



BLUE RIDGE CHRISTIAN NEWS



Pleasant Hill Baptist Church

A Father's Example

By Caron Cline
Burke County

Growing up as a pastor's daughter had its fair share of charms and challenges. As a child, my father pastored a quickly growing church that included many families with children my age. We were a tight-knit group and most Sunday evenings after the service, 25-30 people made their way to our house for homemade ice cream. It was during these times that my love for a church family took root. When I was fourteen, the Lord called my dad to Pleasant Hill Baptist Church in Morganton and for a season, I was convinced my life would end in loneliness and despair. As God would have it, just a few weeks after the move, I suddenly realized that Morganton was the best place on earth. The decision to relocate was also difficult for my parents but the desire to be in the center of God's will took precedence. As a new and young pastor, my father began systematically visiting every church member, seeking to build relationships with his new flock. There were many senior citizens in the fellowship and he immediately won their hearts and they, his. The role of a pastor is multi-faceted. Preaching and teaching the word of God, as well as visiting the sick, were witnessed by all. However, behind the scenes, there were midnight phone calls from those who struggled with alcohol; evening counseling sessions with couples amid serious marital issues; and late-night deliveries of food to hungry people. On multiple occasions, my dad chopped wood for widows in need, drove members to doctor appointments and the grocery store, and even painted a few houses. Countless times, this pastor sat by the bedside of the sick and dying and held their hand as they took their final breath. Whether it was Christmas, Thanksgiving, or any other day of the year, my father was only a phone call away. Surely the flock under his care felt his deep love for each one of them. Subconsciously, his example of serving and loving others was being instilled within my heart. As an adult, I understand the importance of putting others before yourself. Unfortunately, I am still struggling to follow my father's example in this area, although it is indelibly ingrained in my mind.



As any pastor, my dad had his fair share of critics, some harsher than others. In one particular situation, a church member created a petition asking for his resignation from the church. There was no basis for this demand, therefore, it was dismissed. Later, when the same man was hospitalized with a very serious issue, my dad laid aside his hurt and made his way to the hospital to visit and pray for healing. This action was a major lesson for me in humility and I was amazed at his willingness to forgive such a betrayal. My father does not waste time and energy harboring unforgiveness but moves forward in grace and mercy. He has always accepted people for who they are, where they are, but is intentional about sharing Christ and the hope and peace He offers. Those who have come to know the Lord Jesus Christ through his ministry will only be revealed in glory, but I believe the number is incalculable.

Fathers have incredible influence and impact on the lives of their children. A child's first opinion of God is formed based on the example set by their father. What a huge responsibility! I am still seeking to emulate Larry Cline in the areas of love, service, humility, and forgiveness. I desire to be the example to others that he has been to me!

Caron Cline is a follower of Jesus Christ who loves to teach the word of God. Her desire is to see every believer growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord.



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

God

God is the Creator and Ruler of the universe. He has existed eternally in three persons and chooses to manifest Himself in these three ways: as God the Father, as God the Son, and as God the Holy Spirit. These three are co-equal and are one God.

(Genesis 1:1, 26-27; 3:22; Psalm 90:2; Matthew 28:19; 1 Peter 1:2; and 2 Corinthians 13:14)

Jesus

Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, who is fully God and fully human in His incarnation. He lived a sinless human life and offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all humanity by dying on a cross. He arose from the dead after three days to demonstrate His power over sin and death. He ascended to heaven and will return again to reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

(Matthew 1:22-23; Isaiah 9:6; John 1:1-5; 14:10-30; Hebrews 4:14-15; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Romans 1:3-4; Acts 1:9-11; 1 Timothy 6:14-15; Titus 2:13)

The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the very Spirit of God, fully divine, manifested in the life of every believer from the moment of salvation. He is equal with the Father and the Son as God. He is present in the world to make men aware of their need for Jesus Christ. He provides the Christian with power for living, understanding of spiritual truth, and guidance in doing what is right. The Christian seeks to live under His daily control.

(2 Corinthians 3:17; John 16:7-13; 14:16-17; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 2:12; 3:16; Ephesians 1:13; Galatians 5:25; Ephesians 5:18)

The Bible

The Bible is the divinely inspired, authoritative, infallible, living and active Word of God to all men. It was written by human authors under the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is the ultimate source of truth for Christian beliefs and living. In it we find a guideline for right relationship with God and God's creation, and a blueprint for personal, emotional, and spiritual growth.

(2 Timothy 1:13; 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:2-21; Psalm 119:105, 160; 12:6; Proverbs 30:5)

Humanity

Humanity is designed and made by God in His image. We have been created as cognitive, moral, ethical, and physical beings and have been equipped by God for both relationship with Him and with one another. Both male and female are gifted by the Creator with characteristics which equip them for the purpose for which they have been created: relationship, dominion, and responsibility. Although God designed us to have fellowship with Him, we became alienated from God through disobedience. As a result, all human beings are born with a sinful nature and choose to sin against God. We are incapable of regaining a right relationship with God through our own efforts.

(Genesis 1:26-28; Psalm 8:3-6; Isaiah 53:6; 59:1-2; Romans 3:23; 5:22; Colossians 1:21; 2 Corinthians 5:17)

Eternity & Eternal Security

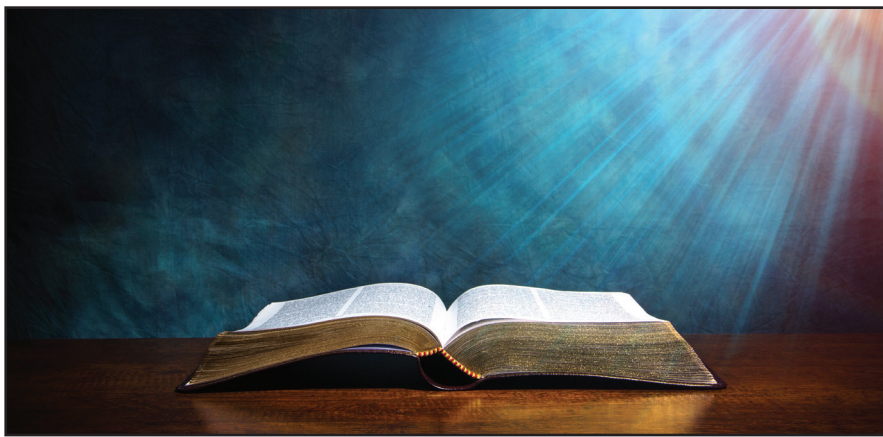
Our soul, the essence of our being, was created by God to exist forever. That forever is spent in one of two places: eternally present and in union with God because of His forgiveness and salvation or eternally separated from God because of sin and unbelief. At the moment that our physical body dies, those who are saved are immediately taken to heaven. Those who have rejected God's gift of salvation will spend eternity separated from God in hell. Because God gives man eternal life through Jesus Christ, the believer is secure in that salvation for eternity. Salvation is maintained by the grace and power of God, not by the self-effort of the Christian. It is the grace and eternal power of God that gives this security.

(John 3:16; 5:11-13, 10:29; 1 John 2:25; Romans 6:23; Revelation 20:15; 2 Timothy 1:12; Hebrews 7:25; 10:10-14; 1 Peter 1:3-5)

Salvation

Salvation is God's gift of redemption and reconciliation to Himself and is offered freely to all who accept, by faith alone, Jesus Christ as God's only son and receive Him as Lord and Savior. We can never make up for our sin with self-improvement or good works. It is only by trusting in Jesus Christ as God's offer of forgiveness that you can be saved from sin's penalty. Eternal life begins the moment you receive Jesus Christ into your life by faith.

(Romans 5:1; 6:23; Ephesians 2:8-9; John 1:12; 14:6; Titus 3:5; Galatians 3:26)



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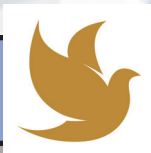
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“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace: that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation: that saith unto Zion. Thy God reigneth!”

Isaiah 52:7 KJV



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Church Directory



Bear Creek Baptist Church

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

Reverend Bruce Cannon

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

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

Landis Orthodox Presbyterian Church

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

Elder Mike Cloy

opcmmikecloy@gmail.com

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

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

Berry Chapel Baptist Church

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

Pastor - Steve Williams

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

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The Rock Church

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

Pastor - Billy Chapman

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

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Grassy Creek Baptist Church

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

Sunday School 10:00am
Morning Worship 11:00am
Sunday evening 6:30pm
Wednesday:
J.A.M. (Jesus and Me) 6:30pm
Mid-week worship 7:00pm
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Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church

2187 Jamestown Road
Morganton, NC
828-584-8212

Pastor Steve Beitz

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

Altapass Baptist Church

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

Dr. Marcus R. Benfield

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

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Plumtree Presbyterian Church

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

Pastor Ryan Bridgeo

pastor@plumtreechurch.com

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

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

Pleasant Hill Baptist Church

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

Senior Pastor Dr. Jack Hodges

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

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

Newland Christian Church

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

Pastor - Phillip Greene

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

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Burkemont Baptist Church

4668 Burkemont Rd.
Morganton, NC 28655
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Dr. Luke A. Lane

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

Marion Seventh-day Adventist Church

188 Ward Dr.
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Pastor Tim Sheridan

Sabbath (Saturday)
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First Baptist Church of Spruce Pine

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

Dr. Rocky Branch Senior Pastor

Sunday School - 9:30 am
Sunday Worship - 10:45 am
Sunday Evening - 6:00 pm
Wednesday Evening - 6:30 pm

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

Pine Branch Baptist Church

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

Reverend Bobby Joe Greene

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

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Spruce Pine United Methodist Church

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

Pastor Richard Schilling

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

The mission of Spruce Pine United
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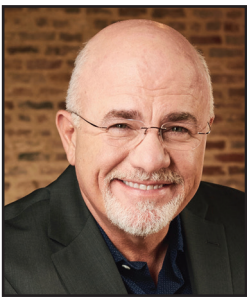
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Limit The Potential For Damage

By Dave Ramsey

Dear Dave,
My husband started working at a new company about a year ago. As part of his sign-on, they gave him \$5,000 in company stock. The stock has nearly doubled in value since then, and we were wondering if we should buy more, considering how well it has done.
Cathi



Dear Cathi,
I totally get why you two might be excited over a stock that doubled in value over a year. But what you're talking about doing right now is a very risky proposition. The truth is any stock that doubles in value over just one year is highly volatile. It's unusual for stocks to do things like that, and it also means it could go down just as fast—or even faster.
I don't know where you and your husband are in your overall financial situation, but I recommend people become debt-free except for their homes, and have an emergency fund of three to six months of expenses saved up before investing. Once you reach that point, I strongly advise you to begin putting 15 percent of your income toward retirement before you start any outside investing.
Don't get me wrong, I don't mind a little selective and educated dabbling here and there once the basics are taken care of first. However, I'd never recommended putting more than 10 percent of your nest egg into a single stock. The reason? If the single stock tanks and you lose it all, then your loss is only a blip on your financial radar.
Of course, it would be fantastic if this single stock went through the roof and you two made a ton of money. Just make sure you limit the potential for damage in this kind of scenario by limiting your exposure.
—Dave

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

“Good Each Time”

By Toby Crowder
Mitchell County



“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” – 1 Cor 15:58
Consistent... what does that word mean to you? Regardless of our personal definitions, according to Miriam-Webster the word consistent means “of the same quality; good each time.” While the word consistent does not appear in the KJV Bible... the word steadfast appears 11 times and in Greek means “firm and immovable.” In the verse we just read, Paul is encouraging his beloved brethren to be firm and immovable in their work and witness for the Lord. As he brings this chapter to a close, he is reminding them to be consistent!
This month we will celebrate Father’s Day, a day that we support, encourage, and applaud those men in our lives who we recognize as leaders in the home, family, and in our churches. I for one, am thankful for the influence of my father and some steadfast men that I have been honored to have in my family and my life... Men who I remember as being “of the same quality” ... day in and day out. To borrow from the above definition, they were “good each time.”
Some time back, I was able to speak to a lady that I had not seen in several years, whose father had been a leader in my home church when I was growing up. As we began to reminisce, I told her some things that I remembered about her father and his faithfulness to our church. As I spoke, I noticed that she was visibly touched... and later told me that she was very thankful that I “remembered that about her daddy.”
What is unique, it that this man passed away many years ago and has been in Heaven for at least 30 years... yet I still remembered things about him that brought his family joy. His faithfulness to God, his quick smile, and the love that he had for others were very evident to me, even at a young age. Why? Because he was steadfast... consistent... “firm and immovable” in his faith. He was “good each time.” The life that he lived and the testimony that he carried made a lasting impression on my life, and to this day I remember him fondly as a man of faith and Christian love.

Many will remember their Dad as a leader in the home. If not, then possibly you recognize a male role model such as a grandfather, uncle, brother, or some other church or family member. This is someone whose paths we can follow, and that our children can see as an example. This should be a Christ-like example since the way children view their fathers influence how they will view God in many ways. A child is blessed if they have a Godly father... and likewise is a father blessed with children who love and respect him.
Psalm 1:1-2 *“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.”*
Psalm 127:3-4 *“Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth.”*
Men... Father’s Day is a day to be recognized. A day to receive gratitude from those who support, love, and need you. But also, may it be a day of realization! A reminder that things are vastly different in 2021 than they were 30 years ago, and there is a genuine need for men to step up and be the men of God that we so desperately need in our homes and churches. What will be said about you in 30 years? Psalm 37:23 says, *“The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way.”* Delight yourself in the Lord and continue to be steadfast for Him. Paul told the church at Corinth that their labour was not in vain in the Lord... and let me assure you ... neither is yours!

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 MCfamily-forChrist.org or mtcarmelsprucepine@gmail.com



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Marlene’s Meditations

Live Out Your Biblical Paradoxes

By Marlene Houk
Burke County



Talk less to say more. This is a paradox. The Cambridge Unabridged Dictionary says that a paradox means “a statement or situation that may be true but seems impossible or difficult to understand because it contains two opposite facts or characteristics” For example:

- The same sun that melts the ice hardens clay.
- Failure leads to success.
- Social media disconnects us from each other.

Here’s how to construct a paradox according to the website <https://literarydevices.net/paradox/> You need to create:

- 1) a statement or situation which initially appears contradictory.
- 2) the statement or situation that appears contradictory must, after consideration, be a logical or well-founded premise.

We live in a world of paradoxes, and this rings true in writing. “In literature, a paradox is not just a clever or comical statement or use of words. Paradox has serious implications because it makes statements that often summarize the major themes of the work they are used in. One of the reasons that writers use paradox is to beckon the reader to observe carefully the plot and look backstage to guess how action develops. Paradoxes create intrigue and help our brains to think rather than react emotionally.

God uses paradoxes in the Bible to intrigue us and capture our attention as we try to figure out His plan. “Readers enjoy more when they extract the hidden meanings out of the writing rather than something presented to them in an uncomplicated manner.”

God, the Master Storyteller, uses paradoxes to mirror the action in the book of Esther. In chapter four, fear gripped the exiled Jews when an evil plot by wicked Haman threatened them with death. (Esther 4:3) But Queen Esther, her smooth complexion unmarred by the tragedies of time, thwarts Haman’s wicked hatred and saves millions of Jews. The literary device of paradox mirrors the story. The paradox is that a young woman outsmarts Haman, an experienced vizier who manipulates the king in ancient Persia. But, when we sense God moving behind the scenes, we understand her power. We understand the paradox.

Divinely-told drama weaves riveting stories in the Old Testament, using paradoxes to help us discern God as the Master Director behind the scenes.

- An old woman, past child-bearing years, delivers a son. (Genesis 18:11; 21:1-7)
- A helpless Hebrew babe rescues millions of his people from slavery. (Exodus 2:5-6)
- Dry bones live. (Ezekiel 37:1-14)

Even in the New Testament, we learn, as Christians, that we carry within us the power to live out spiritual paradoxes.

- Paradox: When I am weak, I am strong. As a child of God, sometimes we feel helpless against the onslaught of evil. But the Apostle Paul teaches us that our weaknesses actually portray God’s power. (2 Corinthians 12:9-10) Like the helpless women who arrived at Jesus’ tomb early in the morning, we know that God’s might far outweigh any of our powerlessness. The women could not topple the Roman government, roll back the stone, or raise Jesus from the dead. Yet they belonged to the One who could...and did. Roman soldiers faint, helpless as babies, and God rolls the heavy stone away, raising His Son from the dead.
- Paradox: If we desire to honor, we must be a servant. (Mark 9:35; 10:42-44) To receive honor publicly is acceptable and good for worthy acts of service. But to crave centerstage above Christ brings glory only to ourselves. Washing others’ feet as we feed the hungry, clothe the homeless, and protect the innocent brings honor in the courts of our King Jesus and points others to Him.
- Paradox: If we take upon ourselves the yoke of Christ, our burden will be lighter. (Matthew 28:11-30) Sometimes, life presses down on our souls, and we succumb to the pressure. But, the Bible reverberates with the sounds of reinforcements when we don the armor of God. The Word energizes our days and splashes refreshing water that cleanses the soot of evil from the windows of our souls. A lifetime of learning and growing in knowing God makes our daily woes and troubles take flight.

When life gets tough, know that God works powerfully. Realize that your strength lies not in physical abilities, like Goliath (See 1 Samuel 17.) but in the Lord God. And when you take care of your neighbor reject ulterior motives and embrace the authenticity of serving. The next time you lift a heavy load and experience relief when someone takes it from you, remember this. Encourage others who despair. Live out your biblical paradoxes.

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

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

First Baptist Nebo

Poem

By Jackie Denton
McDowell County



*As I listen to the stories,
And hear how things are out of hand.
It just really, really gets to me,
How satan's got such a hold on this land.*

*Do people ever think about Jesus,
And how He came to save their souls?
Don't they know that He is carrying,
All our sins - and it's a heavy load.*

*Did they forget He died upon the cross,
So they could have eternal life?
All they ever seem to think about;
Is just fighting and causing strife.*

*When I think about what Jesus did,
It makes me want to sing and shout!
We need to stand up for our Savior.
We need to punch old satan out!*

*We should stand up for the Holy Bible.
We should stand firm on God's word;
And forever sing God's praises,
Till all people on earth have heard.*

*Satan knows his time will soon be up.
That's why he's working night and day.
Our only hope is trusting Jesus;
Without our Savior, there's no way.*

*No way to defeat that evil
And ever expect to win.
Without Jesus and his Spirit;
Old satan could easily do us in!*

*I know he would love to,
Drag us down in sin and shame.
He'd laugh and say "I've got you now!".
We'd only have ourselves to blame.*

*There's strength in the name of Jesus.
Let's work hard to stay on track.
Cause we have all the help we need,
For Jesus always has our back!!*

Jackie Denton is a member of Nebo First Baptist Church. I have 3 daughters, (two living..one deceased), 4 grandchildren. I recently made a solo car trip to Washington state and back to see my first great-grandchild!! As we deal with all the things going on in the world ... just remember...God is in control.



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Poem

In Memory of Joy Baldwin
Madison County

GOD WILL DO THE REST

I pray that all who enter here
Will feel a welcome love
A peace that comes from knowing
He's looking from above.

I hope that they will notice
A lovely Bible there
While sitting at the table
A witness of His power.

Tho one may be discouraged
I feel that they can see
The hope we have in Jesus
Is our total victory.

So when the day is ended
I know I've done my best
If I can point them to the cross
My God will do the rest.



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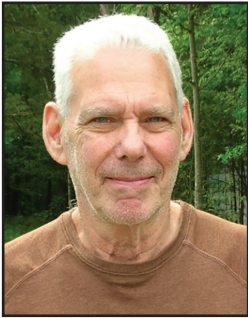
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The Pit
By Robert Garner
Rutherford County

Do we desire something, or do we desire God to do something? Praying for things, healings and other earthly advantages we desire in this world could be just another disappointment for the child of God. Yea, in the way of thy judgments, “O LORD, have we waited for thee, the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee; “ Isaiah 26:8.



Finally, as the child of God is drawn (John 6:44) to climb up out of the pit, after all that stumbling around in the dark, having been led to that ladder anchored into the bedrock, we now know it was put there for us by Christ Jesus our LORD. Now we begin to think about how many years, or decades, we’ve been down in that hole? Perhaps almost a lifetime for some of us. Having reached the top, we sit at the edge of the pit, naked, dirty, and hungry. Yes, our sins ever before us (Psalm 51:3) but wonderfully no longer so blinded with the sins of humanity; He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock [Christ Jesus], and established my goings, Psalm. 40:2.

At last, the Spiritual light of Christ flashes in our face; He begins to wash us clean of all our sins. Job 33:30; to bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living. Our eyes now wide open, fully adjusted to the Light of Christ, as he feeds us with his word. In hope, we wait for Christ’s covering with His garment so pure and white. Our prayer is that we, or some else, might desire to be filled with the knowledge of Christ Jesus. His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. Colossians 1:9 &10.

A Sinners Nightmare

Fallen into this pit,
Down so deep,
Clawed my way up,
Slide back, real steep.
Can’t find a crack,
A brace or step,
No grip to grab,
So slippery and wet.

Been in this hole,
A life to long,
No strength at all,
Need someone strong.
A rope or chain,
Perhaps I’ll find,
My outlooks grim,
Dark all the time.

Some morning light,
Shines down so near,
Someone else,
Was trapped in here.
Bones and sneakers,
Litter the ground,
My Hope is soon,
That I’ll be found.

What else is this?
A Book so aged?
A special note,
Written on a page.
Find the Rock!
On that you climb.
Get to searching,
Stop wasting time.

A Ransom paid,
For your way out,
This fact you trust,
Without a doubt.
Down the tunnel,
It’s just ahead,
Don’t stop looking,
Or else you’re dead.

My eyes wide open,
What a dreadful dream,
This horrible pit,
It can’t be seen.
My Bible Study,
Put me to fright,
This restless sleep,
A terrible night.

Those highlighted verses,
Stand out so yellow,
Perhaps will help,
Some other fellow.
Remembering now,
What the Bible said,
Amazing verses,
Stuck in my head.

“In a dream, in a vision at night, when deep sleep falleth upon men; in slumberings +upon the bed; Then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, He keepeth back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword [the Word of God].”Job 33, 15-18.
“He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock [Christ Jesus], and established my goings.” Psalm. 40:2.

My name is Robert W. Garner, my wife and I live in Union Mills, Rutherford County, NC. I’m a Christian Bible study researcher/writer/coach allied with other Biblical Scripture investigators unaffiliated with any church denominations. Our Scripture research spans 600 years of Christian Bible languages which include English, Hebrew, and Greek. As God Almighty commands in 1 Corinthians 2:13 we search the scriptures; “not in the words which man’s wisdom teaches, but what the Holy Ghost teaches; comparing spiritual with spiritual”; which is a scripture with scripture.

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High Country Prison Ministry

By Jody Griffin
Avery and Mitchell County

“But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.” (John 5:17)

Men and women are often identified by the work that they do. Traditionally, this has led to certain people being called by their title, and not by their actual name. As a minister who has served in numerous settings and contexts for nearly thirty-five years, the specific work has often been my name. For example, as a pastor, I am often addressed as Preacher. In the Correctional setting, I am most known as Chaplain. Both of these titles give testimony to the work of my personal calling. When one of our children was very young and their class was observing Career Day by presenting the work of their parents to their peers, I was asked, What is your career Daddy? Preacher? Army Chaplain? What do I tell them you do? To which I explained gently, You go to your class and you tell them that your Daddy is an anesthesiologist, because he puts people to sleep for a living!

Perhaps the most overlooked title in all of history is the title given to humanity by God through Jesus Christ our Lord. We are given the title, the responsibility, and the privilege to live as the children of God. What if we all accepted this Divine personal calling? What if we all chose to live as God's children and made this identity the driving force of our lives? If we understood our calling and our name as gifts from God, our common journey in life would be complementary instead of competitive. Not that competition cannot be a good thing, it is just that we do very often allow it to divide us rather than unite us. God the Father and God the Son work together with God the Holy Spirit to save, to heal, to deliver, and to lead, just to name a few of the ways they work in unison. Each of the distinct identities of the Trinity works to bring people to a point of decision. Will I accept my title as a child of God and work to see God's Kingdom built? Will I employ the tools granted to me as a child, to represent my Lord through the work that I do?

For the record, that means relating to the people I live and serve among in such a way as to facilitate the Work of God.

And to prove my earlier point, tell the truth. You are beginning to feel a bit sleepy, aren't you? Thank you so much for your prayers and support of the work of the Chaplain at Avery Mitchell Correctional Institution. Through your faithfulness offenders who are housed with us, the Administration and Staff who work with us, the families who depend on us to fulfill our mission within the Department of Public Safety, Division of Prisons, and the broader communities represented all share in the Blessing of this name. Together we are Children of God. Together we have weathered the COVID storm. Together we can and will mature into the very thing we are meant to become. Thanks, Be to God! Amen.

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



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By Doug Harrell
Mitchell County

As I sit here thinking about what to write for this month's Life Lessons the thing that stands out most in my mind is how swift changes are taking place in this nation and our little corner of the world. It is a different world than what I grew up in back in the 1940 and 1950s. It is hard for me to recognize and reckon with the fact that I am now that old (or older generation) and reflection on the past consume, quite a bit of thought time. I still feel very grounded that I am still working in the same fields and on the same hills that I grew up working on as a child and as a young man. But oh how things have changed on the farm as well as in life. I have been in the hayfields every day for the past seven days and as I was working, mowing, raking, and rolling hay I thought back to the days that I mowed with the old mules' Jack and Jim, the old high wheeled hay rake that I had to struggle to pull the lift to dump the hay, and keep it in a good straight line so we could stack it into shocks to be loaded onto the sled. Taking it to the stack was always interesting trying to make sure it did not slide off the old sled, and sometimes it did. I remember spending a day with a pitchfork turning the hay over to dry. We had never even heard of a tedder. I would love to have my Papa Harrell, my grandfather Luther, just see what and how we do it now, he would not believe his eyes!

I say all this to recognize that yes we have better tractors, and don't use the mules, I can do the work that it used to take 5 or 6 men to do and do it much faster, I am not always positive that the difference has been worth the price. I miss the work ethic of the entire community, the pitching in to help each other, and the always being aware that someone had your back. I miss the big lunch meals around the table that were piled high with food that the ladies had prepared, always a feast for sure. The laughter and fun along with the sweat and trying to outwork each other! Imagine that, competing to see who could work the fastest and accomplish the most without slowing down! Yes, times and attitudes have changed.

I miss the Sundays where everyone, or almost everyone, was in church together. We had our weekly Sunday morning bath. I even remember back to when it was in a tub of water in the kitchen and the hot water came from water heated on the old wood stove in the kitchen. We still had the spring house where we would get the water and carry it in.

Why I am writing this I really don't know except that I miss lots of it! I could no longer work like I did then and it probably looks better looking back than it did when I was in the midst of it all and sweat was pouring off my young body, no shirt on most of the summer. Heaven forbid we get sunburned today. Oh we are going to have cancer! Times sure were simpler in so many ways back then. I am reminded of the scripture in Joel 2:28 where it is talking about old men dreaming dreams and young men seeing visions and I guess I am in the dreaming stage rather than the vision stage in many ways.

So I guess this life lesson is about valuing the past but also preparing for the future, carrying as much of the good with you as possible as we prepare for a new day and a new way. I just pray that we can always remember that all our search for wisdom should center around searching for the way, the truth, and the light of the world, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. There is a season for all things and there really is nothing new, just recycled and refurbished a bit. Have a blessed day.

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



Sow the Right Seeds

By Chris Rathbone
Mitchell County



Garden season is well underway for those of us who attempt to grow their own taters, maters, beans, etc. It's been a little bit of a struggle to get the garden going here in the mountains, for me anyway. A couple of late cooldowns in the weather seems to have slowed things a bit with keeping the ground temps lower. This growing season we have elected to wait and plant later in hopes the harvest will come in after we return from our planned vacation this summer. We don't like being away from home knowing some beans need to be picked!

Growing up here in the mountains planting a garden was of necessity and not just a hobby. Our family depended a lot on what was grown and harvested in our gardens. Dad and Mom put a lot of hard work in through the growing season which also meant that we kids were right there with them for the most part. I've spent many long, hard days behind an old front tine tiller trying to help Dad plow up the garden spots on those steep hills around our house. To be honest, I never really looked at it as a hobby, enjoyable, or even satisfying. Let's just say it wasn't my favorite summertime activity! For us kids, it was hard to look ahead to how much we would enjoy the fruits of our labor in the winter when we just wanted to be off playing somewhere. Between our garden and my grandmother's, there was a lot of tater digging, corn shucking, stringing and breaking beans, canning, etc, going on in the holler! While the labor wasn't all that enjoyable, the eating made it tolerable.

Every year when it's garden time we begin preparing the soil early. After cleaning off the garden spot it has to be plowed and tilled to make the soil soft and manageable. I usually put some lime and fertilizer on mine, till it under and let it set in the soil for a couple of weeks before planting. I plant by the moon phases as stated on my gardening calendar. Someone else smarter than me came up with that! And sometimes I just plant when it's dry and time is available. Every year while working and planting it seems the Lord always brings to my heart what He says in His Word, *"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."* Gal. 6:7-8

There is a fundamental truth that applies not only to the physical side of life but also speaks to the spiritual state of man. In the physical, when you or I plant a certain kind of seed in our garden, we labor with the expectation that come harvest time, what we planted is what we will reap. There are three rows of potatoes in my garden and come fall when its time to dig, Lord willing, when I turn those rows up, "taters" will roll out of them. The beans that will be planted will produce beans, tomatoes will produce tomatoes, squash seed will produce squash, etc. There will be squash, cucumber, lettuce; all these seeds, with the Lord's blessing, will yield the same as what was sown. We do not harvest corn from bean seeds. We cannot harvest potatoes from a squash plant. This principle truth is pretty well accepted in the physical. The concept that the seed that is sown in the ground will yield the same come harvest time is simple yet profound. However, for some reason, this same truth is abandoned in the spiritual side of life.

As Christians, the Bible is teaching us that if we expect to reap a spiritual harvest in our lives, we cannot sow fleshly seed. This should be a simple truth but for some reason, many have a hard time grasping it. How often over the years in ministry have I sat and counseled with someone who has lived to satisfy the sinful desires of the flesh. The decisions they have made have shown no desire to please God, to live according to His word, or even acknowledge His Lordship over their lives. They have sown fleshly seed and are reaping the consequences of destruction. When they are confronted with this truth, they often get upset, defensive, and angry. They say things like this, "How could God let this happen to me if He loves me?" We sometimes do the opposite of what God desires of us and then blame Him for the outcome. They are harvesting what they have sown. When we sow to satisfy sinful flesh, we reap the consequences that come with it. We become deceived in believing that somehow that truth doesn't apply to us. We are the exception to the rule, that won't happen to us.

The opposite is also true. When we sow to the Spirit, we reap a Spiritual harvest. Our relationship to Jesus, prayer, Bible study, worship, obeying God's Word, etc; all are Spiritual seeds that we can sow with the expectation of reaping Spiritual fruit. We will get out what we put in. As we labor to sow into our lives what God desires of us, we can with joyful expectation look forward to the harvest of Spiritual blessings. Today's sowing is tomorrow's harvest.

As you are working in your garden this spring and summer, you are looking forward to reaping what you planted. Let it be a reminder to us all that as we labor to serve our Savior, as we strive to live a life that brings glory to Jesus, that the kind of seed we sow into our life is the harvest we will reap. Let us sow Spiritual seed that leads to everlasting life. If we sow the right kind of seed in our lives, we will reap the right kind of harvest!

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

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President Biden's National
Proclamation of Prayer to No God

By Rev. Mark Creech



During last week's National Day of Prayer, President Joe Biden issued a proclamation that spoke of the "power of prayer" and urged Americans to "give thanks," but it made no mention of God. No President in American history has ever omitted "God" in his proclamation of National Day of Prayer proclamations.

It's difficult to understand how prayer has any meaning aside from God. Omit God from the equation, and what do you have? Little more than religious sentiment amounting to a pleasant smile on a dog. To whom do we give thanks? Perhaps it's a generic god – a god who is a jack of all trades but the master of none of us.

Biden's proclamation reminds me of a prayer recently offered by a Senator in the North Carolina General Assembly. At the beginning of the session for the day, she offered a prayer, if you can call it that, which omitted the name of God and called on "Holy Creativity."

I understand that in our system of public life, we preserve and protect the freedom of every religious persuasion. Still, Judeo-Christian values built this country. Noah Webster rightly said, "The religion which has introduced civil liberty is the religion of Christ and his apostles."

So, when a country prays and makes an appeal for help and guidance, it needs to be to someone who can actually grant its petitions. It should be lifted to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God of our fathers, the God of our nation's founders. To do otherwise is just a form of idolatry. To do otherwise offends God, and that's not very smart at a time when we desperately need him.

Contrast such prayers with the ones recently offered at a National Day of Prayer service in front of North Carolina's Legislative Building in Raleigh. Approximately two dozen lawmakers from the House and Senate called upon God in public prayer, imploring him to bless and save our nation.

One lawmaker at this same service even called on God, asking the Lord to reveal himself to people who didn't know Christ as Savior. In my forty-one years of ministry, that was the first time I ever heard a public official offer an earnest prayer for, as he said it, "the lost." Powerful!

This week was Crossover week in the Tar Heel state's Legislature. Crossover is when lawmakers feverishly work to get their bills passed and "crossed over" from one chamber to the other before the deadline, lest their bills are no longer considered for the rest of the legislative biennium. At the beginning of the last day of Crossover, the Senator who gave the opening prayer highlighted the need for every person to "cross over" from darkness to light in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. That was a powerful prayer too!

The Bible tells us, "*Fear of the LORD is the foundation of wisdom. Knowledge of the Holy One results in good judgment*" (Proverbs 9:10).

Although President Biden's proclamation omitted God, interestingly, it included a statement about the role of prayer in confronting "the crisis and challenges of our time – from a deadly pandemic to the loss of lives and livelihoods in its wake, to a reckoning on racial justice" etc.

The President added, "Let us find in our prayers; however they are delivered, the determination to overcome adversity, rise above our differences, and come together to meet this moment in history."

The President's proclamation unquestionably reflected the longing of many Americans for help and healing to overcome our significant problems, but then proudly refused to acknowledge the only One who could provide it.

Dr. George Sweeting, former president of Moody Bible Institute, tells a story about a woman who once told him that she longed for peace and the wisdom to deal with her difficulties. Following High School, she had married, but it didn't make her happy. She had very little communication with her husband beyond the physical level. She had one baby after another and soon was living just for her four children. Her life was an empty routine of strife and overwhelming confusion.

One day she was invited by a friend to attend an evangelistic meeting where she heard the Gospel and realized a personal relationship with Jesus was the one thing that could address her seemingly impossible needs. Upon accepting Christ as her Savior and Lord, she said she literally came alive.

Still, despite the tremendous joy she had realized, there remained a great gulf between her and her husband. In counseling her, Sweeting advised that her husband also needed to know Christ and she was the key to winning him. This prompted her to pray to God and substitute her own understanding with the wisdom that comes from the Lord and his Word.

Dr. Sweeting said soon she was learning how to avoid unnecessary strife. Her house-keeping improved. She became gentle and easy to entreat. She even decided to work off some excess pounds to improve her personal appearance.

One day she came back to Sweeting and said to him, "You know, Dr. Sweeting, the other day my husband kissed me and said, 'Things have certainly been different, darling!'" Then she said, "You know, it's working."

Yes, acknowledging God and substituting our ways for his, works. And what worked for that woman on a personal level, and millions of others like her will also work corporately for us as a nation.

Prayer is not promised to be effectual unless we humble ourselves, repent of our proud, stubborn sinful ways, acknowledge God as sovereign, his Son, Jesus Christ as Savior, and earnestly entreat and trust him for what's needed.

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

The Missing Piece

By Tracy Jessup

“Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the parent loves the child. Who is it that conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 5:1,6)

In his book, Searching for God Knows What, Donald Miller tells about an experience he had while lecturing at a Christian college. He presented a form of the gospel but left out a critical element to see if they would notice. He even told them in advance what he was doing and asked them to listen carefully to figure out the missing piece.

Miller spoke of sinful humanity and gave examples simply from observing the depravity present in our culture. He talked at length about how sin separates us from God and pointed to the Scripture that says “*the wages of sin is death*” (Romans 6:23a). He addressed the importance of repentance and referenced passages from the Bible that clearly affirmed this concept. Continuing with his presentation, Miller “spoke of the beauty of morality” and the benefits of making the right choices when tempted to sin. And then he told of the splendor of heaven, “*and how great it will be to walk on streets of gold.*”

This is how Miller describes what happened when he finished the lecture: “I rested my case and asked the class if they could tell me what it was I had left out of this gospel presentation. I waited as a class of Bible college students...sat there for several minutes of uncomfortable silence. None of the forty-five students in the class realized I had presented a gospel without once mentioning the name of Jesus.”

The story bears repeating: I presented a gospel to Christian Bible college students and left out Jesus. Nobody noticed...To a culture that believes they ‘go to heaven’ based on whether or not they are morally pure, or that they understand some theological ideas, or that they are very spiritual, Jesus is completely unnecessary. At best, He is an afterthought, a technicality by which we become morally pure, or a subject of which we know, or a founding father of our woo-woo spirituality” (pp. 158-159).

Nearing the end of his first epistle, John begins to disclose the motive and aim which have directed his writing – “*I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life*” (1 John 5:13). Today’s passage emphasizes the object of faith, not just the experience of believing. “*Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God*” (1 John 5:1a). Christian faith has distinctive and irreducible content. Put together the first part of verse 1 and the last part of verse 5 and we see what it is. Christians believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. That is not just an article of faith, it is faith. It is this alone that makes a person a Christian (David Jackman, The Message of John’s Letters, p. 134).

Prayer: Lord, we believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Help us to act on that belief as a channel through which your love flows to others.

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.

Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. Psalms 103:13



To Walk With God

By John McCoury
Roan Mt, Tennessee

“*And after he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked with God 300 years and had other sons and daughters... Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.*” Genesis 5:22, 24 This account says twice that, before he was taken up, Enoch walked with God. I love the story of the little girl who was telling her mother the story of Enoch. She said Enoch used to take long walks with God. One day he walked so far God said, 'It's too far to go back; come on home with me.' That is what happened to Enoch. What does it mean to walk with God? Here is a man who, amid a brilliant but godless generation, walked with God. What does it mean? Enoch did not literally walk with God; this is unquestionably a figurative expression, but a figurative walk involves the same thing today as it did then.

First, it means he went in the same direction God went. He was moving the way God was going. God is forever moving in human history. He is moving now to accomplish certain things in human life, and He has been doing so for centuries. The person who walks with God is the person who knows which way God is going and goes the same way. Now, what is that? Perhaps we cannot indicate it positively, but we certainly can negatively: God moves always in unswerving hostility toward sin. He is opposed to that which destroys and wrecks human life. No matter how good it looks, no matter how attractive it seems, God is against it. And the person who walks with God is the person who walks in unswerving hostility toward sin in his or her own life and refuses to make up with it or permit it to rule or to reign. That is the first thing in a walk with God. Second, it means to keep in step. You cannot walk with somebody if you do not keep in step with him or her. Sooner or later there comes unbalance, and one of you bumps into the other. A walk is not like moving on one of these endless belts. It is not smooth; it is a repetition of almost falling. Have you ever analyzed your walk? Every time you take a step you almost fall. You allow your body to go off balance, and then you catch yourself with your other leg. Then you shift to that one and you almost fall again, only to catch yourself. The man or woman who walks with God is the man or woman who lives on the verge of a fall. That is an adventurous life. That means if God is not there to support and strengthen you, down you go. You are counting on Him to come through and to keep you steady. That is what a walk with God involves. It is always a walk of venturing out. It is never satisfied with the status quo, never content to remain in a quiet state, doing nothing, waiting, enjoying one's self. It is forever moving at the same pace God moves. It means taking a step when God insists. The third thing is that there was no controversy between God and Enoch. They agreed. “*Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?*” says the Scriptures (Amos 3:3). They must be in agreement. And this is how we must be. There must be no controversy between us if we are going to walk with God, but we must agree with things as He sees them. What changes this makes in our lives! Lord, may it be said of me as it was said of Enoch: He walked with God. I want to go in Your direction, keeping pace with You. Jesus' name Immanuel means God with us (Matthew 1:23). What does it mean today to walk with God? What are three things involved in walking with God?

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



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How Faith in God Can Impact Your Life

By Joyce Meyer



Life in Christ is absolutely amazing when you learn to live by faith. And Romans 1:17 says that those who are believers in Him “*shall live by faith*” (NKJV). It’s the key to experiencing the abundant life Jesus died to give us, a life we can enjoy, “*and have it in abundance [to the full, till it overflows]*” (John 10:10 AMP).

The question is, how do we live by faith? What does it look like, practically speaking, to release, or use, our faith in our everyday lives?

Faith That Brings the Dead to Life

In John chapter 11, we read about the time when Jesus raised His friend Lazarus from the dead. Lazarus and his sisters, Martha and Mary, were good friends to Jesus, and He’d had been to their home multiple times.

But when Lazarus was sick and his sisters sent word to Him saying “*he whom You love is sick*” (John 11:3 NKJV), Jesus didn’t come right away to heal Him. His immediate response was, “*This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it*” (v. 4).

Jesus wanted them to trust Him and believe that no matter how bad the situation was, He could still do something to make it right. But that’s not the reaction He received.

When Mary, Lazarus’ sister, came out to meet Him, she said, “*Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died*” (John 11:32 NKJV). The Bible says that Jesus was “*deeply moved within [to the point of anger]*” when He approached Lazarus’ tomb (John 11:38 AMP). He was visibly disturbed.

Think for a moment how Jesus must have felt. He knows what has happened and has come to fix the problem, but no one really understands what He’s capable of doing. He’s surrounded by unbelief. And amid the confusion, Jesus says to the people, “*Take away the stone*” (v. 39).

Interestingly, Jesus was getting ready to raise a man from the dead but He told them to roll away the stone. He wanted to see their faith in Him through their obedience.

Faith That Speaks Louder Than Words

Romans 12:3 says God “*has dealt to each one a measure of faith*” (NKJV). So you have faith...but are you using it? It’s so important for us to use our faith because that’s how we grow stronger in our relationship with God and trust Him more in every situation in our lives.

Hebrews 11:6 (NKJV) says, “*Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*” God rewards our faith when He sees it in action.

Using your faith simply means that you do what you can do—what God shows you to do—and you trust Him to do what you cannot do. For example, if you’re praying for your spouse to become a believer in Christ, then don’t go to lunch with your friends and complain about how he or she will never change.

When you release your faith, you take some kind of action that shows you believe God will do what He says He will do. You line up your attitudes and actions with God’s promises for you, according to His Word, and hold on to those truths when life gets tough. That’s what Jesus was asking the people to do when He told them to roll away the stone from Lazarus’ grave.

It’s Not Too Hard

So many times when God asks us to do something for Him, we look at the situation and say, “There’s no way I can ever do that. It’s just too hard!”

Maybe you need to forgive people who have hurt you. Maybe you’re asking God for a new house and He’s telling you to clean up the one you’ve got. Maybe you’re facing a mountain of debt, yet you’re still using credit cards everywhere you go.

When challenges are greater than our ability to resolve them on our own, we often say things like, “I can’t do it, God. It’s just too hard.” But that’s a lie the devil wants you to believe. The truth is, God is never going to ask you to do something without giving you the ability to do it. Whatever the direction is, He’ll give you the strength, understanding, support, resources—anything you need—to do your part when you simply step out in obedience to follow His lead.

In these times, remember Philippians 4:13, which says, “*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*” In other words, you can do whatever you need to do in life through Christ. You can roll away the stone that stands between you and your miracle!

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.joycemeyer.org.



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Obedient Heart Fellowship

Do Bluebirds Still Sing?

By Jim Huskins
McDowell County

Canadian songwriter, Hod Pharis, had low expectations when he recorded I Heard the Bluebirds Sing in 1952. Five years later, the popular Nashville trio, The Browns, took Bluebirds to the top of the Country charts. The still-popular song has been covered by many artists.

It tells of a young, mountain couple who fall in love: “I courted her for months on end until she promised we would wed. We planned on being married in the spring. All through the long cold winter months, it seemed that spring would never come. And every gloomy winter’s day I heard the bluebirds sing.”

The story’s tension is resolved in verse three: “And when at last spring touched the earth, we were married in the village church. Our wedding seemed just like a dream come true. So many years have come and gone, our love is still as true and strong, as when I found her long ago, and still, the bluebirds sing.”

Traditional weddings—often in June—remind us that the home is the foundation of social order, but is that still true? Marriage has fallen from favor with couples from every demographic. Shockingly, many who identify as “Evangelical Christians” now consider marriage “optional.” The Bible makes no such claim.

God’s plan is not cohabitation. He specifies a lifetime, covenant commitment between one man and one woman. “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” (Genesis 2:16). *“Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”* (Genesis 2:24). If God never changes, how can we who claim to love Him now hold marriage in low regard?

The Bible is the story of a loving God going to unimaginable lengths to redeem the object of His affection—the Nation of Israel. Marriage imagery is woven throughout the fabric of the relationship He offers. At Sinai, God promised to be our Husband if we will be faithful to His instructions. Torah was codified in the form of marriage vows. See Exodus 19:5 and Ezekiel 16:8. These vows are serious. The penalty for violating them is bloodguilt that can only be paid by the death of the offending party. The Prophets and the Writings warn Israel to keep her vows to the Most High or face unimaginable pain.

God eventually tired of Israel’s adulterous idolatry. He issued a decree of divorce to the Northern Kingdom, and those ten tribes were dispersed among the Gentiles. Only God’s promises to King David kept the Southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin from a similar fate.

At Sinai, we agreed to a contract that would make God our husband. We broke that contract before the ink was dry. Only the blood of Jesus could redeem God’s bride from sin. This redemption is celebrated each year in the Feasts of God. One key to understanding those Feasts is knowing about traditional Hebrew weddings.

A young man’s father usually chooses the bride. The suitor then negotiates with the bride’s father. They agree on terms for the prospective marriage and record those terms as a contract or Ketubah. If the bride agrees to those terms, the couple is then betrothed. The groom pays the negotiated bride price and returns to his home.

The couple is now married in every way except sexual union. They live apart for at least one year. During this time, the groom must prepare a place for his bride. The bride devotes herself to keeping pure, preparing her wedding garments, and maintaining the oil lamps which will be used in the ceremony. The length of the betrothal is determined by how long it takes the groom to prepare the marriage home. The groom’s father decides when this task is finished. When he sees that the preparations are complete, he instructs his son to fetch his bride.

A member of the groom’s party precedes the group. He announces to the bride and her attendants, “Behold, the bridegroom comes.” He underscores this announcement by blowing the shofar. This is the bride’s signal to leave her home and join her intended at the place where the ceremony will be conducted.

We who are adopted into God’s family by grace through faith are chosen to be the holy bride of the Messiah. Each Spring’s Passover reminds us that He traveled to our home and paid our bride price with His precious blood. He promised to prepare our place and return to take us unto Himself. In the meanwhile, we have much to do.

Our time on earth is not about individual desires and ambitions. It is about keeping ourselves pure and accomplishing His work. How can we teach others to observe all things He commanded when we spend so much time and energy quibbling over which of His commands we can ignore? *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”* (Matthew 7:21)

Spring will at last touch this earth. The Son of God will return for His bride. *“In the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem...there shall be heard again the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voices of those who sing as they bring thank offerings to the house of YHVH.”* (Jeremiah 33:10-11)

Many will wail as they are shut out of His presence. Only those devoted to keeping themselves holy will be prepared for the wedding. They will know what it means to hear the bluebirds sing.

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

Jim & Beverly Huskins are members of Obedient Heart Fellowship.



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Problems

By Steve Williams
Mitchell County



Almost everywhere you look, you see problems popping up around us. Problems drive us crazy and stress us out. I heard of a man whose problems were stressing him out so bad that he went to see a therapist. After talking with him, the therapist suggested that he take up golf to release his stress and help with his problems. So he took his advice, but all golf did was make things worse for the old guy. He couldn't hit the ball, couldn't putt, things were getting worse instead of better. So he went back to the therapist and told him what was going on. The therapist suggested that he play with an invisible ball and just swing his club and whatever he saw in his mind is where the ball would go. So he went and put down the invisible ball and swung and it was the most beautiful shot he had ever made down the center of fairway. 175 yards from the flag, he took a 5 iron and laid it up to the hole, putt in and made a par 3. He was so pleased because that was the first time he had ever made par on that hole. The next hole he did the same thing and again another par, then birdy, then a par, all the way up to the 17th hole. Best game that he had ever had in his life. He said I Love this I'm enjoying myself. I'm really feeling good and relaxed. Then he notices the man that was in front of him was also playing with an invisible ball. He struck up a conversation with the man and they soon realized that they were both going to the same therapist. They also realized that they both were having some of the same problems and experiencing the same kind of stress, so they decided to play the last hole together. They flipped a tee to see who would go first, the tee landed toward the guy that we have been talking about from the first. Last hole and par 5 he put his invisible ball down and hit it, and man was it the greatest shot he had ever hit in his life, right down the center of the fairway. Then his new friend hit his ball right down the center of the fairway also and it landed not far from his invisible ball. So he took out his club and lined up the hit, it was the most beautiful shot. The ball hit on the green right above the hole, the ball had backspin on it and it rolled in the hole. It only took him two shots on a par 5. He looked at his new friend and said looks as if I win, and His friend said hunt-uh, you hit my ball.

Does life ever feel like that to you? Man, everything is going great and then you hit the other man's ball. Here's the reality, we don't get to play life with invisible balls, or golf with invisible balls. Life is real! Folks I have found out that, life is hard, life is difficult and full of problems. So how can you and I solve these problems that we are faced with? Albert Einstein said that "We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them." Before any of us are ever going to be able to solve the problems that we face we must first be able to identify the problem. If you are unable to identify the problem, it is impossible to solve it. And this is where so many people are today.

In Matt 7:24-29, the Bible speaks of the two different foundations people can build their lives on, they are Rock and Sand. The Foundation is very simple to understand: The Rock, is God that is Solid and Stands Firm in life's storms. The Sand is the World that is Weak and so easily Washed away and leaves you hopeless. That is why it is so important to build on the rock. This allows God to work in your life and help build your life and my life into what He is wanting to accomplish in and through us. See, God is the Master Builder and He knows how to build our lives to stand strong amid the problems we face and will face. We also need to allow God to be our watchman over our lives because He sees all that is going on in our lives and what lies ahead for every one of us. Things that catch us off guard, He has already seen them and is ready to help us deal with them. As I have looked back at trying to identify the source of my problems I have come to see this important fact: I am my biggest problem. I've created almost all of my problems, and that I need God to help me solve all of my problems. When I allow God to work on me and God to watch over me God will solve my problems.

Words of Wisdom:

- Problems are not stop signs, they are guidelines. Robert H. Schuller
- Tough times never last, but tough people do. N/A
- My problem is not that I cannot find a solution (which is God) My problem is I don't see that I'm the real problem when I fail to seek God. Steve Williams
- The Greater your problem the greater the assistance that you will need in this life. That's why you need God. N/A

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

Sudoku Solution

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3	6	8	5	4	2	9	7	1
9	2	1	3	8	7	6	4	5
8	1	3	9	5	6	7	2	4
4	5	2	8	7	3	1	9	6
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Pleasant Hill Baptist Church

An Encouraging Word: No Longer Forsaken

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



God’s gracious and merciful gift of a Messiah—One who would save His people from their sins—was the same One who was despised and forsaken by men. In spite of His unselfish, sacrificial death, by which He took upon Himself all of the sins of all humanity for all times—Jesus, God’s Messiah, was forsaken and rejected. The message of the cross was met with contempt and rejection! His message of unconditional love was scorned and laughed at! Not only was He rejected, but also, the unimaginable pain and suffering that the Savior endured were applauded and even called for. The crowds demanded blood—they demanded death! What they got was an innocent lamb who willingly laid down His life for the very ones who called for His demise and death. He died for the very ones who spat upon Him, cursed Him, breathed threats at Him, flailed and beat Him, and nailed Him to a cruel, inhumane cross.

Jesus’ short life here on earth allowed Almighty God to lean in and draw near to His beloved creation who were separated by their sins, alone in their helplessness and cut off from any hope. God leaned in because He saw the pain, the confusion, the misery, and the tears of humanity. He came near because He was the only one who could do anything about it! Only the designer and creator could reach down into the depths of a human soul and heart—and touch, heal, and remove the filthy stain of our sins. Only a loving God could forgive and cleanse the dark, black hearts within. Only faithful God could promise to never let us go—no matter what! Only God, our Savior, and Redeemer could offer us hope for tomorrow. And only He could keep those promises throughout all of eternity. So, He leaned in! But when He came near, He was brushed off and pushed aside. Israel’s promised Messiah was supposed to be a great king like David who would raise a mighty army and deliver them from bondage to their enemies. The concept of “salvation” spoken of by the Psalms and the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah, were interpreted as referring to a mighty military leader who would overthrow Rome. The Hebrew people tended to overlook or ignore the specific prophecies of Isaiah 53, which foretold that the Messiah would suffer and die. They had no use for another Rabbi or religious leader spouting love and acceptance. They needed a scrupulous, hard-driving, militant commander who wouldn’t stop for anything to get what he wanted—that is, to get what they wanted.

Today, as the Lord continues to lean into humanity, a nation and a world guided by secular humanism rise up in revolt, just like those of years gone by. Following human reason, secular ethics, and philosophical naturalism while specifically rejecting religious dogma, supernaturalism, and superstition as the basis of morality and decision making, they rely on “what seems right to me!” The reaction goes something like this: “We don’t need you, God, nor your truth to teach us about morality and decency. We can and will define it for ourselves. We will instead, call upon science and place our faith in a government led by human reason and situational ethics. We want leaders who will throw off the shackles of religion and faith and allow us to be what we want to be!”

When Isaiah described the suffering servant in Isaiah 53:3-12, we hear of the One who came to save, but instead was abandoned, deserted, discarded, betrayed, and rejected. “*He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and, acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face, He was despised and rejected and we did not esteem Him.*”

C.H.Spurgeon, the great late 19th, and early 20th-century preacher, once asked: What does humanity want? He answered that question in a sermon he titled, “Why Christ Is Not Esteemed.” Spurgeon noted that that question “...must be the universal confession of the human race. From the highest monarch to the meanest peasant, from the loftiest intellect to the most degraded mind, from the admired of all men to the unknown and insignificant, this one confession must come: We esteemed Him not.” In his sermon, Spurgeon answered the question for his generation. But his answer is just as poignant for ours. He insisted that there are four reasons we do not esteem Jesus—because: (1) we esteemed ourselves so highly; (2) we esteemed the world so highly; (3) we did not know Him; and (4) we were spiritually dead.

Truly, our Savior and Lord will not and cannot be lifted up and glorified when a sinner sets up an idol-god (himself/herself) on the throne where God alone ought to sit. And truly, when the world and our flesh are more important than following after the will and the ways of Jesus, then He cannot and will not be worshipped and revered. And truly, when our Creator is not known for Who He really is, then He will not and cannot be loved and served. And truly, when one is spiritually dead in their trespasses and sins, one has no hope and no eternal security. Spurgeon gave this illustration:

Suppose, he says, there is a man (or woman) whom I desire to influence (i.e., share the blessed gospel of Christ). I would “imagine that I am a skillful musician and that I touch the strings of my harp in such a manner as to bring forth the most delightful melody, yet the man takes no notice whatever of it. Then I turn to an instrument of quite another sort—a cornet or a bugle—and blow a blast that startles all of you—yet that one man still gives no heed to the sound! ...I try to attract his attention in another way. I place before him the daintiest dish that the cleverest cook in all England can prepare, or I bring some rare delicacy from a distant land—but he regards the food no more than he did the music. I will try another plan to reach his senses. I will bring Him the choicest flowers that were ever grown. I will hold them close to his face and let their fragrance ascend to his nostrils. Yet he heeds not! What will awake him? Let Heaven’s thunder peals roll

like the drums in the march of some mighty war-lord, but the man moves not. Let the lightning flash all around us till it seems as though the end of the world had come, but the man stirs not. What shall I do to awake him? Shall I beat him with a whip, or strike him with a sword? All is in vain and, at last, I perceive that the man is dead and that all my efforts have been wasted! Now the riddle is solved, the secret revealed, the knot untied—the man is dead.

Mankind’s most important pursuit is to know Jesus! It is not to know about Jesus—it is to know Him as Lord and Savior. It is to know His presence and goodness. It is to know and feel His love. For when we know God fully—we will love Him fully, and when we love Him fully, we will serve Him fully!

I want to remind you that, although Christ has been forsaken of men, He has not forsaken you and me. He came, He bled, He died! He gave His life a ransom for our sins. He rose victorious over sin and death and took His rightful place at the right hand of the Father. And now, we live and breathe to serve Him and make Him known. I urge you, as Paul urged the Roman Christians, “...*by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.*”

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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Mitchell Baptist Association

National Day of Prayer

By Monica Kirtz
Mitchell County



Jim Cymbala, the pastor of The Brooklyn Tabernacle in New York, said this: “We forget that the Christian church was founded in a prayer meeting. It was led in its earliest and most successful years by simple men full of faith and the Holy Spirit.” It is true...we have forgotten about prayer...as a nation, as a church, and as individuals. Since JESUS Himself prayed, how much more do we need to pray...how much more should we pray?

That is why I am thrilled that there is a special day set aside in our nation for prayer. The National Day of Prayer is a wonderful opportunity to take advantage of this great privilege that we have...prayer. The whole nation is called upon to spend some time in prayer on this day, whether individually or in groups of local gatherings. The 2021 theme was “LORD, pour out Your Love, Life, & Liberty”. The Scripture theme was 2 Corinthians 3:17, “Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” Mitchell County came together in several ways on this day. There was a full program on the radio stations of WTOE 1470 AM and 101.1 FM. The Pledge of Allegiance was presented by Tri-County Christian School. Music was provided by Pastor Chris Rathbone singing “Amazing Grace, My Chains Are Gone” with his son, Gabriel, accompanying him on the guitar. Also, Alexis Buchanan, a student of Tri-County Christian School, sang, “Different”. Each area of influence in our nation was discussed and covered in prayer by my husband, Jason, and myself. The Mayor of Spruce Pine, Darla Harding, also prayed the 2021 National Prayer. Also, we had a Prayer Walk at Riverside Park in Spruce Pine, where we had 7 different stops to pray for America. The LORD blessed us



with a beautiful day and good attendance and participation. It began at noon with an opening prayer by Pastor Steve Williams. Tri-County Christian School came and led in music and song. One of the students, Alexis Buchanan also sang, “The Potter’s Hand”, and the school led us in The Pledge of Allegiance. This school and its administration are a great asset to our county and community and are always willing to reach out and help whenever needed. Please keep them lifted up in prayer, as they fight spiritual warfare every day as soldiers for The LORD...in service for Him. There was a Prayer Walk scheduled at 6:30 p.m. as well, in consideration of those who work and were unable to attend the noon gathering. This time was opened in prayer by Pastor Toby Crowder. We also want to say a special “thank you” to Mike Sink and Bruce Ikard of WTOE for the use of the radio and also to Pastor Toby Crowder, who was in charge of all sound operations at the park.

Before the National Day of Prayer, there were 7 Days of Repentance observed to cleanse and prepare our hearts. The Blue Ridge Christian News Facebook page allowed us to post 7 devotions, 1 on each day for the 7 areas of influence. We hope this was a blessing to many!

***Next year, please mark your calendars early for the first Thursday in May. Let’s make this a priority in our lives, in our homes, and in our churches. Future generations need to be taught the value of prayer now...while we still can.

Don’t wait until it is too late to read The Bible...read it today.
Don’t wait until it is too late to mention the name of GOD or talk about JESUS...tell someone about Him today.
Don’t wait until it is too late to pray...pray today.
Don’t wait until it is too late to go to church...go to church today.
Don’t wait until it is too late.
JESUS said, “...the night cometh, when no man can work.” John 9:4

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

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Sometimes You Gotta Stir Up the Water

By Timothy W. Tron
Burke County

By the time you read this, summer will be well on its way. But at the time of writing this piece, we were in the last vestiges of winter. May you be blessed...

My journey to church this morning revealed the beauty of God’s creation in the flowers of spring. There is the reminder even in the third week of May that winter’s grasp is not gone. It is Blackberry Winter now in the mountains of North Carolina. Here and there, depending on your elevation, you can find pockets of white blanketing the landscape. Unlike the frozen precipitation, these are the tiny white flowers of the indigenous wild blackberries. They not only symbolize that in roughly two months, there will be the ripe, delectable berries for

which they are named, but it also symbolizes that the last cold spell is upon us. To many folks, the temperatures drop far below what is considered normal during this time of year. While there have been many summer-like days with temperatures nearing the 80’s, during Blackberry Winter, there can even be a late frost with nighttime temperatures dropping near freezing or below.

While this seemingly unseasonable weather is not uncommon, it is still a shock to our senses. We quickly grow accustomed to the more leisurely days of warmth and look forward to the summertime, where living out-of-doors is more pleasant.

Why is it we so promptly become complacent in our lives and take the path of least resistance?

One could surmise that is simply our nature. We perceive the world around us through our senses, our natural instincts. When we rely on these alone, we are nothing more than the beasts of the field. Yet, God made us distinctly different from the wild animals of the forests and the beasts of the field. *“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”* Although we are of the earth, we have been given the ability to choose to serve a higher power – Yahweh. But too often, we get caught up in the worries and struggles of living from day to day and forget, if we knew at all, what our purpose is in life. Some never realize this or awaken to know God but live from birth to death in a valley of life where a shadow of death overshadows all that they do. *“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”*

It was in this vein of thought this past week that the scene of Jesus walking on the sea stood out.

First, in the Gospel of John, *“And when even was now come, his disciples went down unto the sea, And entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them. And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew. So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship: and they were afraid.20 But he saith unto them, It is I; be not afraid. Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.”*

From the Gospel of Matthew, *“And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away. And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone. But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.”*

Now, there is much to unwrap in these few lines of scripture. But if we focus on the idea of how the natural man perceives the world around him, and from this, either believes or rejects the supernatural, then we can find a greater meaning in this miracle. We see not only that Jesus walked on water, but that he called one out of the boat to do likewise. Yet, immersed in the surrounding passages are concepts that apply to us today.

“The disciples went down to the sea and entered into the ship. It was dark and Jesus had not come with them.” The ship was their comfort zone. Several of his disciples had been fishermen. Their familiarity with the Sea of Galilee would have made this travel almost routine. Like so many things in our lives, we stick with what is familiar. Going outside of our box is uncomfortable, yet Jesus told his disciples at the end of the gospel of Matthew to, *“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations..”* He wanted them to leave everything behind, going to the ends of the earth



if necessary. But before they were prepared to embark on such a journey, they had to be shown that they were capable. When we sit in our institutional churches and hear the weekly sermon, too often when we walk out the doors to go to lunch, we leave it behind. We put our faith right next to the Bible on the shelf, where it waits until the following Sunday – if at all.

Then there is the point that Jesus did not go with them, *“It was dark, and Jesus had not come with them.”* As with Philip, when he said that *“This he said to prove him knowing himself what he would do,”* it is probably safe to say that Jesus knew in advance that he would purposely surprise his disciples. Yet, he didn’t just show up walking on the sea in the dark. It was far worse than that, for, *“The sea arose by reason of a great wind which blew.”* In the last scene of episode 4 of Season 2 of the series “The Chosen,” Peter makes a comment regarding the healing of the man by the pool on the Sabbath when Jesus could have easily waited, and Jesus replies, *“Sometimes you gotta stir up the water.”*

The disciples knowingly went out on the Sea of Galilee at night. Was this by choice, or was this planned? The winds often pick up on large bodies of water during the day, so the night crossing would have been safer and easier under normal circumstances. But these were anything but normal circumstances. Remember their comfort zone – the boat? Knowing that these seasoned sailors would haven’t been bothered by the night crossing, I like to think that Jesus did a little stirring up of the water that night. When we are shoved out of our comfort zone, it is then we realize we need Him most. So it was, that dark stormy night, after they had rowed 25 or 30 furlongs, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing nigh unto their boat, and they were afraid. Yes, grown men, hardened sailors were now scared, so much so that Christ had to call to them, *“It is I, be not afraid.”*

Now, the Gospel of Matthew next tells of how Peter, possibly not believing that it was really Jesus, calls out to the Spirit, *“Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.”* We must wonder if it was Peter’s disbelief or was it the fact that he was emboldened by the miracle that he called out to Jesus. Nonetheless, Jesus answers and simply says, *“Come.”* Peter then, fully vested in his belief, gets out of the boat.

Friends, this is the moment that we should all gasp!

For this is the exact parallel to our lives today. We have been asked to go to all nations, making disciples for Christ, yet, we cannot leave the church walls before we are swept back into the boat. We fail to even dare step out of our comfort zone for fear of drowning. Yes, it is a leap of faith. Yes, it is daring and will require more of your dedication and commitment than ever before, but think for a moment of those first few steps that Peter took.

For a few brief seconds, a man was walking on the substance that sustains life. It was not frozen; it was swashing all around; the sea was boisterous, scary, and dark. Yet, Peter stood on the water as if it were solid ground, as did the Son of God! For those brief seconds, Peter was able to walk again where Yahweh stood. When we step out in faith, the impossible becomes possible. When we put God at the center of our lives, we are no longer a slave to the sins of this world. We are set free.

Leaving the confines of our comfort level will never be easy. We cannot expect to succeed at every step. In fact, we will be forced to rely on Yahweh all the more. The next few steps that Peter took revealed how quickly we lose focus. For in that brief instance of time, as he stood on water, Peter quickly realized the tumultuous seas around him and began to sink. As John the Baptist told his disciples, *“He must increase that I may decrease.”* And so it is with us. The more we give up, the more we rely on Him to provide for us.

Lastly, we see Peter returning to the ship with Jesus. As the Gospel of John tells it, *“They willingly received him into the ship.”* Soaking wet, having nearly drowned, Peter is now humiliated but relieved to be back into the confines of the vessel. However, he is not alone, for Jesus is with them all. As we picture that dark night on the sea of Galilee, those men once more were shown how the impossible becomes possible when we give it all to God.

But there is one last thought to this story, one final twist - Christ got into the boat.

“So, what is your point,” you ask?

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.”

Getting into the boat, Jesus entered into their world. He didn’t have to ride in a boat, yet, as God coming to earth in the form of a man, Christ got into the boat so that he could prove he too was the Son of Man.

When the weather turns cold after we’ve become accustomed to the warm, beautiful cloudless days of sunshine, let us not grow bitter, for the landscape becomes white of blooms of the Blackberry Winter. Let not your world be troubled by the change, but embrace it and seek to go beyond what is comfortable.

Take that step out in faith and watch what impossible becomes possible.

And remember, the first step might be the scariest, but it will always be remembered as the best.

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

By Christopher L. Scott
Exeter, California



Any parent, babysitter, or daycare worker has seen a two-year temper tantrum. It's not a pretty sight!

When my two-year-old son has one of those famous two-year-old temper tantrums it's not because he is mad that I've taken away what he wants, or that he's not getting his way. It's because something is wrong, and he doesn't know how to tell me what is wrong.

I've learned that he's either hungry, thirsty, or tired. He knows something is not right, but he doesn't know how to tell me what is wrong. Maybe he doesn't even know what is wrong. He just knows that he is unhappy. So I give him one of those three things until he settles down.

As Christians, there are times in our lives when things aren't the way we think they should be. We know that we should pray, but we aren't sure what to pray for or even how to pray for it.

Thankfully, God helps us in this area. Paul told the believers in Rome, "*And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will*" (Romans 8:26-27, NLT).

What's even more important, is to note that the Holy Spirit helps us with more than just prayer. For example in verse 26 is an explanatory phrase. Meaning, the Holy Spirit helps us in our weaknesses, and one of the ways that he helps us in our weaknesses is through prayer.

The help the Holy Spirit gives us isn't just a casual help. The text says that he "pleads" for us believers. The dictionary defines "pleads" as a request from someone on behalf of someone else, "To argue a case or cause" (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 11th edition) or "to make an emotional appeal" (Concise Oxford English Dictionary).

In other words, this isn't a casual thing that the Holy Spirit does. He doesn't help us when he has free time, is in a good mood, or thinks that we deserve it. It's something he actively does on our behalf. It's part of who he is as a person.

My job as a loving parent is to give my son what he needs even when he doesn't know what he needs. And our loving God, who also is our spiritual parent, helps us when we don't know how to pray or what to pray for.

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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Roan Mountain Baptist Church

What a Bird's Nest Can Teach Us About God's Will

By Russell McKinney
Mitchell County



Snugly tucked away in the Old Testament book of Proverbs is one of the Bible's most beautiful verses on the subject of God's will. Proverbs 27:8 says:
"Like a bird that wanders from its nest is a man who wanders from his place." (N.K.J.V.)

Tell me, are you right now in your place? Are you living where God wants you to be living? Are you working where He wants you to be working? Are you going to church where He wants you to be going to church? Are you engaged in those activities in which He wants you to be engaged?

A nest is the best place in all the world for a bird to be. It is nothing less than home. A bird in its nest is safe because predators can't harm it there. A bird in its nest is at rest because no bird can fly incessantly. A bird in its nest is perfectly natural because a bird standing in the middle of the interstate just seems wrong.

Of course, the primary reason why a bird builds a nest is to raise a family. The mother bird lays her eggs. She incubates those eggs. When the eggs hatch, she feeds the baby birds. When they are ready, she pushes them out of the nest so they can fly on their own and ultimately build their own nests.

By the way, this shows us that there is nothing wrong with a person moving away from the "nest" in which he or she was raised. Remember that it was God Himself who told Abraham to leave his hometown of Ur and move to a land that He would show him (Genesis 12:1). For that matter, most species of birds build new nests each year. So, obviously, Proverbs 27:8 isn't the Bible's way of forbidding us from ever leaving home or embarking on some new adventure in life.

Instead, the teaching is simply that each individual should strive to live every day in the center of God's will for his or her life. If His will means staying in the same spot where you've been for the last ten years, so be it. If it means making a change and building some type of new nest, that's okay too. The key is to always be at your post in life, the post where God has you stationed for the time being.

We get ourselves into trouble anytime we prematurely wander away from a nest where God wants us to remain. And most of us have faced this temptation, haven't we? "I'm tired of this job; I'm going to quit." "This town is driving me crazy; I need to try someplace new." "I've been playing this role long enough; it's time for somebody else to do it." "This marriage isn't working; surely there is someone else out there with whom I can be happier." Watch out, little bird, are you sure that leaving that nest is really God's will?

Perhaps today you are contemplating making a major change in your life. If you are, please know that I'm not trying to scare you out of going through with what you are planning. As I said, there are definitely times when God's will calls for us to change nests. Even a casual study of the Bible will offer evidence of that. What I am trying to do, though, is warn you about the dangers of wandering away from a place where God wants you to remain (at least for a little while longer). A bird in its nest is safe and at peace. A bird that has foolishly abandoned its nest isn't. That's why we should always make sure that we are moving at God's bidding and not our own. Keep this in mind as you consider whether or not to leave your current nest, and ask the Lord to always help you to be in your rightful place, wherever that might either keep you or take you.

Russell McKinney lives in the English Woods area of Spruce Pine and serves as the pastor of Roan Mountain Baptist Church in Bakersville



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The Grandpa Fish

By Christy Lowman
Burke County



If you haven't realized it by now, I am fascinated by animals that live in the ocean and have been that way since I was young. I recently learned about a fish that I have never heard of, called a blobfish, fathead sculpin, or *Psychrolutes maridus*.

This fish lives close to the ocean floor anywhere between 2000 to 4000 feet deep. It is about a foot long, its pink, gray, or white skin is gelatinous and its body is soft. They do not have teeth and eat whatever they can find, mainly crustaceans. Scientists don't know much about these fish and aren't sure where they live, but they have been found around Australia, Tasmania, and New Zealand. They know they live there because fishermen catch blobfish in their trawling nets. Most of them die from being caught in the nets, but those that are still alive are usually set free. It is unknown if they make it back to their habitat in the deep waters and survive from the shock of being brought up quickly through the water.

This fish is not a sought-after fish, meaning it's not one people eat. The blobfish doesn't have much flavor and has an odd texture.

When the blobfish is in its natural habitat it looks like any other fish, but when it is brought to the surface in the trawling nets it loses its shape and looks like a gelatin blob. This is because deep in the ocean the water pressure is 120 times higher than that at the surface. This quick change in pressure deforms the blobfish. They do not have much body structure, only a partial backbone, and very few muscles. The blobfish does not have a swim bladder either, like most fish. The swim bladder's purpose is to help fish move around and maintain buoyancy, (being able to float in water).



These traits of the blobfish, the gelatin skin, minimal skeleton, and muscles, are common of all deepwater fish. God made them this way so they could survive the extreme pressure in the deep ocean water.

Once out of the water, this fish looks saggy and droopy. It looks like it has a nose, and it reminds me of a really old man.

When I saw this fish, it was a quick reminder of how we need to always make sure the elderly people in our community are taken care of. It's easy to forget them. Sometimes we get too busy or we just don't know what to say. Some seniors end up going to a nursing home to live when they get older, and sometimes it can be uncomfortable visiting there, but we must remember that the older people are valuable and need love and care too. It is our responsibility to help take care of them. They might just need someone to come and take out their trash, mow their lawn, bring them a meal or just come and keep them company. Sometimes they get extremely lonely just like we do when we don't see our friends.

One thing I have learned throughout the years is that if you will take the time out to spend time with these people, you in return will be blessed. I have made new friends, enjoyed hearing wonderful stories, and learned new things from elderly people.

It is especially important to remember them during the holidays when they are missing those that they love who have already passed. The holidays are wonderful times to visit them, bring them a card, and perhaps you will make a new friend. Most importantly, don't forget to tell them about Jesus!

Dear Lord, please help us to remember our senior citizens that live in our community. Help us, minister, to them and show Christ's love. We pray that you will use us to be a blessing to them. Help them as they go through hard times and lonely times. Help us be a shining light to know that we are there for them. Help us remember to visit them, especially during the holidays. In Jesus's precious name I pray, Amen.

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



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Snow Hill Baptist Church

No Regrets a Tribute to My Dad

By Dean Honeycutt
Mitchell County



The young teenage boy received a phone call from his distraught mom, “I have caught your dad with another woman...they are at a motel near the house, will you go with me to confront them.” The young boy had grown up in a dysfunctional home often seeing his mother hurt over the abuse of alcohol from his father and agreed to go with his mom. The young boy confronted his dad as a police officer would a criminals: Shoving him on the bed, pointing his finger in his face, almost daring his father to give him the slightest excuse to beat the daylights out of him.

I hope that no child would have to go through an experience like this; however, for many children, life is extremely hard because a lot of children come from broken families. And many are growing up in homes without fathers. I grew up in a dysfunctional family. My mom tried to make the best of a horrible situation. It is extremely hard to try to keep things normal, like birthday parties and holidays, when the occasion is always threatened by an intoxicated parent. To this day, I really do not know why my dad became an alcoholic. Of course, I understand all our vices are the result of sin, inherited and imputed sin nature, and temptation. We are born sinners and bent toward sinful behavior.

My relationship with my dad was not good. When I graduated from high school, I was glad to get as far away from home as I could. Although I always longed for a relationship with my dad. I loved him, but I did not like his drinking and the way he treated my mom. But, my problems followed me, I could not escape my family and my dad’s problems.

Things got so bad at home my parents separated, and dad moved back east to the place I was attending college and the city he and my mom started life together twenty-three years prior. Dad was trying to make a go of it and straighten out his life. In less than a year he had been released from two jobs because of alcohol abuse. My problems did not go away, they followed me. I was struggling as well. I gave my life to Christ at sixteen and served the Lord faithfully for a while, but now in college, I was straddling the fence. The Lord was dealing with me and would not forsake me. The Lord chastised me as a Father would a son to get me where he wanted me to be. And, little did I know, God was dealing with my dad as well.

In my second year of college, God called me to preach the Gospel, and I surrendered to follow the Lord and enter full-time ministry. However, this change in my life did not change my dad. I had prayed for my dad for years to be saved and stop drinking. Alcohol had ruined his life and our family. In time, I had stopped praying for my dad. I never doubted God was listening, but my answer did not come soon enough. Dad would go through three rehab programs, but the promises he made would not last long and he would be back hitting the bottle.

My dad was kicked out of a rental house and was now living in a one-bedroom apartment. After an automobile crash and no income, I was forced to take my dad to live with his parents. The next morning my dad said to me “I hate you for bringing me here.” The last place he wanted to be as a grown man was with his parents. Over the next couple of years, dad would lose his driver’s license, and because he could not get alcohol, he would drink Listerine or any liquid or medicine that contained alcohol. Upon the passing of my grandparents, my dad’s health would go down amazingly fast. My aunt never gave up on my dad. She took him in and tried to help him.

Dad was diagnosed with cardiomyopathy, which is a profoundly serious heart condition. Dad was told by the cardiologist if he did not stop drinking, he would not live. Alcohol was killing him. Dad would continue to drink, and his life was in a downward spiral.

In 2005 during Christmas, dad was in Memorial Mission Hospital because he had a major heart attack. He was on full life support with a heart pump and blood pressure medicine keeping him alive. After a couple of days, the doctors told us they had done all they could do. My family had to make the painful decision to stop all medical life support. It is like unplugging everything that is keeping a person alive. We were told we would have about thirty minutes with dad and he would pass away.

For the first few minutes keep my brother, sisters, mom and I held hands and prayed for my dad and what was taking place in that hospital room. What we did was give dad to the Lord and said, “Lord he is in your hands.” What happened next is a miracle and according to doctors’ records medically unexplainable.

My dad’s eyes began to blink, and he looked up and said I want to live. These were the first words he had spoken in three days. We were shocked and rushed and got the cardiologist. Dad began to improve and the life-saving heart pump, life support, and blood pressure drip were not restarted. At nine o’clock that evening the doctor finally said "we are going to treat your dad as a living patient." God saved my dad’s life that day and performed a miracle.

My dad gave his life to the Lord Jesus Christ. I was privileged to lead my dad to the Lord. For the next three years, I had a father I never had as a child. The father I longed for. We camped together and vacationed together. He enjoyed his grandchildren and spending time with his family. I praise the Lord. God gave my dad a second chance and dad tried his best to make the best of it. He never went back to the bottle; God set him free. I thank God for my dad, and I miss him terribly but praise God he is in heaven.

I would like to dedicate this article to my dad, Larry Dean Honeycutt.

Happy Father’s Day and God bless you all.

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.

Notes From the Shire

God's Artwork in His Nature

By Nancy Malik
Avery County



Beautiful June in Avery County is always full of delightful surprises! Animal babies make their debut and watching baby birds learn to fly is a real treat! There are wildflowers, gardens, fruit bushes and trees, and fishing in small creeks bringing out "the big one!" Summer is a jewel of a secret for the high Blue Ridge Mountains. As a Creation Science teacher, and radio host for Adventures in Creation, June abounds with signs of God's artwork in His nature. When it mists or rains, do you realize the water droplets are the same as since the beginning of time? Butterflies are a great example of Christian life. We start as a baby Christian, caterpillar; then spin a cocoon (change through growth in the life of Christ) and then a new butterfly! That is the true believer!

Another amazing visual of God's artwork is the night sky! There are 42 constellations in the night sky of the northern and southern hemispheres! With approximately 14 seen with the naked eye in both hemispheres, the Gospel Story is very evident! Aires, the lamb, the Southern Cross, Virgo, the Virgin, Leo, the Lion, and on and on where ancient man understood what God had done or would do! No snowflake is the same. Countless numbers have fallen over the millennium, without being reproduced! If you cut an apple through the middle on the side, not top to bottom, take the apple apart, a star is formed with the seeds in the middle of the apple! All living cells are held together with protein in the shape of a cross. All living cells! The last nebula seen before Hubble's latest send back is a nebula (clusters of stars in a cloud) that form the shape called "the eye of God" The dogwood blossoms show the nail scars of Christ's hands and feet. A nebula was found where the stars were singing. When their rhythm was put together with singing humpback whales, they were singing "How Great is our God"!

Snow is white due to each flake having angles on the flake's outer edges that hold light, including red sunsets and sunrises!

The best might be the sheep and their shepherd. We are sheep (baaaaa) and Jesus is our Shepherd! What a loving picture!

There are so many more examples of this event; God's artwork in His nature. Our property has heart-shaped rocks on it. I have always thought it is because God loves Avery County so much! God bless each of you, a reflection of God! Created in His image!

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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Humor

By Buddy Freeman
Madison County

“LAUGHTER IS HEALTHY FOR YOU”

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

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

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

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

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



Founding Fathers and How They Served Our Country—Joseph Warren

By David Streater, PhD
Burke County



This is an American history educational moment of our Founding Fathers and how they served our Country.

Born on June 11, 1741, Joseph Warren graduated from Harvard in 1759. As a distinguished physician, he cared for the poor and the wealthy. Some of his patients were John Adams, Paul Revere, William Dawes, and John Hancock.

Warren was a Freemason who supported independence and organized actions leading to the Revolution. He helped write the Suffolk Resolves, was the president of the Third Provincial Congress in Massachusetts, and was active with the Committee of Public Safety.

Joseph maintained his leadership in the Masonic Lodge, becoming the Grand Master of Continent America. Warren continued attending to the sick while establishing a hospital at Boston Harbor to combat smallpox.

On June 14, 1775, Warren was commissioned as a major general. However, Warren fought as a rank-and-file soldier in the Battle of Breed’s Hill, commonly known as Bunker Hill, which he promised to do shortly before his commission to demonstrate his loyalty and patriotism. Unfortunately, in this battle, Joseph was shot and killed.

When exhumed from the battlefield for a proper burial, his body was identified by Paul Revere. Revere had made false teeth for Warren, using silver—the first example of “forensic dentistry in America.”

Some historians have speculated that had Joseph Warren lived, George Washington would not have been as well known. Can you imagine going to Warren, DC?!

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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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Revival

By Glenda Ward
McDowell County

God’s power surpasses all others and its most forceful expression is revival. There is no power like it on this side of Jesus’ return. True revival must begin within the people of the church as an increased spiritual interest or renewal in the life of a church congregation (1 Peter 4:17). “Revival” means to “bring back to life,” to “restore to consciousness,” or to “restore to a previous condition” or renewal of spiritual interest after spiritual neglect. Revival happens when God’s people are prepared. It happens when we are ready for it with tender hearts and humble spirits. We can’t orchestrate widespread far-reaching revivals, that’s God’s work. Revival begins within the church, people coming under deep conviction and crying out in confession and repentance for their sins.

A Revival does two things. It always includes the conviction of sin on the part of the Church and it causes the conversion of men and women. Because when our hearts are tender, we humble ourselves and weep before Him, and God hears our cries. Revival is birthed within a heart of humility. Humility is the first action God’s people must take to experience revival. Without humility, we will not pray to seek God’s face and turn from sinful ways experiencing a pure heart. We must fall before God in humble repentance for our sin, gratitude for His goodness, and dependence on His Spirit’s strength. The same humility that is necessary for the lost to find salvation is necessary for the saved to experience revival. The proud fail to see their sin as God sees it, a truth that was illustrated by the life of Saul. “A true revival is nothing short of a revolution, casting out the spirit of worldliness and selfishness, and making God and His love triumph in our heart and life.”

We only have a heart of helplessness without our dependence on God. God can only work in our lives when we realize our need for Him. The same Word that proclaims “without me ye can do nothing (John 15:5)”, assures that “with God, nothing shall be impossible” (Luke 1:37). When we stand before God, convinced of our inability to serve Him on our own, but yet we are fully persuaded of His far-surpassing power to work in and through us as we yield to His Will; it is our dependence on Him that equips us to courageously fight the battles He has given us to endure while falling on our knees in desperation before Him. A coming revival must begin with great and earnest prayer! A place in a quiet corner, church members gathering together at special times to spend in prayer, in a closet, or behind closed doors personally or within a designated group setting. Bowing in humility we realize we do not deserve any of God’s goodness! But, with a heart of gratitude, God will give and will continue to give every single blessing we need to bless others and to be strengthened in His glory. “For all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee” (1 Chronicles 29:14). A revival is a new beginning in our hearts and the hearts of church members of obedience to God.

There is a law of sin that dwells within our flesh. We are weak but also a deciding link. One way leads to God and everything that is truly good. The other way leads to evil (sin, Satan, the flesh, spirit of worldly sin, and everlasting death). We must die to self as we are a product of sin. We have to humble ourselves and put aside those parts of ourselves that we know are not of Divine Persuasion and transform those dark places into light: the Light of God. “For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;” (Romans 5:8-9). There are forces at work that are trying to prevent our acceptance of God and His truth in His Word. We are to “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Romans 5:11). When we recognize our fleshly pride, ask God in prayer to strengthen us to serve Him with humility, and renew our mind daily through God’s Word, we can become more like Christ. (Read Romans Chapter 5). With God’s strength, we can overcome!

Spiritual life includes a sense of connection to something bigger than ourselves, and it involves a search for meaning in life which, only God can fulfill. It is a journey toward seeking God’s face through His Word and prayer. It is our special place with our Heavenly Father, a place of importance to our beliefs and faith in Jesus Christ. Strength of heart and strength of mind must be instilled in us while a growing path toward absolute faith is encouraged.

The fields are full; the workers are few. You can be the spark that ignites the



revival! Revivals don’t just happen! No, God must be involved; but it starts with one or two. A personal revival has to begin with absolute faith in the individual’s heart, mind, and soul. Whatever is not from faith is sin! It is sin that blocks the Holy Spirit in the human heart. Without our obedience to God, there will be no personal revival when the Holy Spirit speaks to us about the condition of our heart. There is a reason God brings conviction and we must confess our NEED for Revival. It is our opportunity to repent and be revived in righteous living. It is a renewal – a fresh inflow of life, love, and power of God. When revival breaks out, God breaks in. The gospel finds new people who need God in their life, and Christians find new ways of presenting Jesus to those God puts in our path. Revival may start small with two or three, but it thrives in a crowd. Revival happens when God’s people are prepared. It happens when we are ready with tender hearts and humble spirits. Revival often begins with people coming under deep conviction. Pray that people will listen and come under God’s conviction crying out in confession and repentance for their sins. Revival does not occur outside the realm of prayer. As our world slips into darkness, pray that a small spark will start to build in someone that has turned on the Light, God’s Light. Pray that it not only starts in our hearts but right here in our community.

God is wanting to send revival, but He needs channels of believers, Christians. Revival is the outflow of the Spirit of God through the regenerated spirit of man (see John 7:37-39). God took strong men and women to pieces and put them together again for His glory. We are an earthen vessel. Our purpose is to display God’s power. The transforming power of God is also the transferable power of God. The Holy Spirit empowered Jesus’ followers at Pentecost (Acts 2) and has since been available to all who believe in Jesus as their Savior. If we receive revival, you and I are to be ready to receive the full blessing of God and to be channels through whom that blessing can flow. Please pray that our church will receive a revival and that we may see what God can do.

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



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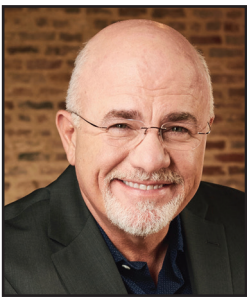


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Limit The Potential For Damage

By Dave Ramsey

Dear Dave,
My husband started working at a new company about a year ago. As part of his sign-on, they gave him \$5,000 in company stock. The stock has nearly doubled in value since then, and we were wondering if we should buy more, considering how well it has done.
Cathi



Dear Cathi,
I totally get why you two might be excited over a stock that doubled in value over a year. But what you're talking about doing right now is a very risky proposition. The truth is any stock that doubles in value over just one year is highly volatile. It's unusual for stocks to do things like that, and it also means it could go down just as fast—or even faster.
I don't know where you and your husband are in your overall financial situation, but I recommend people become debt-free except for their homes, and have an emergency fund of three to six months of expenses saved up before investing. Once you reach that point, I strongly advise you to begin putting 15 percent of your income toward retirement before you start any outside investing.
Don't get me wrong, I don't mind a little selective and educated dabbling here and there once the basics are taken care of first. However, I'd never recommended putting more than 10 percent of your nest egg into a single stock. The reason? If the single stock tanks and you lose it all, then your loss is only a blip on your financial radar.
Of course, it would be fantastic if this single stock went through the roof and you two made a ton of money. Just make sure you limit the potential for damage in this kind of scenario by limiting your exposure.
—Dave

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

“Good Each Time”

By Toby Crowder
Mitchell County



“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” – 1 Cor 15:58
Consistent... what does that word mean to you? Regardless of our personal definitions, according to Miriam-Webster the word consistent means “of the same quality; good each time.” While the word consistent does not appear in the KJV Bible... the word steadfast appears 11 times and in Greek means “firm and immovable.” In the verse we just read, Paul is encouraging his beloved brethren to be firm and immovable in their work and witness for the Lord. As he brings this chapter to a close, he is reminding them to be consistent!
This month we will celebrate Father’s Day, a day that we support, encourage, and applaud those men in our lives who we recognize as leaders in the home, family, and in our churches. I for one, am thankful for the influence of my father and some steadfast men that I have been honored to have in my family and my life... Men who I remember as being “of the same quality” ... day in and day out. To borrow from the above definition, they were “good each time.”
Some time back, I was able to speak to a lady that I had not seen in several years, whose father had been a leader in my home church when I was growing up. As we began to reminisce, I told her some things that I remembered about her father and his faithfulness to our church. As I spoke, I noticed that she was visibly touched... and later told me that she was very thankful that I “remembered that about her daddy.”
What is unique, it that this man passed away many years ago and has been in Heaven for at least 30 years... yet I still remembered things about him that brought his family joy. His faithfulness to God, his quick smile, and the love that he had for others were very evident to me, even at a young age. Why? Because he was steadfast... consistent... “firm and immovable” in his faith. He was “good each time.” The life that he lived and the testimony that he carried made a lasting impression on my life, and to this day I remember him fondly as a man of faith and Christian love.

Many will remember their Dad as a leader in the home. If not, then possibly you recognize a male role model such as a grandfather, uncle, brother, or some other church or family member. This is someone whose paths we can follow, and that our children can see as an example. This should be a Christ-like example since the way children view their fathers influence how they will view God in many ways. A child is blessed if they have a Godly father... and likewise is a father blessed with children who love and respect him.
Psalm 1:1-2 *“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.”*
Psalm 127:3-4 *“Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth.”*
Men... Father’s Day is a day to be recognized. A day to receive gratitude from those who support, love, and need you. But also, may it be a day of realization! A reminder that things are vastly different in 2021 than they were 30 years ago, and there is a genuine need for men to step up and be the men of God that we so desperately need in our homes and churches. What will be said about you in 30 years? Psalm 37:23 says, *“The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way.”* Delight yourself in the Lord and continue to be steadfast for Him. Paul told the church at Corinth that their labour was not in vain in the Lord... and let me assure you ... neither is yours!

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 MCfamily-forChrist.org or mtcarmelsprucepine@gmail.com



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“Something to Think About”
Heavenly Living on Earth

By Dennis Love
McDowell County

Psalm 139 is a Psalm that I would encourage you to really get familiar with. It teaches us three tremendous truths about God. It teaches us that God is omniscient. Omniscient means all-knowing. He knows our acts, v2. He knows our thoughts, v3. He knows our words, v4. And notice in v6 that this fact was more than David’s brain could take in. In other words, it blew his mind.

Truth number two in this Psalm is that God is omnipresent. Omnipresent means He is ever-present at all times. Look at verses 7-12.

The third truth in this Psalm is that God takes a special interest in every person! Look at v13. The word possessed means to create or to form. The Hebrew word translated reins literally means kidneys. It simply refers to our innermost parts. Back in that day, the kidneys were looked upon as the seat of a person’s thoughts, feelings, and actions. David sums up this truth by saying that we are fearfully and wonderfully made in v14. But he’s not finished yet. Look at what he says in v15-16. The word substance means embryo. So the Bible tells me that God custom-designed every part and every inch of my body. Then David tells us in v16 that God even wrote down in a book everything about us before we were fully developed. Then in v17-18, David concludes this section by saying that we are continually on God’s mind. In other words, He thinks about us day and night. You are so special to God that He never gets you off His mind! WOW---let that sink in for a moment! SO I want to show you how you can enjoy heavenly living on earth by simply embracing the following three simple truths. The first truth is this:

I’m Fearfully and Wonderfully Made—v14 Regardless of how you feel about yourself. Regardless of how big or small you are. Regardless of what kind of personality you have. Regardless of everything about you-----YOU are fearfully and wonderfully made. So don’t ever go around complaining about your size or your looks, just remember that you are fearfully and wonderfully made and that God can uniquely use you for His service.

I’m Built for Service and Dedication—v15-16 Long before you ever came out of the womb, God had written some things down about you in a book. He had written down what you were going to look like and what His plan was for your life. Did you know the greatest joy in life is to find and then carry out God’s plan for your life! Don’t ever be guilty of thinking that your life is meaningless. You were built from the very beginning for service and dedication. LISTEN It takes those two things-----Service to God and Dedication to God for a person to discover God’s plan for their life.

I’m Always on God’s Mind—v17-18 If His thoughts of you are like the sands of the sea, then you are always on His mind. If you embrace these three truths you can and will experience heavenly living on earth and that my friend is really something for each of us to think about!

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



Truth or Consequences

By Steve Gaito
McDowell County

Lately, I have had several conversations about retirement income with clients about their parents. It is a common challenge. When I started providing retirement planning you could go to the bank and get a CD for over 10% and Fixed Annuities were over 12%. It was what I call the good old days. If you had \$500,000 of retirement assets you could draw \$50,000 to \$60,000 of interest a year. Fast forward to the current situation where you are lucky to get 1-1.5% or income off that same \$500,000 and it is now \$5,000 to \$7,500 in interest for the same \$500,000. The option that many advisors recommend is diversifying your portfolio. If we look at the recent 20 years of the market the S&P 500 TM just slightly above 6.5% which would provide \$32,500 but who wants 100% of your money in stocks? Everyone remembers what happened between 2000 and 2009. The return on the stock market was negative for that whole period. What can you do? Therefore, understanding the income part of retirement planning is critical to the success of retirement. First, we must address the truth. That is that we are not going back to interest rates of the past. The second is that the market is too volatile for consistent income given today's stock market. The third is you must plan for Long Term Care. With costs exceeding \$100,000 for 24/7/365 care it can deplete savings in a hurry. The consequences of not planning for income are devastating.

Now that I have gone through the truth and consequences, how do we address them and minimize the impact? For the last several years I have been working with people to free them from the bondage of an investment portfolio. I help them create income streams that meet their needs and minimize taxes. If you think about it for most of us, we are used to living on a paycheck every month. We pay our bills, go on vacation, purchase cars, and buy groceries. It is comfortable. So why does everyone seem to think that it is normal to live off a portfolio of stocks and bonds for the rest of their life? It makes no sense to me. I believe in having an emergency fund in retirement just like while working but based on the clients I have worked with having a paycheck provides much more freedom than worrying about what the market does on any given day. Think back to when you first started saving for retirement. What was the purpose? It was to provide income to live after you started working. Now is the best time to create that income. With the market at or near all-time highs should not you consider creating your income plan now instead of waiting for another correction?

I realize that this is different from what most hear, but like interest rates that have changed so must the way you plan in retirement. The question is what do you want to do? Worry about the stock market or spend time with your grandkids? It is not that complicated and if you have questions, please feel free to come into my office and take advantage of the free initial consultation. I will show you the difference and you can make an educated decision. I can help you create your own retirement paycheck so you can enjoy life.

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



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Sharing God’s Truth in a Subjective World

By Rev. John B. Sorensen



Let’s face it. We live in a world where our view of truth has become subjective. The moral absolutes that have guided society for thousands of years suddenly have become relative. What’s right for one person is wrong for another. And if we question the status quo, we are labeled “intolerant.”

Many people don’t want to acknowledge an absolute truth because they don’t want to face their sin. If there is no absolute truth, then how could there be an absolute morality? And if there is no morality, there is no sin. They believe the absence of absolute truth is a license to do what they want. They see it as freedom. But ultimately, we know that “freedom” is false. Sin is nothing but bondage – a set of chains that leads to destruction and despair.

Regardless of what the world says, there are still many people in the world who are searching for something deeper. They are searching for truth. That truth is only found in Jesus Christ. But they can only know it if we, as believers, are willing to step out in faith and share that truth with them.

So, how do we share God’s truth in such a subjective world?

Truth, by its own definition, is very narrow. Only the right answer is true. Everything else is false. Real truth doesn’t change. Someone can believe that 2+2 is 5, but it doesn’t change the math. The answer is 4. When we talk with others about absolute truth, we can remind them that they can believe whatever they like, but their belief alone doesn’t make it true. We can encourage them to pursue truth, not mere opinion, belief, or whatever is politically correct at the moment.

Once someone is truly open to knowing the truth, then we have an open door to present God’s truth. But as 1 Peter 3:15 admonishes us, we must do this with gentleness and respect. Don’t push. Ask permission before you share about spiritual matters. Some people will be open to listening. Others will not. Respect their wishes, and pray for another opportunity. But if they are willing, proceed with compassion and concern for their eternity.

Share what God has done in your life. Your story is powerful because it is unique and personal. Don’t be afraid to be vulnerable and share how God has changed your life.

Keep the focus off what the world says and on what God has said and done. True freedom only comes from knowing the truth. The truth of God’s word is what the person needs to be set free (John 8:32). If at all possible, keep distractions at a minimum while explaining the greatest news of all.

Allow the Holy Spirit to speak to the person’s heart. Remember, it’s not our job to convict people of their sins. That’s the Holy Spirit’s job. It is our job to share the Gospel. But always ask if they are ready to take that final step and accept the free gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ. They might just say, Yes!

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



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Darryl Strawberry

By Jim Smith
McDowell County

Freedom Life staff have been working for over a year to make this coming community event a success. We have joined with many community leaders to make the Darryl Strawberry event a fun-filled family evening along with some great encouragement about hope through the journey and lessons of his own life on June 27, 2021. This will provide great encouragement for those who may struggle with family brokenness and addiction.

Gates open at 4:30, 30 minutes earlier than previously announced. Our event activities and booths begin at 5:00 pm at Big League Camp in Marion NC. Overflow parking with shuttles will be in the parking Lot behind J Hartman’s, to the left of the Food Lion parking area. There will be parking at Big League Camp. At 4:30 pm, we will begin serving a free BBQ dinner to the first 2000 attendees. This also kicks off our family activities at 5:00 pm. We will have several inflatables for children, face painting, snow cones, and balloon animals ... all in the KIDS ZONE. During this time, anyone who has purchased a VIP Event pass will have dinner (a table for 6) with Darryl, along with a meet and greet photo with Darryl, and a more intimate setting as he shares his story. There are a total of 27 tables for this VIP event, if you are interested, the cost is \$1000 and you can reach out to Jim Smith, Development Director to reserve your spot now. On the field, we will have community talent at the main stage from 5:00 pm till 6:15 pm. We encourage you to bring a chair and sit in the lined areas on the field! Down each sideline, we will have church and human service organizations booths sharing information on how they can assist your family in many ways here in McDowell. No food on the field please, just beverages. At 6:15 all areas will wrap up and all eyes will be on the main stage. Heart Cry, the music outreach of Freedom Life, will begin in a short concert followed by Darryl Strawberry sharing his story!

This highly anticipated speech is the main event of the Freedom Life community event. Tickets are \$5 for adults and free to those that are 12 and under.

Many of you that are baseball fans may be surprised that Darryl is now an ordained minister. The last we heard of him, he’d thrown away what should have been a Hall of Fame career because he was addicted to drugs and alcohol. Cocaine was the main drug that forced Strawberry’s retirement in 2000. At this time, Major League Baseball had just given him a year-long suspension for failing another drug test. At this time, he slowly disappeared from the public eye. He would pop up from time in time in the news from other addiction-related mishaps. He was in a circular flight pattern of rehab, relapse, surrender, and then repeat it all again. That one-time superhero of baseball - Darryl Strawberry- the one who played 17 MLB seasons, made more than \$30 million and lost it all as a defeated addict. But then God. At Freedom Life, we have a saying that “hopelessness ends here.” Freedom Life is not a God or an organization with a magic key ... it is an organization founded on the biblical principles of healing and renewal of love and compassion for our brothers and sister. It is led by many staff that have their recovery, brokenness, and renewal stories. They understand hope! Today, it’s Darryl Strawberry ... a man of God, and you wouldn’t recognize him. He’s a 52-year-old ordained minister who doesn’t own a ball glove and prays before every meal. The man who tried so many times to reinvent himself, only to fall back into drugs and women and booze, swears this is his final reinvention. And, Minister Strawberry says, if he could do it all over, he never would have played baseball. Darryl Strawberry is described as a legend by many who have been dazzled by the dynamics of his game, the power he possessed at the plate, and the story of redemption that continues to bring hope to so many lives. He has earned the legendary nicknames and phrases of one of the most feared homerun hitters in the game of baseball, Straw’s Sweet Swing, Strawberry’s Field Forever, and The Legendary Straw Man! Darryl’s purpose and passion are serving the Lord Jesus Christ by speaking a message of hope and helping others transform their lives through the power of the gospel. “I was once very lost and tormented but now I am found and free in Christ Jesus. I want everyone to experience the saving and transforming power of Jesus Christ.” -Darryl Strawberry

106.9 The Light FM and Big League Camp are among our key sponsors in this event. Local businesses can become event sponsors as well, showing your support for a stronger community through recovery and renewal. You can reach out to Jim if you would to: volunteer, be a key business or private sponsor. Have a free booth space for your human services organization or church.

Tickets are available at the Freedom Life Office on 130 North Logan Street (the original Marion City Hall), by calling the office at 828.559.2224, or by going online at www.freedomlifeministries.org. We encourage you not to wait till the last minute for your ticket or VIP table purchased. Jim Smith Development Director: jsmith@freedomlifeministries.org

Photo used by permission from www.findingyourway.com media packet.

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



Tractor Ride 2021 to Benefit North Carolina’s Seniors

By Dr. Sandy C. Gregory, NCBAM Director



First Things First: What color is your tractor? I never knew the color of a tractor mattered so much until moving to eastern North Carolina. As associate pastor at Rocky Hock Baptist Church in Edenton, I got to know a lot of farmers with numerous acres of land. I quickly learned that the color, size, and make of a tractor matters a great deal and that farmers take pride in their tractor of choice: a blue Ford, a red Farmall or Massey Ferguson, or an iconic John Deere green.

I drive a tractor for simple tasks like plowing or hauling, but farmers use their equipment day-in and day-out as a vital part of their lives and work. Some of their tractors have wheels taller than I am.

I recently learned about the Southeast Old Threshers’ Reunion held each summer at the Denton FarmPark. Folks from all over the Southeast attend for a week of family fun and entertainment. The Reunion kicks off with a Tractor Ride where families, farmers, and friends parade their tractors through town to raise funds for a non-profit.

Tim Loffin’s mission-minded family started the Reunion over 50 years ago. I got to know Tim when NCBAM filmed its 2019 Christmas video on the train at the Denton FarmPark. I am pleased to announce that NCBAM will be the recipient of the 2021 Tractor Ride proceeds. We’ll use the funds for ministry projects like wheelchair ramps and other safety measures for older adults.

No matter what color tractor you support, I hope you will plan to attend the Tractor Ride and help NCBAM make a difference in the lives of older adults all across the state. You can learn many ways to support the event at ncbam.org.



This ark was handcrafted by Angie Gregg, central west regional director for NCBAM. It will be auctioned July 1, 6pm at Denton FarmPark. Proceeds from the live auction benefit seniors served by NCBAM.

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The No Matter What Father

By Steve Bietz
Burke County

My wife and I did a little bit of shopping this morning. A little bit is about as much as I can handle. One of the items we needed to get was one of those Hallmark cards. In a few days, we are attending a wedding for a young lady that is a member of our church family. While my wife was searching for an appropriate wedding congratulatory message, I was browsing the large section of Father's Day cards. My dad passed away a dozen years ago, so I was not looking to purchase a card, rather I was just browsing. I picked up a card to read it and was struck by the underlying message of the card. On the front, the card stated: "DAD, WHEN YOU LOOK AT ME...TRY NOT TO SEE ALL THE HOURS OF WORRY I CAUSED YOU." Then on the inside of the card, "TRY NOT TO THINK OF THE THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS YOU INVESTED IN ME." Then on the next panel, "TRY NOT TO REMEMBER THE ANXIETY, FRUSTRATION, AND JUST PURE TORTURE I'VE PUT YOU THROUGH." And finally on the last page, "INSTEAD, THINK OF WHAT A GREAT LITTLE CHARACTER-BUILDER I'VE BEEN! HAPPY FATHER'S DAY."

As I stood there in the aisle with the card in my hand, I contemplated just how horribly insufficient my expression of thanks was that I mailed to my father every June. A card could never make up for the sacrifices my dad made for me and my family. I could go on and on about the enormous outlay of time and money my dad supplied and I could endlessly address the heartache, and yes torture that I caused my father in my youth. I cannot name a single time that my father was not there for me, no matter what. No matter what covers a lot of stuff that I'm too embarrassed to share in this forum. It is way too kind to refer to me as a character-builder as the Hallmark card stated.

Likewise, as I contemplate my Heavenly Father, I cannot help but sense the same horribly insufficient expressions of thanks I share with Him in prayer. I mean what could compare to the investment that the Father God has extended to each of us. There is a hymn written by Frederick Lehman entitled "The Love Of God." The opening line states, "The love of God is greater far than tongue or pen can ever tell." See, as good as Hallmark is, it is insufficient in trying to convey the wonderfulness of the love of our Heavenly Father. The disciple John expressed this same thought in a letter he wrote to the first century Christian Church. We find his words in 1 John 3:1. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God."

Now I am well aware that earthly fathers are not perfect. Sometimes they fail. And I am well aware that everyone who reads my words did not have a dad that was there for them, no matter what. But we do have this guarantee. That our Father in Heaven is such a surety, that He is always there for us...no matter what. God is a "no matter what" Father.

We can be thankful this June for our dads here on this earth. I would actually hope that we don't just wait for June to say thanks. And to our Heavenly Father, even though it is horribly insufficient, may our thankfulness be expressed in a way that we share the Father's love in our service for others. Actually, when we do share His love, that is exactly what makes our Heavenly Father...happy. Indeed, Happy Father's Day.

Steve Bietz, Pastor, Morganton Seventh day Adventist Church.



Attitude Of Gratitude . . . Out Loud

By Ken and Jan Merop
Avery County

The story is told of a young boy who had misbehaved. "Go sit on the stool in the corner," said his mom. He went to the corner, but wouldn't sit down.

So his mom came and repeated that he should sit down. After a few defiant moments, he finally acquiesced. However, he whispered loud enough for her to hear, "I may be sitting down on the outside, but I'm standing up on the inside."

Such contempt for authority isn't uncommon. And just as the story shows, it begins early in life. If it is not corrected...if the child isn't shown how his sinful nature leads to sinful choices and attitudes, he grows into adulthood with the same frame of mind.

However, gratitude will foster the opposite result. How often while growing up did you hear, "Say please, say thank you, say you're welcome, say I'm sorry, say please forgive me?" When we became parents, we taught the same to our children. Unfortunately, we don't hear these words too often in our culture.

When children are taught to be thankful along with these other virtues, they are developing their inner health with an attitude of gratitude. Without that training, an attitude of entitlement pervades. And as disappointing as that is for the one who should hear virtuous responses, it is really more sorrowful for the one who neglects to be grateful.

Gratitude brings health to our mind and heart...to our inner health. The Bible says in Proverbs 4:23, NKJV, "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life."

In other words, "Keep vigilant watch over your heart; that's where life starts," says The Message.

Grateful hearts, hearts that praise God and acknowledge him regularly will overflow with delight. This overflow will refresh others like a cool mist of water on a hot day. And breezes of blessings will blowback on us as well.

One way to be thankful is to heap praise upon God our Maker. Thanksgiving and praise is a two-way street. Anyone who worships God with a heart of gratitude and praise realizes we do so not only to bring blessing to Him but for our sake.

"Be thankful to Him, and bless His name," says Psalm 100: 4b. We need him for our next breath. We depend on him to sustain us. I've heard that C.S. Lewis once said that praise is inner health made audible. So, live with an attitude of gratitude...out loud! Selah

Let your light shine

These bright beauties draw us to them.
They are like lights in the darkness
bringing smiles and joy.
Bloom as these do...
Attracting and engaging others
to see the true Light.

"Let your light so shine before men,
That they may see your good works
And glorify your Father in heaven."
Matthew 5: 16



Sudoku

Solution on page 14

5					1			7
	7		2	6				
	3					4		8
7			6			3		
				4				
		1			7			5
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Ken and Jan love residing in the mountains of Avery County. Visit Jan's new blog @pauseandconsider.net, Journeying with Jan. Ken's photos can be seen at kenmeropphotography.com.

Jeremiah 6:16

By Terry Cheek Th.D...
McDowell County



Jeremiah’s ministry took place at a time when the people of Israel were deep into spiritual wickedness. Israel had sinned against God to the point He was ready to give them over to captivity. Israel did go into captivity in just a few short years. While Israel stood on the edge of God’s judgment. He still wanted to see Israel repent and turn back to Him. Jeremiah 6:16 reads; *“Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.”*

From this verse, I get the image of a traveler who has come to a fork in the road. He has the liberty to go any way he chooses, but God wants him to *“...ask for the old paths, where is the good way...”* Our traveler could blindly choose a path to travel hoping for the best, or our traveler could stop and seek God’s direction before moving on. Today in our fast-paced lives filled with GPS and technology galore we often fail to stop and seek God’s direction before deciding. We feel we have the answers to life’s problems, the simple and complicated. We present ourselves as vulnerable targets for the devil’s temptation. The Lord wants His people on the right path one that will lead them in His direction. While this verse was spoken as a word of correction to the Jews many years ago there is a lesson in this verse for today’s church. It is my opinion the Lord would still have His people *“...ask for the old paths...”* We must agree the Lord has warned us against the wrong path and has provided us direction for the right path. His people, the church today, are responsible for walking the one which God has ordained, it is the one He can bless, it is the one that honors Him.

The history of Israel as recorded in the Bible has us understanding God’s command to not allow false prophets or leaders to take them astray. This was a fundamental requirement of their faith. The Israel of Jeremiah’s day was to look back at men like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, and others for examples to pattern their decisions after. They were men of faith and obedience. God required Israel to not take just any path but to take time and find the right path, the old well-worn path. Even though it will have hills and rocks it is still the best path because it is God’s path.

I want to share a story with you about finding the right direction. At the battle of the Bulge during World War II there was a group of German soldiers who dressed in Allied uniforms. These Germans also used captured American military vehicles and went through the German countryside changing road signs. When American troops came to the various crossroads, they were fooled many times being led off in the wrong direction. This deception by the Germans almost gained victory in this key battle. The difference was stopping, taking time to radio ahead, and confirm location and direction. God has provided a way to reach out and a command for us to do so, through our Bibles and prayer.

Too often we come to crossroads where Satan has changed the road signs. Here are a few of the changes he has fooled many into following. Is Salvation only through the Blood, we read in Hebrews 9:22 *“And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.”* Our belief in Scripture has been wrongly changed, notice 2 Timothy 3:16 *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”* There are 66 books, 1,189 chapters, 41,173 verses, 774,746 words, and 3,566,480 letters in the KJV Bible. Every ounce of God’s Word is the infallible, inerrant, inspired Word of God. How has our love for the church been changed when we consider Hebrews 10:25 *“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”* How about the reality of Heaven and Hell being changed considering John 14:1-3 *“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. (2) In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. (3) And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”* And Psalms 9:17 *“The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.”* Does the lack of concern regarding the sharing of our faith show the value of the human soul being compromised? What does Mark 8:36-37 have to say? *“For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? (37) Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”* We also talk about Jesus’ soon return but do we follow the right path? Here is what 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 reminds us to be mindful of. *“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. (14) For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. (15) For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. (16) For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: (17) Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. (18) Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”* And here is God’s Word from Revelation 20:12 about the matter *“And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.”* I will close with one last example and a question. Have we been led down the wrong path regarding God’s Holiness? Have we tried to bring God down to man’s level? Let’s consider Isaiah 6:3 *“And one cried unto another, and*

said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.” Along with 1 Peter 1:16 *“Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.”*

Much more can be written about this subject, but I will not indulge myself with any more of this publisher’s precious space. Friends when the Lord tells us to “ask for the old paths, where is the good way” it’s because those old paths have been walked out by men and women of faith who have their walk recorded in the pages of our Bible. Let’s be careful to not allow Satan the opportunity to misdirect us.

Until we meet again, either in print or in person, may God richly bless you is my prayer. Scripture is provided through e-Sword Bible software

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



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Bear Creek Baptist Church

The Audacity of Evil

By Bruce Cannon
Mitchell County

The Oxford Dictionary defines audacity as “rude or disrespectful behavior; impudence.” How many times have you or I over the last years said, “I never thought I would see the day” and then we would speak of something that had recently been reported on the news or had just happened. I find myself saying that over and over! And yet Biblical prophecy tells us that this will be the normal occurrence just before the Lord’s Return for His church. In Matthew 24:6-12 Jesus teaches, “*And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.*”

As I write this article the eastern seaboard of the United States is experiencing a gas shortage because of a hack in the Colonial Pipeline by a group known as “DarkSide”. (What a fitting name for a group to do such a thing!) I am also reading about attacks upon Jerusalem because of rockets being fired by Palestinian groups at them. COVID-19 is still causing major problems all over the world. The economy of the U. S. is in greater shambles than ever seemingly, at least somewhat, because of financial handouts and people refusing to work. Businesses are having to close their doors for lack of employees. Lawlessness is continuing around the nation because of racial unrest. Black Lives Matter continues to spew out its ungodly propaganda. Law enforcement remains under attack. Our borders are extremely insecure. Many, including myself, believe America is in a state of Civil War because of all of the factions and “infighting” within our borders.

And yet, we have not seen the end of the troubles that are to come. In Matthew 24:8 Jesus said, “*All these are the beginning of sorrows.*” Our nation has turned away from God and He is turning His back on us! Without His protection, which has been lax because of our rebellion as a nation, there is no telling how many more times we will say, “I never thought I would see the day...”

Certainly, we can see the fulfillment, before our very eyes, of the prophetic Scripture above. Christ is coming! He’s coming for a people who are watching and waiting for Him! Jesus said in Matthew 24:43, “*But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.*” Don’t get caught off guard! Heed this preacher’s warning! Evangelize your household! Make sure your circle of acquaintances knows Jesus!

As the song we used to sing says, “People get ready, Jesus is coming! Soon we’ll be going home. People get ready, Jesus is coming to take from this world His own.” Amen!

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



Crossnore School & Children’s Home and Youth Villages

Press Release New Partnership Seeks to Address Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children

By Holly Solomon
Avery County

Crossnore School & Children’s Home and Youth Villages partner to create a new program which mitigates the risk of sexual exploitation for children in foster care.

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. (April 21, 2021) — The commercial sexual exploitation (CSE) of children in North Carolina and the United States is a growing public health crisis, disproportionately impacting young people served by the child welfare and mental health systems. Crossnore School & Children’s Home and Youth Villages are excited to announce a new partnership to address this issue for children in North Carolina’s child welfare system. The partnership is called Project Safe Home: A Pathway to Resilience. Young people who have a mental health diagnosis, a history of trauma (especially childhood sexual abuse), and involvement in the child welfare system also experience higher rates of other risk factors making them especially susceptible to commercial sexual exploitation. The exact number of exploited children or children at risk of exploitation within child welfare is unknown.

To decrease this risk of CSE, Project Safe Home will create an innovative community-based approach to serving young people at risk. This approach includes an intentional focus on assessment, prevention, and protection across a full continuum of services. Project Safe Home will create this continuum of care capitalizing on each agency’s strengths and addressing the individual needs of the young people they will serve together. All services aim to mitigate CSE risk factors and build protective factors around the youth and their family which strengthen the family unit and prevent future trauma. Sarah Norris, Crossnore’s Chief Program Officer, said, “Project Safe Home brings a wealth of experience to address the issue of commercial sexual exploitation for children at risk in the child welfare system. We are excited about working with Youth Villages and what each of our agencies can bring to the table to help these children and youth.”

Youth Villages serves young people in 24 states across the country by providing a wide range of programs that utilize evidence-based and research-informed interventions to help them thrive. In North Carolina alone, Youth Villages serves more than 5,000 young people annually through community-based family services, high fidelity wraparound, and transitional living services. Crossnore School & Children’s Home is a non-profit child welfare organization with three locations in Forsyth, Avery, and Henderson counties serving western North Carolina. In addition to their campus-based foster care services, Crossnore provides an array of services within their local communities including community-based family and therapeutic foster care, school-based and outpatient therapy, youth independent living, and day treatment services.

About Crossnore School & Children’s Home: For more than 100 years, Crossnore School & Children’s Home has served children and families through group residential services, community-based family foster care, and adoptions, and outpatient and school-based clinical services. For more information about Crossnore School & Children’s Home, please visit www.crossnore.org.

About Youth Villages: For more than 30 years, Youth Villages has provided help for children and young people across the United States who face a wide range of emotional, mental, and behavioral problems by working to find solutions using proven treatment models that strengthen the child’s family and support systems that dramatically improve their long-term success. For more information about Youth Villages, please visit www.youthvillages.org.

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Redeemed Free Will Baptist Church

Prayers

By Patricia Jackson
McDowell County

Bedtime prayers were a nightly habit for many of us as we grew up. Many continue to teach our children and grandchildren the same prayer. “Now I lay me down to sleep; I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take.” I knew these words long before I fully comprehended them. This classic bedtime children’s prayer was written in 1711 by Joseph Addison. It has become one of the best-loved rhymes-prayers ever written.

When we pray, we share our concerns, needs, thoughts, and feelings as we communicate with God. The first recorded prayer in the Bible is Genesis 4:26. “Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord.”

The prayer of a sinner asking for forgiveness is one of the most important prayers we will ever say. The apostle Paul said, “And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” (Romans 10:13).

God forgives those who confess their sins. “I acknowledged my sin to thee, and my iniquity have I not hid. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, And thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah” (Psalm 32:5). King David acknowledged his sin and knew in his heart God had heard and forgiven him.

There are many benefits we get from praying. Philippians 4:6-7 “Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Paul wrote these words to the church at Philippi while he was under arrest. Paul wanted them to know discouragement and worry was robbing them of joy and that the solution was to pray to God.

These scriptures are only a few of the types of prayers. Others include prayers of thanksgiving, vows (1 Samuel 1:10-12), healing, deliverance and help, intercession, and blessings. There is a prayer for every need you have. Mark 11:24 tells us, “Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.” We are to pray AND believe.

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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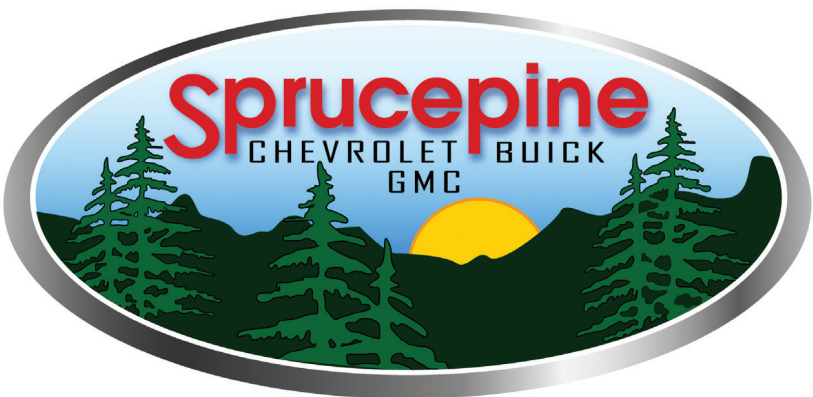
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YOUR GOVERNMENT PAGES

NC Senate District 47



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

One of the most important bills of this legislative session is Senate Bill 405 – Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act, of which I am a cosponsor. Primary sponsors are Senators Joyce Krawiec, Lisa Barnes, and Amy Galey. This bill is very similar to Senate Bill 359, of the same name, which I sponsored in 2019. Gov. Cooper vetoed Senate Bill 359 and Democrats’ votes in both the Senate and House sustained the Governor’s veto of a bill to require health care practitioners to provide the same care for every living baby in North Carolina, even those born alive despite an abortion. So here we are this year with a very similar bill, which includes the following:

- Recognizes that a child born alive despite an abortion is a legal person under the laws of North Carolina.
- Requires health care practitioners to use the same level of care for children born alive during an abortion, as they would for any other child born alive at the same gestational age, and also preserve the life and health of that child, including transporting and admitting the child to a hospital.
- Charges a health care practitioner who does not provide that care with a Class 1 misdemeanor, which could include up to 120 days of jail time with a fine of up to \$250,000.
- Requires health care practitioners or any employee of a hospital, a physician's office, or an abortion clinic to report a health care practitioner who does not care for a child born alive. If they do not, they would be charged with a Class 1 misdemeanor, which could include up to 120 days of jail time with a fine of up to \$250,000.
- Protects the mother by barring her from prosecution for not providing medical care or reporting a lack of medical care for a child born alive despite an abortion.
- Creates a civil claim for a woman whose child was born alive despite an abortion and the healthcare provider failed to provide care, and if care was not provided and it was not reported by someone required to report.
- Amends the existing murder statute to include "an intentional, overt act performed after the child is born alive."

It is truly heartbreaking that this legislation is even needed. Although Gov. Cooper claims that this practice does not exist, numerous accounts do exist of infants left to die following an abortion either overtly or from lack of care. Jill Stanek, a nurse who worked at a Chicago hospital that performed induced birth abortions, witnessed an aborted Down syndrome baby, born alive, who was thrown in a soiled utility room to die. She said, “I could not bear the thought of this suffering child dying alone, so I cradled and rocked him for the 45 minutes that he lived.”

I look forward to the House passing this bill so it can be sent to the Governor. And I would call on Gov. Cooper to sign this bill that clarifies and strengthens the punishment for not providing care to a living, breathing newborn infant.

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

NC House District 86



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

The month of May has been a particularly busy at the General Assembly. Several deadlines for legislation to be introduced and for passage of certain bills in the House or Senate occurred in May. I would say that it was certainly one of the busiest times of the legislative calendar. Over 1200 bills have been introduced in the NC House of Representatives alone. Bills that pass the House are sent to the Senate. Bills that passed the Senate then go to the House. If a bill is approved by both House and Senate, it then goes to the Governor for his signature or veto.

I have been selective in only sponsoring 83 bills. Of these 83 bills, I am a primary sponsor of 23. In all that I sponsor and support, I am animated by the belief that government exists to protect our God-given natural rights. Government power over our individual lives should be limited as much as possible. However, we know that is not the world we live in. So, it requires vigilance to monitor the legislative process in the effort to limit encroachments appropriately. Thus, several of the bills I am supporting represent an effort to reclaim and expand personal choice in education, health care, public safety, and social services.

The legislature now moves on to crafting a budget that I am confident will continue our commitment to fiscal responsibility, staying within the parameters of population growth and inflation on spending, and continuing to carefully lower tax burdens. This year’s budget process starts with the Senate. The Senate will adopt a budget and submit it to the House. The House will respond with its own budget proposal. Senate and House then will appoint members to achieve a single budget document by resolving differences between the two. Once this is done, the budget is submitted to the governor. As you may recall, Governor Cooper vetoed the last budget. “Mini-budgets” were developed to address some issues on which the governor would agree. However, there were important issues left unresolved from the veto. It is certainly to be hoped the governor will decide to support this session’s new budget once it is finalized by the legislature. We continue to talk with his staff in hopes of arriving at a budget he will sign.

NC Senate District 46



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

It is hard to believe we are almost halfway through 2021. My wife and I have been enjoying weekend hikes in the cooler weather but with June arriving, western NC residents know to prepare for hotter days ahead.

In business taking place at the NC General Assembly, we are preparing for the release of the state’s biannual budget that this year originates in the NC Senate. As co-chair of the Senate Committees on Finance and Appropriations on Justice and Public Safety, I have been personally involved in preparing the JPS budget and formulating a robust tax reduction package that will continue to focus on responsible budgeting and the philosophy that taxpayer money belongs to the people who earned it, not to the government. The proposed Republican tax cut plan would reduce the personal income tax rate from 5.25% to 4.99% (It was 7.98% in 2010), increase the standard deduction from \$21,500 to \$25,500 (it was \$6000 in 2010), and increase the child tax deduction by \$500 to \$3000 per child. With these changes, a family of four would pay zero income tax on the first \$31,500 of income. These changes would be a 21% tax cut for a family of four earning the median household income of \$54,000. For the past decade, North Carolina has led the nation in tax reform policy under Republican leadership, and as a result, our state’s economy is booming and people and businesses are moving here at record levels. This is evidenced by the fact that NC was just allocated another congressional seat in the 2020 census. Our Democratic colleagues have often criticized Republican tax cuts saying that we won’t have enough money to operate the government. Yet our state revenues are at an all-time high and we have had strong budget surpluses for 6 of the past 7 years. North Carolina’s average teacher pay ranking has gone from 47th in the nation to 29th since 2011, and now our teachers have the second-highest average salary in the Southeast. Per pupil spending has also increased by 39% under Republican leadership. As we enter a new decade, I look forward to continuing the conservative philosophy of reducing taxes on our citizens, so that they -rather than state government- can keep and spend more of their own hard-earned money.



YOUR GOVERNMENT PAGES

NC House District 11



Rep. Madison Cawthorn
828-808-2148

I wanted to update you on what my team and I have accomplished this month:
From Washington:

Over the course of this month, I introduced and co-sponsored several important bills, including the Veterans Fellowship Act. This bill prioritizes our veterans and opens up new and unique pathways towards employment. This new fellowship program will build upon the success of other fellowship programs across the country. I am confident that it will empower unemployed veterans to find meaningful work in this post-COVID economy. There are immense benefits that will come from this legislation. It will give eligible veterans the ability to find relevant job experience while earning a necessary monthly stipend. I will always fight for our courageous veteran community in NC-11, and this bill is a bipartisan measure that puts veterans and their interests first. I am happy to report that the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs passed an amendment that includes this legislation I authored. Following the passage of this amendment out of the House Veteran Affairs Committee, the next step for this legislation will be a vote on the House floor!

I am proud to announce that I introduced the "Donument" Act on the House floor. This bill would protect the southern border wall built by President Trump by creating a "Southern Border Wall National Monument." This is the first step towards finishing the wall and protecting the longevity of our immigration security.

I also introduced H.R. 2389 on the House floor. This vital bill establishes a mental health framework to provide adequate mental health care to Capitol Police officers. Specifically, this bill prevents the Chief of the United States Capitol Police from retaliating or imposing "undue" disciplinary actions against officers who seek wellness services, including trauma counselors. It authorizes the USCP Chief to appoint a such number of trauma counselors as is necessary to maintain high morale and instructs the USCP administration to investigate the feasibility of outside vendors providing trauma counselors.

I co-sponsored Rep. Biggs's bill, the No Vaccine Passports Act. This act prevents a federal agency or a federal property from issuing or requiring a COVID-19 Vaccine Passport. COVID-19 passports have no place in our society and should not be mandated by the federal government. Our country needs less government control, not more.

I am proud to be an original co-sponsor of the Finish The Wall Act. This bill requires the Secretary of Homeland Security to FINISH THE WALL! This bill actively prevents the Secretary of Homeland Security from canceling border construction contracts. It requires that all appropriated funds sent to the wall are spent accordingly. The Finish The Wall Act requires the Secretary of Homeland Security to send a plan to Congress regarding the implementation of border wall system elements and technology. In addition, this bill also protects all agreements regarding the border wall with associated parties.

I was proud to join Rep. Perry as a co-sponsor of the WINGMAN Act. This bipartisan legislation will cut months of bureaucracy, so veteran advocates can support our veterans with claims in the Department of Veterans Affairs. This bill will help our heroic NC-11 veterans get the support they deserve.

This month I also signed various letters alongside my colleagues to address several topics relevant to NC-11. I joined my colleagues in writing to Speaker Pelosi, who invited President Biden to deliver his first Joint Address to Congress on a day when the House isn't even in Washington. We requested the joint address be rescheduled to a day when all Members of Congress can be present.

I signed an important letter requesting the Biden Admin to eliminate the records request backlog at the National Personnel Records Center. These requests come from veterans and their families who need these records to attain essential resources. Our veterans need our support. Absent these records, veterans and their families cannot receive COVID-19 vaccinations, GI Bill education benefits, V.A. loans, medical benefits, burial benefits, disability compensation, life insurance, and other resources. I urged the Biden Administration to address this issue immediately.

I also signed a letter to the Director of the CDC requesting they provide us with info regarding how they concluded that children ages 2+ should wear face masks to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Children have difficulties with wearing masks, especially those with disabilities. The evidence indicates that there is a lower risk of contraction and spread of COVID-19 amongst children. My constituents shouldn't have to be mandated to force a mask on their young children. The families of NC-11 deserve answers to these questions.

I was also proud to join my colleagues in writing to Secretary Vilsack regarding his decision to cancel the Farmers to Families Food Box Program. This program was created with bipartisan funds to help our agriculture supply chain and provide food for vulnerable populations during the pandemic. We urge Secretary Vilsack to continue the Farmers to Families Food Box Program, an essential program in my district. This program supports farmers in NC-11 who provide food and support to our communities who are in need.

I joined my colleagues in writing to Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy opposing the use of two tax provisions that would undermine the financial security of American families, small businesses, farmers, and ranchers in NC-11 and America. These harmful provisions must not be implemented. I also signed a letter to Biden demanding he permits states to claim much-needed tax reductions. Biden's American Rescue Plan unfairly infringes on the ability of North Carolina businesses to operate.

I also joined my colleagues in sending a letter to Sen. Schumer and Leader McConnell regarding the anti-2A Biden nominee for the ATF, David Chipman. The Director of ATF shouldn't be a career gun-control activist and lobbyist. The nominee should DEFEND our Second Amendment rights, not act with his personal bias to attack the Second Amendment and disarm law-abiding Americans.

I was proud to have joined Rep. Dan Bishop urging our North Carolina Governor not to institute a vaccine passport in North Carolina. My NC-11 constituents' constitutionally protected liberties must not be infringed. Vaccine passports are political tools that my constituents want no part of.

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By Joe Sturz
Shenandoah, Virginia



How can sinful man fellowship with God who is holy and just? God's holy justice requires that He must punish sinful men for such things as cursing, lying, thinking lustful thoughts, stealing, etc., etc.

(Exodus 20:3-17; Matthew 5:28). Who has not done these things and is therefore separated from His holy presence? (Romans 3:23). To be allowed to be in His presence and fellowship with Him we must never have sinned (Deuteronomy 32:4). But we have all sinned and are so justly condemned to death in eternal separation from Him and His heaven (Isaiah 53:6; Romans 3:10-23).

God the Father in His mercy and grace sent His only begotten Son to remedy this situation by providing a way for Father God to be merciful and fellowshiping with Him without violating His justice (John 3:16). God cannot just be merciful by ignoring our sin as that would violate His justice (Job 34:12). So God sent His only Son to:

- fulfill God's law (Matthew 5:17-18) by living a sinless life (I Peter 2:21-25) of perfect obedience (Hebrews 5:8-9) and
- be put to death on the cross (Philippians 2:7-8) in place of sinners (Romans 5:6-8) who believe (John 3:16; I Thessalonians 4:14) even though He never sinned and did not deserve death (II Cor. 5:21).

Oh the wonder of God's undeserved favor in sending His only begotten Son to save us from our sin and come into fellowship and spend eternity with Him! (Ephesians 2:6-9) So let us come to Him in repentance of our sin and trusting in God the Son, Jesus Christ for securing our salvation (I John 1:9). Praising and worshipping the triune God of the Bible (Psalm 150:1-61; Mat. 28:19; Acts 2:47) that does all things well (Ecclesiastes 3:14; Mark 7:37).

Brother Joe "fellowshipping with God" Sturz [Tue., May 11, 2021]




Sharing what the Lord has taught me through His Word, my mistakes, failures, and successes, and 47+ years as a Biblical counselor in my short, daily Bible messages on my Facebook Timeline. nd Sturz Christian Counseling Group Seeking to apply all of the Bible to all of life. You can look on my website for my "Workbook for Couples" www.sturzchristiancounseling.com and prepares singles for marriage as well.

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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Burke County Public Schools

Chartwells K12 New Cafeteria Program Promotes Food Sustainability

By Bethany Collier
Burke County

Burke County Public Schools and Chartwells K12 support food sustainability with a new program called the Piggy Bank that feeds local pigs food waste from school cafeterias. Marty Browning, a pig farmer in Nebo, picks up leftovers from the cafeteria line each Friday at schools in western Burke County. The food slated for Browning’s pigs cannot be donated to local nonprofits or shelters because the food is not sealed or packaged.

Daniel Wall, director of BCPS Child Nutrition, said, “We really appreciate Marty taking the extra food from the cafeterias. Before we just had to dump the food into landfills, so this is a way of making our school system more sustainable by giving the animals something to eat and also teaching the kids about sustainability.”

BCPS Interim Superintendent Dr. Mike Swan said, “This new partnership with Mr. Browning is a great way for our cafeterias to make a positive impact on the environment. We’re also glad we can help a local farmer keep his livestock fed. This is an amazing new avenue for the school system to take to become more environmentally friendly.”

In the future, BCPS cafeterias plan to expand the program to include student participation. There will be a separate disposal bin, the Piggy Bank, at the trash cans designated for food waste to go to Browning’s farm.

Browning is one of the only farmers in western North Carolina the USDA has licensed in its garbage feeding program. To be licensed, Browning has to agree to allow the USDA to regulate his practices to ensure the pigs are eating appropriately. This includes cooking the food waste to a certain temperature and cooling it before the pigs can consume the product. An inspector visits his farm to test pigs’ blood to make sure they are healthy.

Browning said “I really want to thank Mr. Wall and the Burke County Child Nutrition Program for their consideration in my effort of feeding pigs and for donating garbage to the program. I appreciate the USDA for allowing me to be a part of the program for 30 plus years.”

Bethany Collier is a child nutrition marketing specialist at Burke County Public Schools.



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Does It Really Matter?

By Dan Qurollo
Burke County



We live in a pragmatic society in which individuals believe that the end justifies the means. Those holding to this philosophy regard the means as irrelevant as long as it produces something that is perceived to be good. Therefore, stealing may be justified in certain settings as may lying and many other sins the Bible condemns. This faulty philosophy stems from the idea that truth is relative instead of absolute. By regarding the truth as relative, individuals are free to create their own standard by which to live. The standard for one may be different from the standard of another, but both may be right, even if both are contradictory. Logica says that two contradictory ideas cannot both be right, though they might both be wrong. Does the end justify the means? The Bible clearly teaches and illustrates that such a philosophy is wrong and must be avoided.

During the reign of Saul, the ark of the covenant was foolishly taken into battle as though it were a good luck charm. Israel was defeated, and the ark was captured by the Philistines. After God judged them, they determined to send it back to the nation of Israel. But it was David who determined that it needed to be returned to its rightful place in Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6, 1 Chronicles 13). That which he desired to do was a good thing. In fact, we would most likely commend him for taking this initiative.

David consulted with 30,000 chosen men, and they determined to bring the ark back to Jerusalem. To facilitate it, they got a brand new cart – after all, it was the ark of the covenant. They took great care as they began making their way back to Jerusalem in what must have been an impressive procession. There was great celebration as the ark was being returned to Jerusalem.

The festive tone suddenly changed when they entered the threshing floor owned by Nachon. There, the oxen stumbled slightly, causing the cart to shake. To steady the ark, Uzza touched the ark of the covenant, and God immediately struck him dead. The Bible teaches that David was displeased with what God had done (2 Samuel 6:8). To David, God acted unjustly. Rather than continuing the journey, they took it to a man's house named Obedom where it remained for three months.

The problem was not in the fact that David desired to return the ark to its rightful place in Jerusalem. The problem was in the method he chose to transport the ark. God said it was to be carried by the Levites. Although David placed it on a new cart, that mode of transportation was not what God had instructed. When they went to get the ark from Obedom three months later, David had a much different perspective. David gathered the Levites and acknowledged that they "sought him [God] not after the due order" (1 Chronicles 15:13).

Does the end justify the means? David ignored the means of transporting the ark, and it cost the life of Uzzah. Whenever you are tempted to consider a particular method, learn from the example of David and consult God through the Word of God and prayer. Be assured, God will never lead you in a manner that contradicts His Word.

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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The Orchard at Altapass

Orchard At Altapass Open

By Kate Groff
Mitchell County

The Orchard at Altapass is open for the 2021 season. The honeybees are buzzing, trees rustling in the wind, barn swallows swooping, and sounds of many feet on the old wood floors in the red barn echoing through the building. Staff are busily at work in the General Store, smiling and helping visitors. The crew's the in the fields with mowers and weed eaters. This year, the model train will stay on track to completion; kids' activities will continue to entertain and educate; local crafts will entice, and new products will keep the shelves filled while our hot-from-the-oven apple pie (with or without ice cream) and Linda's fresh fudge work to fill visitors' stomachs. In a few weeks, they will be joined by Mr. Bob's turnovers and 'uglies', and fried apple pies from the Farmer's Wife. More hives are arriving; the nursery is growing as are the adopted trees from last year; new peach saplings planted; blueberries going from spindly to spectacular; blossoms dropped and replaced by the greenest of leaves, and still the swallows "stake their claims" to rafters in the pavilion, back deck, and front porch.

Protocols remain and will be followed, but the Orchard has stopped holding its breath and is exhaling into a new season of mission-driven programs and music for the people. In less than a month, two long-time friends of the Orchard and well-known musicians start the free-to-all music season. Sam McKinney returns to the "stage" in the Olin Hefner Pavilion on June 5, from 2:30 to 4:30 PM. Randy Flack follows on Sunday, the 6th, same time, same space. This season's musicians are playing in an ersatz venue—roofed but outdoors, with limited sound systems, and limited space. It's all temporary—a precursor to the renovations that will start on the pavilion later in the season.

The Orchard is a non-profit working orchard, educational and cultural venue. Hours are 10 AM to 5 PM, Saturday and Sunday through the end of the month, Wednesday-Sunday, June through October 31. For more details, please visit www.altapassorchard.org, our Facebook page, or email information@altapassorchard.org. Last year, we entered our second quarter-century at the red barn with as much dedication and determination to “Save the Good Stuff” as on that first day. Those convictions continue this year. Be prepared to enjoy the people, music, art, and natural beauty of the Blue Ridge Mountains in Western North Carolina. People friendly. Pet friendly. Easy to get to, hard to leave.

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



Walnut Grove Church

It's in the Valleys I Grow

By Kurt Bomar
Avery County

I have had the privilege of ministering in the Avery Mitchell Prison every month for over 10 years. With the COVID virus epidemic, all volunteer activities at the prison have been suspended until further notice. I look forward to the time I can “have church” again in the prison.

About 10% of the prison population attends church there regularly. I have seen God's grace change lives there. Many are actually thankful they are there because they say that it was there that they met Jesus. Were it not for their incarceration, many say, they would still be lost or dead. I recently was given this poem written by one of the inmates which touch on this concept beautifully. I hope it blesses you.

It's in the Valleys I Grow

Sometimes life seems hard to bear, full sorrow, trouble, and woe. It's then I have to remember, that it's in the valleys I grow.
If I only stayed on the mountaintop and never experienced pain, I would never appreciate infinite love and would be living my life in vain.
I have so much to learn and my growth is very slow. Sometimes I need the mountain tops but it's in the valleys I grow.
I do not always understand why things happen as they do, but I'm very sure of one thing-- my Lord will see me through.
My little valleys are nothing when I picture Christ on the cross. He went through the valley of death. His victory was Satan's loss.
Forgive me Lord, for complaining when I'm feeling so very low. Just give me a gentle reminder that it's in the valleys I grow.
Written by R.L., a current inmate at AMCI

If you would be interested in volunteering at one of our two prisons, contact me. Now would be a great time to go through the screening process then be ready to go when they re-open. Contact me at 941-468-7809 or kurtbomar@hotmail.com.

Kurt Bomar is pastor of Walnut Grove Church.



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HOT DOGS

Crossword

Crossword 267 and Solution
ACROSS
1 We have mortgaged our ____, vineyards, and houses (Neh 5:3)
6 unto the rings of the ephod with a ____ of blue (Exod 28:28) (KJV)
10 raised up Jesus, whom ye ____ and hanged on a tree (Acts 5:30) KJV
14 I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to ____ authority over the (1 Tim 2:12) KJV
15 they exchanged silver, ____, tin and lead for your merchandise (Ezek 27:12)
16 Fall on us and ____ us from the face of him who sits (Rev 6:16)
17 John tried to ____ him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you (Matt 3:14)
18 made the hearts of the people ____ with fear (Josh 14:8)
19 Then Nebuchadnezzar in his ____ and fury commanded (Daniel 3:13)
20 Do not be proud, but be willing to ____ with people of low position (Rom 12:16)
22 Tell the Israelites to bring you ____ heifer without defect (1,3) (Num 19:2)
23 to ____ their own desires, they will gather around them (2 Tim 4:3)
24 So he ____ ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him (Luke 19:4)
26 They hammered out thin ____ of gold and cut strands (Ex 39:3)
29 they hid in caves and ____, among the rocks, and in pits (1 Sam 13:6)
34 if we ask anything according to his will, he ____ us (1 John 5:14-15)
35 O LORD, save us; O LORD, ____ us success (Ps 118:25)
36 Because you said " ____ " over my sanctuary when it was (Ezek 25:3)
37 for an image of a bull, which ____ grass (Ps 106:20)
38 Let us not become weary in ____ good (Gal 6:8-9)
39 Do not ____ because of evil men or be envious of the wicked (Prov 24:19)
40 the serpent beguiled ____ through his subtilty (2 Cor 11:3)
41 the siege of Jerusalem and with ____ arm prophesy against her (Ezek 4:7)
42 the ____ forest has been cut down (Zech 11:2)
43 the recompence of a man's hands shall be ____ unto him (Prov 12:14) KJV
45 will never enter their minds or be remembered; it will not be ____ (Jer 3:16)

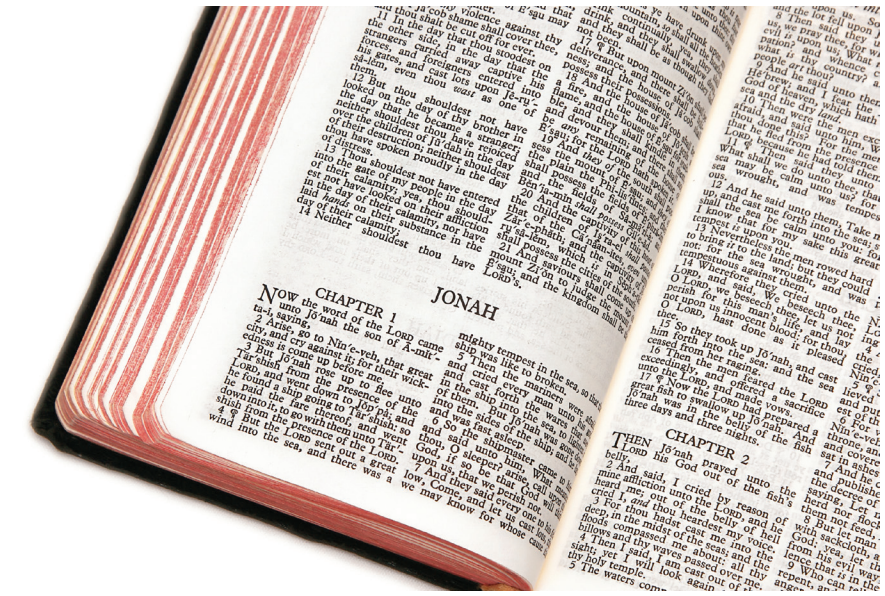
46 I wrote them with ____ in the book (Jer 36:18)
47 The ____ of Pharaoh's officers are drowned in the Red Sea. (Exodus 15:4)
48 Take heed that ye do not your ____ before men (Matt 6:1) KJV
51 A tale or a story (Luke 1:1) NKJV
56 wife of Jacob (Gen 29:23)
57 brother of Jacob (Gen 25:25-26)
58 Samuel took ____ of oil, and poured it upon (1,4) (1 Sam 10:1) KJV
60 for a pittance, gaining nothing from their ____ (Ps 44:12)
61 the One who ____ enthroned on high (Ps 113:5)
62 dishonest scales, with a bag of ____ weights (Micah 6:11)
63 for your little ____, and for your wives (Gen 45:19)
64 down to his feet and with a golden ____ around his chest (Rev.1:13)
65 Jehoshaphat built a ____ of trading ships to go to Ophir (1 Kings 22:48)
DOWN
1 The sons of Shem: Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, ____ (Gen 10:22)
2 was what looked like ____ of glass, clear as crystal (1,3) (Rev 4:6)
3 some pistachio ____ and almonds (Gen 43:11-12)
4 husbandmen also, and vine ____ in the mountains (2 Chron 26:10) KJV
5 the seed ____ and grows, though he does not know how (Mark 4:27)
6 they always heap up their sins to the ____ (1Thes 2:16)
7 He traveled through that ____, speaking many words of (Acts 20:2)
8 brought the ass, and the ____, and put on them (Matt 21:7) (KJV)
9 to prevent anyone from leaving or ____ the territory of Asa (1 Kings 15:17)
10 contracted, reduced, shrivelled (Gen 32:32) KJV
11 let God be true, but every man a ____ (Romans 3:4)
12 They begged him to let them touch even the ____ of his cloak (Mark 6:56)
13 they will ____ out of his kingdom everything that causes sin (Matt 13:41)
21 God gave unto them Saul the son of ____ (Acts 13:21) KJV
25 God who works in you to will and to ____ according to his good purpose (Phil 2:13)
26 this message will bring ____ terror (Isa 28:19)
27 your tithes, and ____ offerings of your hand

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(Deut 12:6)
28 figs, which are so bad they cannot be ____, says the LORD (Jer 24:8)
29 Again they ____ to seize him, but he escaped (John 10:39)
30 Whatsoever thy ____ findeth to do, do it with thy might (Eccles 9:10) KJV
31 The wicked man ____ deceptive wages (Prov 11:18)
32 For ____ commands are a lamp, this teaching is a light (Prov 6:23)
33 He has filled me with bitter herbs and ____ me with gall (Lam 3:15)
35 the horns of a wild ox. With them he will ____ the nations (Deut 33:17)
38 O LORD, keep my lamp burning; my God turns my ____ into light (Ps 18:28)
39 judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious ____ (Col 2:16)
41 ``son of`` in Hebrew
42 The staff on which wool or flax is wound before spinning (Prov 31:19) KJV

44 make its plates and ____ of pure gold (Ex 25:29)
45 Jesus said to her, "Will you give ____ drink?" (2,1) (John 4:7)
47 In the ____ they gathered salt herbs, and their food was the root (Job 30:4)
48 Forgive us our debts, as we ____ have forgiven our debtors (Matt 6:12)
49 the LORD with all your heart and ____ not on your own understanding (Prov 3:5)
50 one ram and one ____ lamb (Num 7:15)
52 John to the seven churches which are in ____ : Grace be unto you (Rev 1:4)
53 Five gold tumors and five gold ____ (1 Sam 6:4)
54 Who shall change our ____ body, that it may be (Phil 3:21)
55 Men at ____ have contempt for misfortune (Job 12:5)
59 He trusted in God; ____ him deliver him now (Matt 27:43)

Solution on page 14



Walking in the Light

By Dr. Tom Walker
McDowell County



1 John 1:6-7 says, “*If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*”

In the two verses we have read, John draws a contrast between walking in darkness and walking in the light. Have you ever sought to go out on a dark night, with no flashlight, and try to find your way through the darkness and its dangers? It is so much better to do your outside movement when it is daylight. You can see so much better when there is light to help you move from place to place.

Just like in John’s day, some people say they are in fellowship with God but are walking in darkness. When you walk in darkness, you are living in such a way that you rarely think about God at all. And if you do think about Him, you do not think of Him as light in whom there is no darkness at all. When we claim to be a member of a church we are saying, “We have fellowship with God.” Some may try to present that picture when it is not true in their lives.

When we walk in darkness or sin, we are walking in the wrong atmosphere. The kingdom of darkness is one that has a king. The Scriptures tell us there are two kingdoms in this world. There is the kingdom of God and the kingdom of evil, the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness, the kingdom of holiness and the kingdom of sin.

When we are born into this world, we are brought under the kingdom of darkness. That kingdom represents everything this is opposed to God, His holiness and perfection, plus, everything that is in opposition to His plan and His purpose.

The only way to get into the kingdom of light is to know the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. Jesus said something in John 12:26 we dare not miss. In John 12:46

Jesus said, “*I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.*”

It is your choice whether you will remain in darkness, or whether you will find a new way of life by knowing Christ as Lord and Savior. Sometimes in life, we make wrong choices, but when it comes to eternal life, you had better not make the wrong choice. It is of the utmost importance that you receive the Light of the World, the Lord Jesus Christ, so darkness can be dispelled from your life.

What does “walking in the light” involve?

The Consideration of a Person

When we think of walking in the light we think of Christ. Jesus said, “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” (John 8:12). Maybe when Christ spoke these words, the sun may have been rising, so in light of that, He compared himself to the rising sun. To the Jew, the sun was a symbol of Jehovah's God. I John 1:5 says, “*God is light.*”

No one can walk in the light unless they have established a personal relationship with the right person, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the darkness-removing person. The way to cure the darkness of the soul without Christ is to let His light shine brightly into our lives.

Light reveals dirt and dust. Look at one of your windows when bright sunlight is making its way into the house and you will see the dust floating through the air, which you did not realize was present. When the light of Christ shines, the wickedness of man is revealed.

Christ is a darkness dispelling person. In describing the believer, the apostle Paul said, “*For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light*” (Eph.5:8). Our darkness is seen as something that is a past condition and not a present one. The entrance of the light of Christ drives the darkness away. According to the Scripture, “*Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light*” (1 Peter 2:9).

Christ is a delightful person. There is no one exactly like Him in the whole universe. The Bible calls Him “above all” (John 3:31). There is not another person who has lived, who is living now, or who will live that could rightly say they are above Him. Christ is the highest of the high.

Christ is a dependable person. He is many times called “faithful” in the Word of God (I Cor.1:9; I Cor.10:13; I Thess. 5:21; 2 Thess.3:3; Heb.11:11; I Jn.1:9; Rev.1:5). A recognition of and a resignation to Jesus is essential to walking in the light.

The Co-operation with the Word

Remember the man by the name of Enoch in Genesis 5? According to Gen.5:24, he walked with the Lord; he was walking in the light.

When the Lord told Enoch He was going to take him from the earth, from his friends and loved ones, from his earthly responsibilities, there is no evidence he argued with the Lord about it. He could have said, “Now Lord, I would love to go and be with you in Heaven, but I just don’t want to leave my friends and loved ones on the earth. Don’t take me now. Just wait until a little bit later.” There is no evidence that is what had happened. He no doubt was willing to co-operate with the desires of the Lord for his life.

When one walks in the light, he or she is willing to and is cooperating with God’s plan. It suggests an adherence to the demands and commands of God’s word.

In the Psalms, the Bible says, “*The entrance of thy words giveth light, it giveth understanding to the simple*”(Psalm 119:130).

Know what it says? Some people claim they know what the Bible says but they cannot point you to a verse or passage, rightly divided, that proves their point. Darkness is a result of not being influenced enough with the light the Scriptures give.

A lady on one occasion said to the people who visited her in the home, “I know what the Bible says.”

She was asked, “Could you quote me a verse you have memorized?”

Her response was, “The verse I know best is the one that says every tub sits on its own bottom.” The problem with what she said is, those words are not found in the Bible.

Believe what it says. Hearing the word of God is to be mixed with faith. We will not act on what the Bible tells us to do unless we have faith in it as the inspired, inerrant, infallible, preserved Word of God. Faith leads to action.

Act on what it says. Those who walk in the light are those who do not just hear what the Bible has to say, but who put those truths to practice in their own lives. James 1:22-25 says, “*But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.*” The person who acts on the truths the Bible says has an increasing degree of light in their lives. They radiate their relationship with the Lord Jesus.

The Confession of Sins

1 John 1:7-9 tells us, “*But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*”

When it comes to sin, we are to keep a short account with the Lord. When we do sin, to keep from dimming the light in our lives, we need to deal with it immediately. Sin does not break our relationship with God, once we have been saved, but it does hinder our fellowship with God.

Agree with God. To “confess” comes from two Greek words that mean to “say the same thing about something.” When God points out our sin, there is no need to argue with Him, if we want to walk in the light as He is in the light.

Thirst after God. Those that have the most spiritual light inwardly, are those who have an intense thirst for God. Christ in the beatitudes said, “*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled*” (Matt.5:6).

Live to please God. Jesus said, “*The Father hath not left me alone, for I do always those things that please Him*” (John 8:29). If we live our lives to please Him, then we will experience all the light we need to make it through the darkness of this world.

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

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