. A 'cannon' that gets shot?" As if somehow the child's name was partly to blame, inviting someone to shoot him.

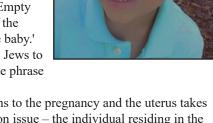
National File also said that a fake Wilson Police Department press release was posted on Facebook, which changed the "narrative surrounding the horrific crime."

It goes to show you, anything, no matter how heinous, will, almost always, have its defenders - even the wanton killing of a blameless, powerless, priceless child. There are many ways to dodge the guilt - diminish, distract, and dissuade from the

When carefully contemplating the matter, aren't the defenders of abortion doing the same? Let's be honest with ourselves, in principle, what's the difference between putting a gun to the head of a five-year-old child and tearing apart a child, limb from limb, while in the mother's womb? It's still just as odious. Randy Alcorn, a champion for the pro-life cause, has written:

"Two years before abortion was legalized in America, a pro-choice advocate

instructed nurses in a prominent journal, 'Through public conditioning, use of language, concepts, and laws, the idea of abortion can be separated from the idea of killing. The same year a symposium on abortion in Los Angeles offered this training: 'If you say, 'Suck out the baby,' you may easily generate or increase trauma; say instead, 'Empty the uterus,' or 'We will scrape the lining of the uterus,' but never 'We will scrape away the baby.' Interestingly, Hitler's command to take the Jews to their death in the camps was couched in the phrase 'empty the ghettos...'



"Using words that focus on what happens to the pregnancy and the uterus takes attention away from the crux of the abortion issue – the individual residing in the uterus. But no matter how many words we use and how we use them, 'terminating a pregnancy is terminating a human life. The one may sound better than the other, but the realities are the same.

"We must cut through the semantic fog and always find our way back to the bottom-line realities."

Diminish, distract and dissuade from the truth, but the fact remains abortion is just like putting a gun to the head of a child. Furthermore, attempting to defend it is also an unconscionable act. Both Christian theology and science agree that when sperm and egg are joined, a new dynamic occurs - a genetically distinct human being begins.

Our culture's defense of this woeful practice has been so aggressive that now some justify the so-called right to terminate a pregnancy up to nine months or provide no assistance to a baby that survives a botched abortion, letting it die.

Who would believe that there is any justification for shooting a child at pointblank range? Only those on the fringe would defend or take away from what Cannon Hinnant's murderer did. Yet more than half of Americans, figuratively speaking, seek to justify putting a gun to the head of an unborn baby.

In heaven, it's a scandal and an outrage that a holy God will not indefinitely tolerate. His judgment is inevitable. The blood of over sixty-million cries out to him for justice, and they shall have it. Only those who repent of this wickedness and refuse to indulge or shield it, only those who cast themselves on the mercies of Christ, will be saved from God's wrath.

Some say, Black Lives Matter. Others say Blue Lives Matter. Let me say it as demonstrably as it can be said, how can we argue any of these lives matter if we cannot credibly say that Little Lives Matter?

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







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## Your Government Page

#### NC Senate District 47



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

On March 11, I filed Senate Bill 249 – The SAVE Act, titled An Act to Deliver Safe, Accessible, Value-Directed, and Excellent (SAVE) Health Care throughout North Carolina By Modernizing Nursing Regulations. This legislation would expand access to health care across our state and would particularly benefit our rural areas, where a lack of providers prevents many North Carolinians from accessing affordable, quality health care that is close to their homes and meets their specific needs. The confluence of certain trends has brought about the need for this legislation. As more Baby Boomers retire and age, more physicians are retiring and dying each year than are graduating from medical schools, and the majority of new physicians, including primary care physicians, practice in urban areas. This bill addresses that problem by streamlining regulations to allow APRNs (advanced practice registered nurses), which include NPs (nurse practitioners), CNMs (certified nurse midwives), CNSs (clinical nurse specialists), or CRNAs (certified registered nurse anesthetists), to fully utilize their training and practice at the top their licensing. This bill is a savings bill, not a spending bill. In addition to expanding access, The SAVE Act would result in annual health care system savings of between \$433 million and \$4.3 billion in North Carolina. Had the 2019 version of this bill passed, we could have already saved at least \$866 million. It is time for our state to join the 23 other states that have modernized nursing regulations in allowing APRNs to practice

Senate Bill 101 – Require Cooperation with ICE 2.0, which I cosponsored, passed the Senate on March 11 and was sent to the House. This bill requires North Carolina sheriffs to cooperate with federal immigration authorities when dealing with suspected illegal immigrants who are already jailed for committing a violent crime who have U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detainer requests. Specifically, the bill would:

- Require that ICE is queried when an individual charged with certain offenses is in custody and citizenship status is undetermined.
- Require a judicial official to order that a prisoner subject to a detainer and administrative warrant be held in custody for 48 hours or until ICE resolves the request.
- Create reporting requirements related to ICE queries.

Two years ago, Gov. Roy Cooper vetoed a bill that would have required sanctuary cities to honor ICE detainer requests for all offenders. Senate Bill 101 – Require Cooperation with ICE 2.0, which passed the Senate on March 11, is more limited, only requiring sanctuary cities to cooperate with ICE for violent offenders jailed for murder, rape and other sexual offenses, gang-related crimes, human trafficking, drug trafficking, or assault. However, all Democrats voted against the bill. It is completely outrageous and unfathomable that anyone would support the protection of illegal immigrants who commit violent crimes against North Carolinians. Turning illegal violent criminals over to federal immigration authorities should be a bipartisan priority. Unfortunately, it is not.

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 Warren.Daniel@ncleg.net 919-715-7823

Spring is now here and I am looking forward to warmer, sunny weather. I wanted to update you on a couple of bills that I am working on in the NC Senate. First is Senate Bill 191, the No Patient Left Alone Act, which I first filed in 2020, but did not pass into law. After hearing numerous heartbreaking personal stories of constituents and citizens from across our state that was prohibited from visiting hospitalized family members during the pandemic, I decided to re-file it again in 2021, but this time with an important change. This proposed law would require licensed hospitals, and now also nursing homes and long-term care facilities, to ensure the opportunity for at least one visitor to visit a patient admitted to a facility during a period in which a disaster, emergency, or public health emergency has been declared. It provides for a minor who is admitted to a licensed hospital the opportunity to have at least one parent, guardian, or person standing in loco parentis the opportunity to visit and be present while the minor is receiving hospital care. Visitors would still be subject to normal visitation policies and will also have access to a waiting area when the visitor cannot be in the room with the patient. Licensed hospitals and nursing homes may require visitors to submit to health screenings, and restrict visitors who do not pass the screening or who test positive for an infectious disease. Further, SB 191 authorizes hospitals to require visitors to adhere to infection control procedures. Other states have passed similar bills and I am hopeful that this legislation will pass both chambers and be signed into law this year.

A second bill worth noting is a local bill, SB 232, entitled the Students/Parents Community Rights Act. This bill would prohibit the governor from enacting any executive order that reduces the attendance level at any public school sporting event to less than 50% capacity. In other words, school sporting events in the 14 western counties included in the bill, (including Avery, Burke, and Caldwell), would always be allowed to have at least 50% attendance at school sporting events, so that our students will no longer have to compete in empty stadiums and arenas, without their parents, friends, and family there to cheer them on.

If you would like to continue to follow the actions of SB 191 or any other bills or examine the voting record of your NC House or Senate member, The General Assembly website is an invaluable resource. Check out NCLeg.gov.

#### NC House District 86



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

North Carolina's K-12 students who don't have underlying health issues need to return full-time to the classroom. Research from the Center for Disease Control, the Duke/UNC ABC Science Co-Operative, and the Journal of the American Medical Association have all documented the devastation to both the mental health and academic achievement of our children caused by the closing of our public schools. Respected researchers have also shown that returning to the classroom is safe for students and staff who don't have underlying conditions. With these findings in mind, the North Carolina legislature passed "The In-Person Learning Choices for Families Act". Unfortunately, Governor Cooper vetoed the bill and we lacked the necessary votes to override his veto.

So, the legislature then presented Governor Cooper a bill with a new language to open the schools. Because, I believe, of tremendous parental pressure to open schools, Governor Cooper agreed to the new language and signed "The Reopen Our Schools Act of 2021." The bill requires that students from kindergarten through 5th grade be back on campus full-time, five days per week. Districts still have a choice for older students. However; school districts may open for grades 6-12 full-time, in-person if they desire. Alternatively, they can do a hybrid model with a combination of remote and in-person. In any event, all schools must offer special ed students full-time, in-person classroom instruction. All schools in the state must meet reopening requirements no later than April 1, 2021. There is the flexibility to open sooner.



#### Burke County Public Schools

#### Burke Virtual Academy Holds Open Enrollment

By Chris Shuffler Burke County

The Burke Virtual Academy is holding open enrollment for students interested in a virtual education experience for the 2021-2022 academic year. The Burke Virtual Academy is for any student kindergarten through 12th grade wishing to take a full slate of online classes, or for middle and high



school students who would like to enroll in at least one online class while attending face-to-face classes at their base school and/or Western Piedmont Community College. The deadline to enroll in Burke Virtual Academy is Friday, April 16, 2021. To enroll, visit bit.ly/ApplyBVA.

Enrollment requires a year-long commitment from kindergarten through 8thgrade students and a semester-long commitment for 9th- through 12th-grade students. Students also must meet certain eligibility requirements. Kristin Edwards, the coordinator of Burke Virtual Academy, said, "It is important to us that each Burke County Public School student experience academic success. We have outlined eligibility requirements for students specific to their grade level. Please review the requirements found in the Burke Virtual Academy Student Handbook or the Burke Virtual Academy website to ensure your student's success."

Edwards said K-2 parents are asked to be actively involved in their students' virtual learning experiences and act as hands-on learning coaches. Orientations and virtual parent support groups will be available to help parents navigate virtual

Edwards said, "As students work through daily lessons, their online teachers provide them with meaningful and timely feedback and instruction in a virtual setting. Students are still assigned to their base school and can participate in extracurricular activities to help them explore interests and stay connected to their

Students will still be assigned to their base school but will operate under the Burke Virtual Academy handbook. Attendance requirements include at least some

New students and kindergarten students should enroll at their base school in the district they are assigned. Parents also must have a valid email address for contact purposes. A new application must be completed for each student who wishes to enroll during the 2021-2022 school year.

For secondary students, all virtual classes, including NCVPS, APEX, Burke Virtual courses, and Career and College Promise, must now be accessed through

enrollment in Burke Virtual Academy. Please use the Burke Virtual Academy application to access any of these online programs.

Christie Abernathy, director of Advanced Learning and Innovation, said "The Virtual Academy's online learning offers flexibility for students and parents as you can organize your daily school work routine to fit your lifestyle. Students can pursue outside interests while receiving personalized learning tailored to their needs. Local, talented teachers provide



Students in Angela Happoldt's third-grade Virtual Academy class Zoom with BDI President and CEO Alan Wood during Read Across America Day. Open enrollment for next year's Burke Virtual Academy ends April 16, 2021.

students engaging and interactive instruction while allowing parents to help guide and facilitate their child's education in a home setting. The blended learning approach helps students form relationships with their teachers while at the same time gaining independence to work on their schedule."

For more information, visit the Burke Virtual Academy website at bcva.burke. k12.nc.us/. To enroll, visit bit.ly/ApplyBVA.

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

#### **Enjoying Everyday Life**

continued from page 28

We need to look to God to provide what we need and what we want. This means we trust Him, no matter what other people do or what circumstances look like. It's not wrong to put realistic expectations in the people we have relationships with, but no one is perfect, and people will disappoint us sometimes. We can get rid of a lot of disappointment and discontentment by learning how to put our hope and expectation in God first and foremost.

God cares about everything about you and everything that concerns you. He wants to be good to you and He will never disappoint you. Give Him all of your heart and put all of your hope and expectation in Him. You can have true contentment and satisfaction in Christ!

Joyce Meyer is a New York Times bestselling author and founder of Joyce Meyer Ministries, Inc. She hosts the Enjoying Everyday Life radio and TV programs, which air on hundreds of stations worldwide. For more information, visit www. iovcemever org





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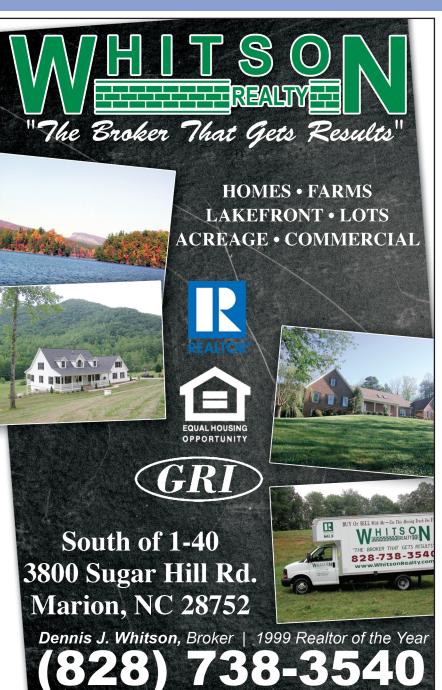
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National Day of Prayer for 2021 – May 6, 2021

By Monica Henley Kirtz Mitchell County

As we look forward to the National Day of Prayer for 2021, we are excited to announce the theme: "LORD, pour out Your Love, Life, and Liberty." The Scripture for 2021 is 2 Corinthians 3:17, "Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where

the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

2021 is the 70th year of the national observance of the National Day of Prayer. As I've been reading a book about the life of President Abraham Lincoln, it has been written that in 1861, in the middle of the Civil War, at the suggestion of Congress, Lincoln called for a day of nationwide prayer. The first one was on the last Thursday of November and his reason for choosing Thursday was so it would not interfere with any other religious (or holy) days already set by American churches. ["Abraham Lincoln – A Man of Faith and Courage" by Joe Wheeler, p.20] Here are some of Lincoln's words: "...when our beloved country, once, by the blessing of God, united, prosperous, and happy, is now afflicted...and in sorrowful remembrance of our own faults and crimes as a nation and as individuals, to humble ourselves before Him, and to pray for His mercy." Abraham Lincoln actually observed and called for 9 of these national days of prayer during his presidency.

Even as early as 1668, there were days of fasting and prayer for America, proclaimed by other presidents, preachers, governors, generals, and Congress. [For more detailed information on the history of prayer in our nation, go to the National Day of Prayer website, scroll to the bottom of the home page and click on "History of Prayer in America".] Many times, these national days of prayer and fasting were during times of war and battles, as well as other times of crisis, such as health epidemics. Today, our war is a spiritual war. And the battle has greatly intensified in this last year. It seems as if every major area of influence in our nation has been in warfare: government, military, media, business, education, church, and the family. As with any war, it is best fought on our knees, not in the energy of the flesh but the power of GOD.

This year, in Mitchell County, let's come together on May 6, 2021, with our hearts united in prayer...hearts crying out in repentance for our town and county, our state, and our nation. We will be observing the National Day of Prayer this year in several ways:

- \* WTOE 1470 AM & 101.1 FM radio 11:00 a.m.- 12:00 noon\*
- \*A prayer walk at Riverside Park at 12:00 noon & also 6:30 p.m.\*

Please share this information with your church...with your family...with your friends and neighbors.

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.



#### GriefShare

By Carolyn Dotts Mitchell County

Signs of spring are everywhere-daffodils poking their heads through the moist soil, robins pulling worms from the lawn, and warming temperatures that allow the shedding of sweaters and coats. It's been a long active winter, and hopefully, some of the normalcy that was set aside



throughout 2020 and the Coronavirus pandemic can be resumed. Lives have been changed in so many ways during this time through loss, but no loss is greater than the loss of a loved one, whether it was due to COVID or some other cause. Losing a loved one thrusts a person into a state of shock and grief that can be unbearable. Often what that person needs most is someone to walk along-side them through the grief. That is what GriefShare is designed to do.

the grief. That is what GriefShare is designed to do.

GriefShare is a grief support ministry offered through local churches worldwide. It meets as a small group to view a weekly video of a featured topic, followed by discussion questions. There is no pressure to speak, and silence is an appropriate



response. Confidentiality is highly valued and practiced by leaders and participants. Western Carolina Church GriefShare Ministry began in 2008, and it has met for nearly every spring and fall cycle since then. There have also had numerous Surviving the Holidays banquet seminars, and more recently, several Loss of Spouse seminars. The 2020 Spring cycle was being planned when the pandemic hit. Going forward, the plan is to begin meeting in person again in the fall.

Western Carolina Church will begin its GriefShare program in April, meeting on Thursdays at 6:00 pm. The last time this ministry met in person was in December 2019. The 2020 spring cycle was being planned when the pandemic hit. The 2021 spring cycle will be an entirely online group using Zoom technology, which will be a first. However, through this past year, many have conquered their fear of technology as they learned how to make connections with small groups at church, in business meetings for their job, and other gatherings done online. During April, the following topics will be featured:

April 8 Is this normal?

April 15 Challenges of Grief

April 22 The Journey of Grief-Part 1

April 29 The Journey of Grief-Part 2

To register to participate, go online to Griefshare.org, or call the church at 828-765-4633. Another way to register is to call Carolyn Dotts, group leader, at 828-467-1433. The cost of the workbook is \$15, but there is no charge for the sessions. The workbook will be mailed to those who register online by Church Initiative, GriefShare's umbrella ministry. Some workbooks can be purchased from the church. If there is difficulty with online registration, or if you have questions, please call Carolyn.

Going forward plans are being made to meet again in person in the fall at Western Carolina Church. Please pray for this opportunity for those who need the support and comfort found only in Christ, during this time of grief and loss.

Carolyn Dotts makes her home in Ledger and is a retired Special Education teacher. She is a widow with two sons and five grandchildren. She is a member of Western Carolina Church in Spruce Pine.

## "If you love me, you will obey what I command." John 14:15



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Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: John 11:25

#### Tim's Treasures

#### Through the Eyes of a Child

By Timothy W. Tron *Burke County* 

Cast into your mind the melody of "Wayfaring Stranger," playing as an instrumental number. It's solitude, its loneliness preparing you for what comes next. The words begin to meld into the memory as one and together present a cinematic scene so forlorn, so haunting; you cannot help but be drawn in.



"I am a poor, wayfaring stranger..."

Gray skies overcast the scene before me.

Like a cloud of disbelief, the entourage of man, cattle, and feline moved slowly into the beckoning opening of the dairy barn. As a methodical procession, in some unforeseen rhythmic cadence, their existence moved as one. Some sense an urgency being pressed upon them by their natural state, to be milked, another the knowledge of labor from which life itself is sustained, and the latter, the offering of something to which they had not labored but only entered into another's toil. The beasts, united by nothing more than the instinctual desire for relief of pressure and the welcoming call of hunger being satisfied therein, came willingly. Their solemn lowing as if greeting the time answered only by the cats' thirsty meows. The solitary man, his thoughts straggle along like those hooved footsteps before him, recalls the past when so many more had been with him – beast and child. For this day, another young soul, his eyes fixed upon the moment, would unknowingly forever have this scene etched into his young memory. The elder didn't dwell on what the grandchild might remember, only that he was proud to have him tagging along – another one that he might share the love of being connected to God's creation through the lifelong servitude to farming - providing for others what they cannot fulfill of their own accord. There had been many other grandkids, many other children to which he had shown this daily routine. Some had helped when they were old enough. Others found it nothing more than a novelty – an exercise in the quainter side of life. Yet, the one that watched with longing eyes had the soul of an old spirit, one that appreciated more deeply the things to which he was shown – reasoning the old man could appreciate.

The shadow of the barn's darkness encapsulated their entourage as they entered. The dusty, fly-specked windows added to the grayness of the light. Like spectral images, the cows one-by-one found their own stall. Wandering to the long concrete trough built into the ancient floor, they began mouthing the sweet-smelling grain the man had placed earlier, long before they had been called. Only when he had prepared their table for dining would he step out of the barn and painfully walk to a point where he knew they could hear his call. His high-pitched shrill, "Sook cow," echoed off the other outbuildings, ringing into the foothills. They would come as if summonsed from another time, ambling slowly, milk bags swaying as their procession made its way down the long lane, which was bordered by matching wooden fencing on both sides. The Catalpa trees shadowed their walk, like pillars to the sky, their gray trunks, now amid winter's late clutches.

And the song continued, "Traveling through this world below..."

They had heard of Jesus' healing powers. Like strangers from the midst, they came. The Passover, the feast of the Jews was nigh when Christ went up on the mountain to sit with his disciples. From whence he came, most did not know. For this day, he had arrived to serve those who could not provide of their own accord. Unlike the farmer, he had not beckoned them, yet they came seeking to be healed, misguided by their misunderstanding of his message. For what Jesus sought was to provide for them that they might see the miracles and believe him when he spoke of eternal life, a place where he would go and prepare a place for us; a place where disease and mourning would have no home.

Meanwhile, the melody plays on, "There is no sickness, no toil, nor danger in that bright land to which I go..."

As Jesus sat with his disciples in supposed reclusion, themselves alone, and discussed all that had been said, all that had been done, he soon realized they were not alone. "When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that

every one of them may take a little."

One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said, "There is a lad here that hath five loaves of barley and two small fishes, but what are these among so many.?" What came next was a miracle to which none other had yet to be compared, the feeding of the multitude, some say far greater than five-thousand. And yet, what became of the lad who had offered to share his lunch? With eyes of wonder, he indeed beheld the miracle that transpired. For the rest of his life, as a baseline for living from that day forward, he would forever be changed.

The child watched his grandfather continue the routine operation of milking the cattle. His eyes were like a sponge unto his mind, absorbing all that he could, impressing this time with his grandfather upon his soul. Etched into his heart, the scene before them began to unfold.

Sitting his short-legged stool near the cow's side, the man grabs the well-worn rag from the edge of one bucket, washes it around in the solution, wringing it out with hands of age and firmness until it was only damp to the touch. He would then wipe down the underside of the cow's bag and all four of her udders. Placing the rag back on the edge of the bucket, he would then grab the milk bucket, the stainless still container, and put it underneath. Those ancient hands, so firm but so gentle, would then begin the process of milking.

Here and there, the old girl's tail swats instinctively at an unseen fly. The elder reaches up to remind her of his presence, and the rhythmic process continues. The streams of bountiful creaminess are seen and heard as their initial crescendos pulsate into the pail. Like beacons of hope to the ears of those feline onlookers, the cats come running to the backside of that man and beast coupling. There they sit, licking their whiskers in anticipation, some yawning as if to say we are tired of waiting. When the milk bucket is nearing capacity, the supple hand gently begins shooting streams of the rhythmic pulsations to the furry onlookers. Their faces become plastered with the creamy goodness. The grandfather's aim is perfect. The years of practice have served him well, as the ungracious recipients accept their welcome nourishment. Overwhelmed with the delectability of that fulfillment, the cats begin to stand on their hind legs, reaching for the whimsical ever-rising stream the farmer playfully spreads. Finally, the last remnants of her utter contents are relinquished into the pail, and once more, he wipes down the flesh of her underside. Before moving onto the next beast of the field, he reaches up and unhooks her collar from the bindings.

Meanwhile, she continues to chew the delicious grain as grandpa slides over to the next stall and repeats the process. Eventually, the cats, being filled with their beggar's meal, wander off. Some stop nearby and begin the cleaning process, their faces first, wiping the bounty from their whiskers with wide-tongue swipes. Lazily, they find their favorite nook within the confines of the barn – their sanctuary from the world.

"I'm going there to see my Father and all my loved ones who've gone on. I'm just going over Jordan, I'm just going over home..."

Frantic to be in his presence, to be fed once again, the crowd of witnesses took shipping over the sea of Galilee to find Jesus on the other side of the sea. When they found him, they had yet to realize the significance of the miracle. They only saw it through the natural eyes of man, the instinctual existence of being fed for the profit of the flesh, unbeknownst that they had just received a feeding of the spirit – the true intention of Christ. "Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed." So often, those who pursue the concept of Christianity without seeking the relationship with God are merely acting as those barn cats or those who had witnessed the miracle of the feeding of the multitude. Their commitment was simply at face value – they had no skin in the game, as the saying goes. Unlike the disciples, those on the periphery of belief were there for the freebies, for the show, and for what they could get out of it that would satisfy their earthly needs.

And the haunting strains of the song continue, "I know dark clouds will gather 'round me, I know my way is hard and steep. But beauteous fields arise before me, where God's redeemed, their vigils keep..."

The children would never forget the things they saw that day. Each had been

continued on page 37



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fed, but not from the meat which perisheth, but rather from that sustenance which endureth to eternity. One, a poor farmer's grandchild, the other possibly an orphan looking to find comfort in the loving arms of a new Father – each having scenes of inspiration unfold before them so that they would be forever changed. Their recollection of that time etched into their souls would be recalled once more to those that would listen. In the autumn years of life, they would speak of a time before, a moment when what was perceived as the simple task of feeding and being fed would become much more than the visceral study, but a lesson of how God's love for us transcends anything we can comprehend.

And the last refrain of the song concludes, "So, I'm just going over Jordan, I'm just going over home. I'm just going over Jordan, I'm just going over home."

As time passes, the children age and become old men. The image in the mirror is not the one in their heart. With backs bent from a lifetime of toil, they look forward to that day to join those gone on before. One would speak of a miracle so profound, so evident that it would be told for centuries to come. Another would speak of merely a simple day in the life of a peasant dairy farmer. Each would tell of a similar moment when compared in the essence of life being provided by God so that the eyes of a child could capture that moment and realize its significance. Their memories would save that event to share with those who would never know that moment in time personally. Still, through their eyes, the retelling could enrich the hearer's belief, and they too would be fed like that multitude on the hillside so

In this, we can say without a doubt, "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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#### Crossword

Crossword
Crossword 265 and Solution
ACROSS 1 Absalom had appointed
over the army in place of Joab
(2 Sam 17:25) 6 some pistachio and
almonds (Gen 43:11-12) 10 he who righteousness
reaps a sure reward
(Prov 11:18) 14 The people will not eating
until he comes (1 Sam 9:13)
15 son of Isaac (Gen 27:5) 16 Do not cut the hair at the sides
of your head or off the edges (Lev 19:27)
17 that will not be
moved; its stakes will never (1,4) (Isa 33:20)
18 But if you can do anything, take pity on us and us
(Mark 9:22)
19 As soon as the grain is, he puts the sickle to it
(Mark 4:29)
20 A betrays a confidence (Prov 11:13)
22 so also these men oppose the truth, men of minds
(2 Tim 3:8)
24 Can you make a of him like a bird (Job 41:5)
26 the western foothills and the
mountain (Josh 10:40) 27 Satan might not outwit us. For
we are not of his schemes (2 Cor.2:11)
31 They were all filled with
and praised God. (Luke 7:16) 33 their were not scorched,
and there was no smell of fire (Dan 3:27)
34 What strength he has in
his, what power in the muscles (Job 40:16)
37 Stinging insect (Isa 7:18) KJV
39 The sun turned black like sackcloth made of hair
(Rev 6:12) 40 with trumpets and the of
the ram's horn (Ps 98:6)
41 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me (Matt 25:35)
KJV
42 from one of the heavens to the other (Matt 24:31)
43 to perform the daily duties of their various
2 Chron 31:1 <del>6</del> )
44 the forest has been cut down (Zech 11:2)
45 was the golden that had manna (Heb 9:4)
46 What he toiled for he must
give back (Job 20:18) 48 They are like plants in the
field, like tender green
(2 Kings 19:26) 51 long period of time
52 they hid in caves and, among the rocks, and in pits
(1 Sam 13:6)
54 A man who loves brings joy to his father (Prov 29:3)
59 Can a man on hot coals
without his feet being scorched? (Prov 6:28)

60 my ears have heard the of
my wicked foes (Ps 92:11)
62 thy brother was dead, and is
again (Luke 15:32) KJV 63 We hear that some among you
are They are not busy
(2 Thess 3:11)
64 Salvation is found in no one
, for there is no other
name (Acts 4:12) 65 So Joseph bought some
cloth, took down the body
(Mark 15:46)
66 Like a bird that strays from its
is a man who strays
(Prov 27:8) 67 O Sovereign LORD, well
with me for your name's sake
(Ps 109:21)
68 why money on what is not
bread (Isa 55:2)
DOWN 1 with dishonest scales, with
of false weights (1,3)
(Mic 6:11)
2 "What do you want
do for you?" Jesus asked him.
(2,2) (Mark 10:51)
3 mystery that has been kept hidden for and
generations (Col 1:26)
4 to the paralytic, "Take heart,
son; your are forgiven."
(Matt 9:2) 5 You did not renounce your
faith in me, even in the days of
(Rev 2:13)
6 abbr. for the 16th book of the
O.T
7 Show me the coin for paying the tax (Matt 22:19)
8 Have nothing to do with
godless myths and old wives'
(1 Tim 4:7)
9 trust ye not in any brother: for
every brother will utterly (Jer 9:4) KJV
10 I will away her rubble and
make her a bare rock
(Ezek 26:4-5)
11 I am like an tree
flourishing in the house of God (Ps 52:8)
12 I will wipe out Jerusalem as
one a dish (2 Kings 21:13)
13 The creatures back and
forth like flashes of lightning
(Ezek 1:14) 21 one beka person that is
21 one beka person, that is, half a shekel (Ex 38:26)
23 with four of cedar
columns supporting trimmed
cedar beams (1 Kings 7:2)
25 gives honest testimony, but a false witness lies
(Prov 12:17)
27 he him to take it; but he
refused (2 King 5:16)
28 called on the name of Baal
from morning even until (1 King 18:26)
29 Like tooth or a lame

29 Like

foot (1,3) (Prov 25:19)

30 they shall \_\_\_\_ thee with the dew of heaven (Dan 4:25)

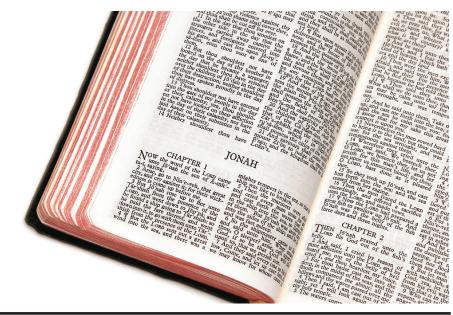
tooth or a lame

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32 Each frame is to \_ cubits long and a cubit and a half (2,3) (Ex 26:16) 35 He cut down cedars, or perhaps took a cypress or (Isa 44:14) 36 married a wife, deceased, and, having no (Matt 22:25) 37 As she wept, she \_\_\_\_ over to look into the tomb (John 20:11-12) 38 now therefore thou somewhat the grievous servitude (2 Chr 10:4) KJV 40 The city is left in ruins, its gate is \_\_\_ to pieces (Isa 24:12) 41 Give \_\_\_\_ sign of your goodness, that my enemies may (2,1) (Ps 86:17) 43 David the spear and water jug near Saul's head (1 Sam 26:12) 44 Peter made three \_\_\_\_ about knowing Christ (John 18:17,25,27) 45 your enemies he will hurl away as from the of a sling (1 Sam 25:29) 47 those who believed came

and openly confessed (Acts 19:18-19) 48 shelter from the storm and a from the heat (Isa 25:4) 49 wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the \_\_\_ (Amos 9:13) 50 men into the city that day as men steal in (2 Sam 19:3) 52 ship with the figurehead of the gods Castor and Pollux (Acts 28:11) 53 Xerxes reigned from his royal throne in the citadel of \_\_\_\_ (Est 1:2) 55 The law of his God is in his heart; his feet do not \_\_\_\_ (Ps 37:31) 56 So the king and Haman went to with Queen Esther (Est 7:1-2) 57 They are all adulterers, as an heated by the baker (Hosea 7:4) 58 a time to tear and a time to (Eccl 3:7) 61 exiles who lived at \_\_\_ Abib near the Kebar River (Ezek 3:15)

Solution on page 14



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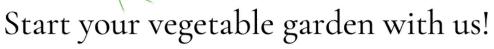


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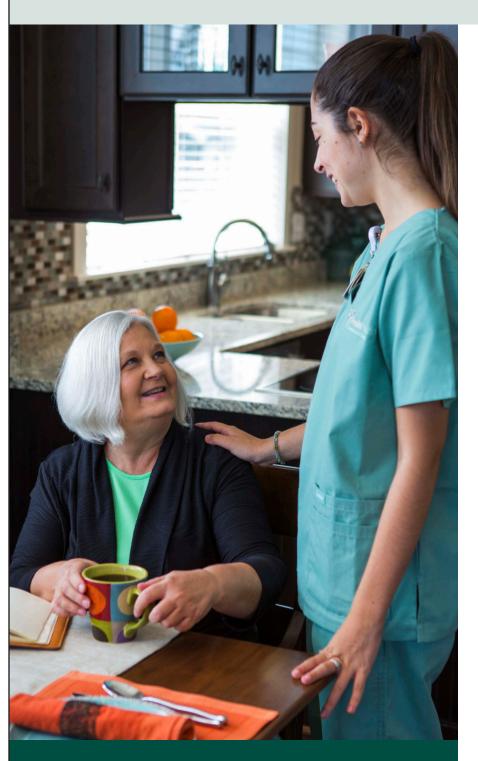


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