



# BLUE RIDGE CHRISTIAN NEWS



## Mt. Carmel Baptist Church

### “At A Moment’s Notice”

By Toby Crowder  
McDowell County

1 Peter 3:15 “*But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:*”



Levi Sawyer... John Hawks... James Goodwin... Asa Rugg... Joel Phinney... Do any of those names ring a bell? These are the names of only a few of the Revolutionary minutemen that served our country. Although many of their names are not well-known today, civilian colonists called “minutemen” comprised about a fourth of the militias during the time of the Revolutionary War. These men were selected from militia muster rolls by their commanding officers and were typically young men who were chosen for their enthusiasm, reliability, and physical strength. They were expected to be ready to assemble and serve at a moment’s notice, hence their designation and title.

I will admit, I am starting to feel the effects of my age and I am not so sure that I can be ready for anything (other than a meal) at a moment’s notice, but when I read the verse above, the minutemen are what immediately came to my mind. As the children of God, we should be ready at moment’s notice to tell others about the HOPE that is in us. We see God’s “minutemen” all throughout Scripture, but I would like to focus briefly on the Apostle Paul and his ministry.

In the opening chapter of Romans, we hear Paul make what has become a very popular statement on the Gospel, and basically lays out the theme of Romans ... the Gospel of Christ. Verse 16 says “*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*” Paul was letting them know upfront that he was unashamed of the good news of Jesus Christ! The good news of the Gospel has not changed since Jesus’ day...and this is what we accept and believe by faith for salvation.

Consider all the great opportunities that Paul had to share the Gospel. In Acts 25 & 26 we see him before rulers such as Felix and Agrippa, yet when given the chance to speak, Paul did not argue or complain, he only spoke to them about

the good news of his testimony and the Gospel that he proclaimed! The audience did not seem to matter to Paul, because the subject was always the same. Wherever and whenever he had the chance, he wanted to talk about Jesus and was not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ!

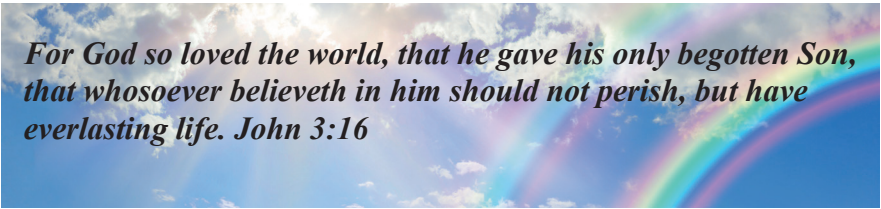
Paul was unashamed to BELIEVE this Gospel. Many in this day do not want to believe the message of the Gospel. They are ashamed to admit that they are lost, separated by their sins from God, and need a Savior. When Paul stood before Agrippa in Acts 26, he was not ashamed to recount how that the Lord had saved Him on the Damascus Road. Are we willing to tell others how we came to believe the Gospel and share with them our salvation experience?

Paul was also unashamed to CONFESS the Gospel. Everywhere he went in his travels, the message was the same.... Jesus! Are we being consistent with the message that we are sharing with the world? Are we ready at a moment’s notice to confess to the world this Gospel that we believe? Jesus told His disciples in Mark 8:38 “*Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.*”

And finally, Paul was unashamed to SPREAD the Gospel. In the preceding verse (Rom 1:15) Paul says “*So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.*” Paul had surrendered to the ministry of the Lord and was bold in his work for Him as he spread this glorious Gospel. This is the place that a lot of Christians stop because it means we must deny ourselves and our desires and overcome the fears of sharing our faith.

In a world that so desperately needs to hear the good news of the Gospel, may we each heed the words of 1 Peter 3:15 and be ready “*at moment’s notice*” to share our faith!

*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*



***For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. John 3:16***



# What We Believe

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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BLUE RIDGE CHRISTIAN NEWS

**Publisher/Co-editor** – Brian Barrier  
828-413-0506  
brianb@brcnews.com  
**Office Manager/Co-editor** – Cathy Pritchard  
828-765-6800  
cathyp@brcnews.com  
**Sales:**  
Brian Barrier  
828-413-0506  
brianb@brcnews.com  
**Church Directory:**  
Brian Barrier  
828-765-6800  
brianb@brcnews.com

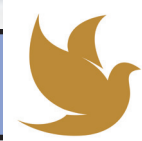
**Distribution:**  
Deborah Slagle  
Doug Braswell  
Amanda Silver  
Sherri Hutchins  
Sid Houk  
**Graphic Design / Layout**  
Lynn Yaccarino  
lynny@brcnews.com  
**Blue Ridge Christian News**  
261 Oak Ave.  
Spruce Pine, NC 28777  
Office – 828-765-6800  
Fax – 828-766-9157

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

Isaiah 52:7 KJV



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# Church Directory



## Bear Creek Baptist Church

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

### Reverend Bruce Cannon

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

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

## Landis Orthodox Presbyterian Church

4975 US 221  
Marion NC 28972  
(828)-756-7470  
[www.landischurch.org](http://www.landischurch.org)

### Elder Mike Cloy

[opcmikecloy@gmail.com](mailto:opcmikecloy@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](http://www.berrychapelbaptist.com)

### Pastor - Steve Williams

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

Where Everybody is Somebody  
And Jesus Christ is Lord!

## The Rock Church

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

### Pastor - Billy Chapman

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

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Tent Revival 2020

## Grassy Creek Baptist Church

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

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

## Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church

2187 Jamestown Road  
Morganton, NC  
828-584-8212

### Pastor Steve Beitz

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

## Altapass Baptist Church

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

### Dr. Marcus R. Benfield

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

"A Christ-Centered,  
Bible Believing Church"

## Plumtree Presbyterian Church

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

### Pastor Ryan Bridgeo

[pastor@plumtreechurch.com](mailto:pastor@plumtreechurch.com)

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

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

## Pleasant Hill Baptist Church

2396 Enola Road  
Morganton, NC 28655  
(828) 437-4082  
[www.pleasanthillbc.church](http://www.pleasanthillbc.church)

### Senior Pastor Dr. Jack Hodges

Sunday School: 9:30 am  
Sunday Worship: 10:30 am  
Sunday Evening: 6:00 pm  
Wednesday Evening 6:00 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](http://www.newlandchristianchurch.com)

### Pastor - Phillip Greene

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

"A Local Congregation of Christ's Church"

## Burkemont Baptist Church

4668 Burkemont Rd.  
Morganton, NC 28655  
828-437-2357

For more information,  
please visit  
[www.burkemontbaptist.org](http://www.burkemontbaptist.org)

### Dr. Luke A. Lane

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

## Marion Seventh-day Adventist Church

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

### Pastor Tim Sheridan

Sabbath (Saturday)  
Bible Study - 9:15 am  
Sabbath Worship - 10:50 am  
Reaching the World with the Everlasting  
Gospel of Jesus Christ!  
[www.marionnc.adventistchurch.org](http://www.marionnc.adventistchurch.org)

## First Baptist Church of Spruce Pine

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

### Dr. Rocky Branch Senior Pastor

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

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

## Pine Branch Baptist Church

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

### Reverend Bobby Joe Greene

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

A Bible-believing Fellowship  
Loving God and Loving People



## Spruce Pine United Methodist Church

11090 Hwy. 226 South  
Spruce Pine, NC 28777  
[www.sprucepineumc.org](http://www.sprucepineumc.org)  
[spumc3@bellsouth.net](mailto:spumc3@bellsouth.net)  
828-765-7446

### Pastor Richard Schilling

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

The mission of Spruce Pine United  
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Our Republic: Can We Keep It?  
So Far, We're Losing It

By Rev. Mark Creech

The story has been told and retold. It's been said that Benjamin Franklin had just walked outside of Independence Hall after the Constitutional Convention in 1787 when someone inquired, "Doctor, what have we got? A republic or a monarchy?" Franklin is said to have responded: "A republic, if you can keep it."

Historians say the quote actually doesn't appear in Franklin's writings, nor was it ever recorded as such in newspaper accounts of his day. According to the Washington Post, it first appeared in 1906 in the American Historical Review. "The Review was publishing for the first time the notes of James McHenry, a Maryland Delegate to the Constitutional Convention. The notes are both more and less specific than the legend," claims the Post.

The story is intriguing, and I see no reason to doubt its historicity or render it as a legend. It also appears in numerous other works. What seems most important is the question believed to have been attributed to Franklin. It asks every generation of Americans: Can we keep this great Republic?

In a speech by Mark Steyn at Hillsdale College and published by Hillsdale's Imprimis, Steyn laments "Our Increasingly Unrecognizable Civilization." He mourns three essential things our Republic has lost: equality before the law, border control, and honest elections.

He notes how a policeman shot a young woman threatening the life of another woman with a knife. Unfortunately, the officer's identity was released to the public for vilification. Yet another policeman shot an unarmed woman in the U.S. Capitol building on January 6, and his identity is protected.

America currently has no southern border, says Steyn, and no plan to get one. Moreover, "dare I bring up the fact that it is a real question whether we can go back to agreeing to have open and honest elections," he asks. "If we don't have open and honest elections, control of our borders, and equality before the law, then we don't have the conditions for politics or free government."

Steyn speaks truth, hard truth! But he didn't stop there; he went on to talk about much more. He seemed especially concerned about "the escalation of so-called wokeness," as he put it.

Here's what he said about that issue: "If you look at one of the most startling manifestations of this, transgender fanaticism – which involves, after all, the abolition of biological sex and, I'm sorry to have to say it, the physical mutilation of children – one notices that America is farther down this road than any other country in the Western world. In other words, at this moment of crisis for Western Civilization, or for what we used to call Christendom, the leading country of the free world is pulling the wrong way.

"Think of it. Your daughter has been training since she was a little girl to run in school sports. Now at 17, she's in the state high school track championships, and you are forbidden even to notice that she's competing against a woman who is 6'2 with thighs like tugboats, a great touch of five-o'clock shadow on her face, and the most muscular bosom you've ever seen. You're not supposed to notice the craziness of this, and the craziness is at its craziest right here in America.

"We traditionally think of France as being a bit screwy, but today there are French intellectuals who regard themselves as hardcore leftists and yet who think America has gone bonkers on this transgender issue. President Macron himself has said that American wokeness is an existential threat to the French Republic, and he even found bureaucrats in France's education bureaucracy who agreed. There is not a single bureaucrat in the Department of Education in Washington, D.C. who would agree, but there are apparently a few in Paris."

Steyn adds that other countries further east in Europe: Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic fear the exportation of America's foolish wokeness.

"But again, even most of our conservative leaders and institutions seem oblivious," Steyn concludes.

He is so right. Never have I read anyone who speaks with more clarity about the danger this nation is facing.

This year in the North Carolina General Assembly, lawmakers were unwilling to seriously take up the Save Women's Sports Act, legislation that would have prohibited male students that attend public schools from participating in sports designated for females. The leadership wouldn't even allow a vote on the bill in committee. But they are taking-up, and even voting on a measure for so-called medicinal marijuana - a proposal which, if it passes - will undoubtedly give our youth the impression there is something good about the harmful drug and ultimately lead to the passage of recreational marijuana. Surely, that's what we need to focus on - opening Pandora's box for another ruinous legal intoxicant.

I think this kind of prioritizing by our leaders – this failure to discern between good and evil – what's urgent and what isn't – begs the question of whether we really can keep this Republic.

Perhaps what we ought to do this July 4 is to skip the barbecues, the beaches, that trip to our favorite vacation spot, and even the fireworks. America is in terrible trouble! Instead, we should fill our churches to pray this isn't our last Independence Day.

So sorry to be a killjoy, but all the signs are clear. We are losing this Republic.

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



The Beauty of Dull

By Marlene Houk

Burke County

*But 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*

Wandering into the cathedral quiet of Leviticus, the third book of the Bible, I stared at the lofty ceilings. The priceless murals spread in rich biblical scenes for the length of the room, and top shelves overflowed with rules and rights. Within reach were the beautifully illustrated volumes that connected Leviticus to the New Testament—at least 20 "books" with gilt edging that glimmered in the soft lights.

Studying Leviticus reminded me of my visit to the oldest university in Ireland called Trinity College. The vaulted Long Room, one of the library buildings, is over 200 feet in length and contains around 200,000 of the rarest books. The architecture is stunning, and I could have happily lived there.

Beautiful Design

Leviticus is like Trinity College Library—a priceless treasure for which we waited an hour to enter our scheduled tour. The third book of the Bible opens up its beauty and holy chambers that offer me an exclusive journey like no other section of the Bible.

While I would normally seek the drama of Esther or the practical life hacks of the book of Ruth, my assignment was Leviticus 25:1-22 for a recent writing challenge. I discovered, to my delight, the chiasitic structure that adds harmony, clarity, and emphasis to the whole book. I immersed myself in the harmony of the literary structure. According to <https://literarydevices.net/>, a chiasmus is: "a rhetorical device in which two or more clauses are balanced against each other by the reversal of their structures to produce an artistic effect" (An example is: "Never let a Fool Kiss You or a Kiss Fool You."). This literary device helps clarify the complicated regulations of Leviticus. Indeed, one scholar considered Leviticus the mother-lode of chiasitic structure, and that alone pulled me back into the book.

Communication Skills

Leviticus means called out. It's all about communication says Rabbi Elyse Goldstein, a rabbi, and author from Toronto, Ontario, Canada. We, as Christians, are called to extend the Gospel to the world as explained in Matthew 28:19-20. And who today does not need more communication skills in this hyper-sensitive word-driven society of ours? Studying how God interacts with His chosen people will help us polish our engagement skills with others.

- Linked
- While some may try to overlook the stunning architecture or the practical holiness of Leviticus, the unmistakable repetitions and references in the New Testament (ranging from 20 to 39 according to the interpretation of the original language) prove its relevance to us today.
1. We are called, thousands of years later, to be holy as the Israelites were instructed (Leviticus 11:44 compared to 1 Peter 1:16).
  2. We are told to love our neighbor, and this does not change from Leviticus to today (Leviticus 19:18 compared to Mark 12:31).
  3. God walks with us through life. This was true for the Israelites, and it is true for Christians today (Leviticus 26:12 compared to 2 Corinthians 6:16).
  4. As saved sons and daughters, we are a priestly people, a precious connection to the Levitical priesthood in the third book of the Bible (Leviticus, chapters 8-9 compared to 1 Peter 2:9).
  5. Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament sacrificial system described in Leviticus, and this helps us to understand his life, ministry, and death. (Leviticus, chapters 1-7 compared to the Gospels). (from <https://bible.org/seriespage/1-learning-love-leviticus>)

How relevant Leviticus is to us today!

Go, enter the hallowed halls of Leviticus, and enjoy its beauty and connection to us today. As I immersed myself in the grandeur of Trinity College's Library in Ireland, I realized that the rare books, donated by countries and individuals in answer to Ireland's invitation, were authoritative testimonies to the power of words. John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God." The more I study Leviticus, to some a dull book, the more I delight in its grand architecture, skilled communication, and its significant links from the Old Testament to the New Testament.

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





# Lakeview Missionary Church

## God's Security

By Christopher L. Scott  
Moses Lake, Washington



"I'll always love you" is something I often tell my son. He's only three years old, but I want him to know that no matter what he does I will always love him unconditionally. Nothing will separate him from my love for him. God has the same unconditional love for us.

Paul tells the believers in the city of Rome that they will go through tough times writing, "*Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death?*" (Romans 8:35, NLT). Paul tells us about seven things that we will experience: trouble, calamity, persecution, be hungry, destitute, put in danger, and threatened. Paul continues and gives us the assurance we need.

*"And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Romans 8:38-39).

In these two verses, Paul lists ten things that cannot separate us from God's love. Whether it be death, life, angels, demons, fears for today, worrying about tomorrow, the powers of hell, the sky above, the earth below, or all creation, nothing can sever us from God's love.

(I've always loved Max Lucado's book on Romans titled, *In the Grip of Grace: He Will Love You Forever*; it's a great description of Paul's letter to the Romans and a book I recommend you read.)

In Franklin Graham's autobiography, *Rebel with a Cause*, he reveals his crazy lifestyle as a young man smoking and drinking lots of whiskey. In an article with the *Citizen-Times* Franklin Graham reflected on his rebellious years and talked about his relationship with his father, Billy Graham. "I remember my father saying, 'Franklin, your mother and I love you very much, and we want you to know that no matter what you do in life, no matter where you go, our home will always be your home.'"

We too should be assured that our Father's home will always be our home. No matter where we go or what we do, He'll always be ready to welcome us home because He loves us unconditionally.

*Christopher L. Scott, a graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary, is a pastor and freelance writer. Learn more about his writing ministry at [ChristopherLynnScott.com](http://ChristopherLynnScott.com).*

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# Redeemed Free Will Baptist

## Stand Fast In The Lord

By Patricia Jackson  
McDowell County

Paul writes a letter to the Philippians, thanking them for the gift they sent him. They were aware he was in jail in Rome. In V.1, Paul's words to *"Stand fast in the Lord"* are more than encouragement. It is a commandment from Paul. He knew they too faced struggles, persecution and urged them to rejoice, regardless of their present circumstances. Paul spoke those words from his own experiences of serving God while enduring hardships. In 2 Corinthians 11:23-28, Paul recounts his numerous beatings, imprisonment, receiving lashes, being stoned, shipwrecked, facing hunger and thirst. In his self, Paul could only stand "in the Lord." He suffered for Christ's sake, *"For when I am weak, then am I strong."* 2 Corinthians 12:10.

Many other notables in the Bible continued to "stand fast in the Lord." Young David "hastened and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine." Daniel is another great man who had committed that he would die instead of serving a false God. Moses, Abraham, Stephen, Sampson, and others stood fast because they realized they were not standing alone but in the Lord.

Our standing must always be combined with "in the Lord," for we cannot do it alone. We first stood fast in the Lord when we surrendered our life to Jesus Christ and trusted him for salvation. With Jesus, we never stand alone as we gain strength and courage to overcome our circumstances.

You may be familiar with the Christian hymnal entitled "Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus. In 1858, George Duffield, Jr. assisted a fellow minister (Dudley Tyng) in a Pennsylvania revival. Five thousand men attended, with over one thousand converts. Tyng died the following month in a farming accident. Duffield wrote the song based on the revival message and recited the hymn as a tribute to his friend.

Stand up, Stand up for Jesus, Ye soldiers of the cross. Lift high his royal banner, It must not suffer loss. From victory unto victory, His army shall He lead, Till every foe is vanquished And Christ is Lord indeed.

Our difficulties are nothing compared to Paul and others in the Bible, as we Stand Fast in the Lord.

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



# Gardner Webb

## Contempt or Kindness?

By Tracy Jessup

*"Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us, for we have had more than enough of contempt. Our soul has had more than its fill of the scorn of those who are at ease, of the contempt of the proud."* (Psalm 123:3-4)

Recently, my wife and I celebrated our 32nd wedding anniversary. Anytime someone asks us how long we have been married, they look shocked, as if marriages are not supposed to last that long. Psychologists John and Julie Gottman are renowned experts on marital stability and run The Gottman Institute, which is devoted to helping couples build and maintain loving, healthy relationships based on scientific studies. Simply by observing various interactions between couples, Gottman can predict with up to 94 percent certainty whether couples will be broken up, together and unhappy, or together and happy several years later. For the record, my wife and I are together and happy!

According to an article in The Atlantic, "contempt...is the No. 1 factor that tears couples apart. People who are focused on criticizing their partners miss a whopping 50 percent of positive things their partners are doing, and they see negativity when it's not there. People who give their partner the cold shoulder - deliberately ignoring the partner or responding minimally - damage the relationship by making their partner feel worthless and invisible, as if they're not there, not valued. And people who treat their partners with contempt and criticize them kill not only the love in the relationship but also their partner's ability to fight off viruses and cancers. Being mean is the death knell of relationships.

Kindness, on the other hand, glues couples together. Research independent from theirs has shown that kindness (along with emotional stability) is the most important predictor of satisfaction and stability in a marriage. Kindness makes each partner feel cared for, understood, and validated - loved...A great deal of evidence shows that the more someone receives or witnesses kindness, the more they will be kind themselves, which leads to upward spirals of love and generosity in a relationship" (Emily Esfahani Smith, "Masters of Love," 6/12/14).

In today's passage, the people of God have endured "more than enough" of the contempt and scorn of people who couldn't care less. How do God's people respond? They turn their eyes to the kindness of God. "Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us" (v. 3). The repetition of this phrase expresses both the magnitude and seriousness of the situation, as well as the mindset of God's people as we wait in dependence on God to intervene.

In this Psalm, "where real power and real malice are pitched against a righteous cause, the people of God know what to do. They keep patiently on with the task before them; but even more important, they look constantly in prayer to the One who alone is both pledged to uphold the right and able to frustrate the wrong" (Michael Wilcock, The Message of Psalms 73-150, p. 228).

Prayer: Lord, we thank you that you look upon us with eyes of mercy. In a world full of contempt, help us to show kindness to others.



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



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By Jody Griffin  
Avery and Mitchell Counties



*“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”*  
(Ephesians 5:15-16)

The sign said, “Watch Your Step!”, but I didn’t see it. Focused on getting from here to there quickly and efficiently without delay instead of the exact placement of my feet meant that I passed by the warning like I had done many times before, with no conscious thought of its purpose. So when the feet began sliding, the mind flashed back to the bright sign and its bold declaration...

If only we had someone available to remind us of this important safety precaution then we would at least have the potential to miss much of what happens to bring pain, suffering, and loss. “Watch Your Step!” or you could be injured. “Watch Your Step!” or you could cause someone else to be hurt. “Watch Your Step!” or you could soon be in the midst of disaster.

Confessions often shared with the Chaplain offer opportunity to present the gift of this challenge from God’s Word. The English word circumspectly is translated from the Greek word akribos (pronounced ah-kree-bose’) meaning diligently or exactly. Perhaps a most helpful understanding of this verse would be ‘to walk giving careful attention to each step taken.’

Perhaps we have found ourselves facing the consequences of our inattention... It is common in prison and it is common almost everywhere else too.

The apostle Paul is teaching the congregation in Ephesus that when believers are thoughtful and attentive to the implications of their actions, then they can make the most of the moments that make up the years of their lives. Such thoughtfulness leads to the ability to make wise decisions and avoid the consequences of foolish decisions. This truth is of particular importance because the ‘days are evil’. The most obvious observation that can be made here is that when we fail to give careful attention to the manner of our daily living, we are prone to get caught up in the less than honorable.

Someone once said, “If we are to redeem the time, meaning buy the time for ourselves, then we must make wise and sacred use of every opportunity for doing good so that zeal and well being are as it were the purchase money by which we make the time our own.”

If only every hazard had a warning label...but then that would be too easy! Inevitably human beings cease paying close attention to the potential hazards on our life journey and find ourselves (and often others) in pain as a result. Prisons are full of people who ceased paying attention to the warning signs.

Some might argue that to sound this alarm is a form of judgmental thinking. “How dare you presume to know what is best for me, or what I need to do to watch my step!” But the warning made out of love and compassion is NOT judgmental at all.

It is a privilege to sound the alarm to any who needs to hear it. ‘WATCH Your Step!’ It’s a warning meant to help someone else avoid the consequences of being distracted.

How might this warning be of help to you today? And how could this shared warning benefit others you know and care about today?

*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

I look around today and I am not sure I recognize where I am anymore. I am well aware that I am fast approaching eight decades of life here in this old world and, man, things are changing faster than I can keep up. Things that used to be everyday stuff, a shotgun in the back window of your truck, a knife in your pocket at all times, church on Sunday morning, and a mother and a dad in the picture of the family. Not so much anymore for any of these things.

There have always been some on the fringe that we wondered about at times but things that the Bible talked about as sin was considered a sin. Being a Christian was considered a virtue, not a handicap. Having prayer and the National Anthem at athletic events was always the norm, standing for the pledge of allegiance, was not even a question. Representing the Stars and Stripes in Olympic events was one of the greatest honors that could be bestowed on someone and had they been disrespectful of the flag or the National Anthem they would have been disciplined at the least and probably would have been removed from the team.

Today the NFL has decided they will no longer play our National Anthem but are going to substitute a different anthem, a good part of the teams are embracing taking a knee rather than standing at attention for the pledge and National Anthem. What has happened? We are tearing down our history and destroying statues that have honored our forefathers, we are teaching critical race theory, whatever the heck that is! Being born white is a sin and something that we should all be ashamed of if we happen to be born with that particular skin color. I was always taught that we all bled red, that black, white, yellow, or brown we were all precious in His sight! What happened?

I always thought that when a child was born the doctor would say, and we did not know until then, you have a baby boy or a baby girl and you celebrated whichever it was, now there is a 30, 60, 90-day window to give you or the baby time to decide what gender the child is! What the heck happened to common sense! If someone happened to lean toward being queer, they were queer and the word gay was for happy people. The word described happiness and joy, not queer behavior. The rainbow was a promise from God that the world would not be destroyed ever again by a flood; now it has been bastardized into embracing homosexual and transgender behavior. In my youthful days a woman married a man and a man married a woman, marriage was a God-ordained institution and it was not even a matter for discussion, never even mentioned. Now we even have mainline denominations performing marriage ceremonies between people of the same sex and calling it right! God has mercy on the leaders of these so-called churches.

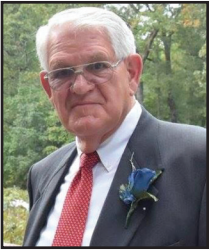
Never in my life have I ever seen right called wrong and wrong called right like it is taking place all around us today. If you have a question about what the Bible says, start with reading Romans 1:21-32.

*“because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.”*

Romans 1:21-32 KJV

My prayer is that we, as a people and a nation, will return to our roots, that we will once again be proud to be one nation under God and remain that way. To God be the glory!!

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



No Regrets Family - Take off the Mask

By Dean Honeycutt  
Mitchell County

I hope and trust when children go back to school that they do not have to wear masks. Someone might ask “how could you be so uncaring”? That is the very reason they should not wear a mask because it is hard on children. I will never forget this past October during pastor appreciation month the church recorded a video for me of different people thanking me for being a pastor.

A young girl was asked,” What would you like to say to the preacher”? She said with a big smile “Thank you, preacher, for not making us wear a mask”.

Many adults have a difficult time wearing masks.Can you imagine how hard it is for a child. I understand why some doctors and nurses wear a mask. I can understand in certain conditions and circumstances a mask may be necessary. But for a child going to school 5 days a week for 7 hours a day trying to learn and wanting to play with other kids and interact socially wearing a mask is ridiculous.

We had a doctor’s appointment in Asheville and the office required masks. So, we put on our masks like always when asked to do so. Once we were seated in the room the doctor comes in takes off his mask and says, “I am not wearing this thing.” His actions were suggesting the mask is useless. So, we took ours off as well.

Children need to be exposed to a certain number of viruses to strengthen their immune systems. God has created our bodies to fight off viruses and recover from sickness. We are not created to walk around with a mask on. If I am wrong, when I get to heaven the Lord will deal with me and I fear Him. But what I am hearing from the Bible and the Spirit is to trust the Lord. Be wise, but for heaven’s sake please do not live in fear. God has not given us a spirit of fear, neither is God the author of confusion.

I received a letter from the White House that said they were offering the “American Rescue Plan.” Like it is the Governments' responsibility to rescue me and my family. This is so deceiving because they cannot rescue anyone. They cannot guarantee a “life rescue” for you or your family. Only Jesus Christ can rescue me. Only Jesus can provide eternal life for me. He died on the Cross so I could trust Him and live forever. Now that is a guarantee and a rescue plan that I can believe and have confidence in.

The Bible says, “God has a plan for us,” which includes everything that happens to us because we are in God’s hand. And being in God’s hand is the safest place I can be.

Children are being misled in our country; they are being deceived to trust in the wrong things. Look how dependent most people have become on the government for food, clothing, housing. The Bible says if you do not work you do not eat. In other words, if a person can work and provide for themselves then they need to work. Children need to see adults working and trusting in the Lord. When the children of Israel were in the desert they had to depend on God. All Christians need to depend on God.

Children are told the mask protects them. Really my son wore a mask and he still got sick. How can you stop something you cannot see? I would not intentionally expose myself to a virus and I will not stop living and trusting the Lord. God is in control of me and my family. If I thought for a minute that I could keep my family from getting sick by wearing a mask all the time, then we would be doing it. However, I cannot control sickness any more than I can control the weather. Children need to interact with one another, they need to play and laugh. You ever wonder why the Bible says, “the love of many will wax cold”? It is because of the sin of complacency and lack of concern. When people cover their faces then they will begin to cover their eyes to the needs that are around them. They will become dependent on welfare, or they will become self-centered and self-protecting. Jesus said those who seek to save their life will lose it, but those who lose their life for the sake of the Gospel will save them. So, our children need to see us following Jesus and trusting in Him. This will help them be brave and strong in following the Lord during difficult times of their life.

As a parent, I need to set an example of faithfulness for my children. I have asked myself would Jesus tell me to distance myself from others, would he tell me not to go to church?

If I were sending my Child to school and I could either send them with a mask or a Bible, I would send them with the Bible. Because God’s word in my child’s life is far more valuable than anything in this world. Pam and I are praying for you. We are praying for our teachers and principals. And we are praying for children. God loves you and your family.

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



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Henry Carrigan of No Depression Magazine writes about their newest album; "Inner Journey" showcases Darin and Brooke Aldridge's stunning harmonies, highlighting the somber and poignant beauty of two voices almost effortlessly finding each other and matching each other perfectly note-for-note. Few albums can come close to matching the sheer beauty of the music itself here."



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*The Edwards Family*

[www.EdwardsFamilyMinistries.com](http://www.EdwardsFamilyMinistries.com)

The Edwards Family The Edwards family began as a duo with Patricia and Adam in 2001. Ann, Patricia's mom, joined them with harmonies. Beginning in 2008, The Edwards Family began travelling extensively to bring gospel music to churches around the country. Eventually, Patricia and Adam's daughters joined them on stage. They have produced several CDs and bring beautiful harmonies wherever they are singing.



The Jimmy Justice Family has a great heritage in Southern Gospel Music. Jimmy and Louise each sang with their families from early ages. Each of their three daughters; Sandra, Gloria, and Marsha began singing at the early ages of three. They started singing in their small home church, Mountain Home Baptist, in Edneyville, NC. The family grew over the years and now includes grandchildren in the group. They have produced multiple CDs and many original songs.



Debbie Phillips Mars Hill College in 1986 with a degree in music. Debbie spent several years in Nashville pursuing her dream of singing at the Grand Ole Opry. For the past two decades, Debbie has been singing classic country music and jazz, but it all began with sacred music.

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POEM

Everything's Alright

In Memory of Joy Baldwin  
Madison County

At times when all the house is quiet,  
So peaceful, hushed, and still.  
I settle in my favorite spot  
Against the windowsill.

When all the rain has ceased to fall  
And all the earth looks green,  
The birds begin their singing  
And playing once again.

It seems that they are praising God  
For all that He has done.  
Then from the highest cloud above  
Peeps out the shining sun.

Now all of God's creation  
While glistening in its light,  
With sparkling drops from heaven  
Whispers—EVERYTHING's ALRIGHT.

Joyce Harwood Baldwin  
1976



NC Baptist Aging

The Caregiving Crisis & the Church  
By Carol Layton



In partnership with Mary Tutterow, author of The Heart of the Caregiver® ministry series, North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry will present a free virtual workshop on August 25, 10:00 am – Noon.

As families seek to secure care for their loved ones, they are often faced with overcrowded nursing homes, staff shortages, and underfunded care systems. Those providing direct care themselves have few community resources to rely on and face burnout.

Join NCBAM and Mary Tutterow for a lively presentation of scripture and conversation to learn how your church and its care leaders can be empowered to address the growing caregiving crisis.

Tutterow will share from Scripture and her many year's experiences as a family caregiver. She will remind attendees that caring for others is the primary calling of believers.

To register for this free virtual workshop, visit [www.ncbam.org/events](http://www.ncbam.org/events) or call 877.506.2226.

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



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Walking Circumspectly

By Dr. Tom Walker  
McDowell County



Ephesians 5:14-16 says “...Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”

Note the two words from our text that say “walk circumspectly.” The first thing I believe we should take notice of is the verb “walk.” Since it is a verb there are several aspects of the verb we should notice. The verb of a sentence is where the action is. First, the verb is plural in the Greek New Testament from which our Bible came. That means every believer has a responsibility to walk like a Christian should walk. God expects all (not a few) of his children to walk circumspectly.

Secondly, the verb “walk” is present tense. That tense speaks of continuous or ongoing action. So many Christians live their lives like a yoyo when it comes to consistency in their lives. Maybe one day the believer will live in an upright manner, while another day he may cater to the flesh and not be upright in his walk. God wants us to be consistent, constant, reliable, and steady.

The action word “walk” is also active voice. That means we cannot depend on someone else to walk the walk for us. It is our responsibility. We are to actively live the life God wants us to live.

“Walk” is also indicative, which simply means it is an action represented as certain or realized. All born-again believers can certainly, through the power of Almighty God, live the Christian life. There is no doubt about that fact.

The word “circumspectly”, as part of speech is an adverb, which describes and tells us something about the verb. It comes from a word that is translated as “most straightest” in our King James Bibles. The Greek word (akribos), which is here translated “circumspectly” which is translated in our KJV in other places as “diligently” and as “perfectly.”

I am going to use the translation of the root word from which “circumspectly” is derived, as the way of describing what I believe the word is saying. It can mean “most straightest” (Acts 26:5). In Acts 26:5 Paul speaks of his past religious affiliation as a Jew as being a Pharisee, “*the most straightest sect of his past religion.*” The word expresses a life that is walking straight in the will of God rather than walking in a deviated path. So many people who say they know the Lord take detours oftentimes from the straight and narrow way.

**Why Should We Walk Circumspectly?**

You should walk in this way because of expectations. That is what the Lord wants for you. We should always be concerned about what the will of the Lord is for our lives. That is a trait of a true, dedicated believer. Christ saved us not to walk

as a lost world does, but rather to walk as a saved child of God should. Sometimes it seems some people in the world know more about how a Christian should walk than some believers do.

Walk-in this way because of testimony. Your testimony is one thing you do not want to lose. Your life may testify in a good way while others degrade and demean you, saying things about you that are unjustified and not true. The Bible says, “*A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches*” (Prov.22:1). There is nothing that will grieve you more inwardly than knowing that someone has determined they are going to destroy your reputation. Regardless of what others may say about you, your life will speak for itself. 1 Peter 2:15, “For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.” You silence the ignorance of men by simply doing right. By doing good you reduce to silence the ignorance of men who are unreflecting and unintelligent. Your upright life will bring to nothing the criticism of the uninformed and inaccurate people.

Walk-in this way because of satisfaction. No true saint of God can walk in less than an upright manner and have peace and calm in their hearts. It is when we do what we know we ought to do that we have the peace of God in our hearts. In Philippians 4:9 the Apostle Paul wrote: “*Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.*” When we do what we should do, it is then we have the peace we desire for our lives. If we go against what we should do to live upright, then there is turmoil and agitation on the inside.

**Where Should We Walk Circumspectly?**

Everywhere we go we should be the same in our Christian lives. How can we live one way when we are at church, then turn around and live the opposite when we are outside the church? People in the world need to see genuine people, whose lives manifest the way a true child of God should live. Inconsistency in the lives of God’s children turns people away from the things of God. Too many believers are like a weathervane, they turn whichever way the wind is blowing.

**How Can We Walk Circumspectly?**

First, you must realize the evil days necessitate it. There is so much evil that abounds in our day. The Bible says in Eph. 5:16, “*the days are evil.*” Since the days are evil, we need to redeem the time or make the most of every opportunity to do good as we live each day of our lives.

Also, we must realize that it is foolish to live any other way. What is the main mark of a fool? He or she does not want to acknowledge or follow God. The Bible says, “*The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God*” (Psalm 14:1). That verse cannot be used only in reference to an atheist, but it can be used of an ungodly, self-ruled person who says, “*No God for me. I will live my own life the way I want to live it. I do not need God or His Word to tell me what to do.*” Psalm 14:1 describes the fool as one who is---- corrupt, that does abominable works, and as one who does not practice good.

A very important factor in walking circumspectly is to be filled with the Holy Ghost. We are commanded as believers to be filled or controlled by God’s Spirit in Eph. 5:18. As the drunkard is controlled by his alcohol, they believe it to be under the control of the Spirit. Compare Acts 1:8. If we are not Holy Ghost controlled, then it stands to reason you will be controlled by the flesh or the old nature. If that be the case, things will not turn out very well in your life.

It is also important that you have a song in your heart. Ephesians 5:19 says, “*Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.*” It is easier to live in an upright manner if you have a spiritual song in your heart. We need to sing songs about the Lord Himself. I love to sing about Heaven but oh how I love to have a song about Jesus and His salvation in my heart.

Having a thankful spirit also makes it easier to live an upright way. Ephesians 5:20 tells us, “*Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” When you grumble and complain, it is as though you are discontented either with the Lord or His providence in your life. The upright person is always moving forward with a thankful spirit.

Live circumspectly and when you will stand before the Lord, it will pay off in eternal dividends.

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

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# Pleasant Hill Baptist Church

## Godprints

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



The Lord God called Abram to a special relationship and a special purpose. In Genesis 12:1-3, we hear that covenant calling, “Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country, And from your relatives And from your father’s house, To the land which I will show you; And I will make you into a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing; And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.” (NASB)

Skip Heitzig, a popular pastor, teacher, and radio preacher recently wrote an excellent book that also has an eye-catching cover. On the front cover of the book, there is a huge fingerprint printed in red that is centered on the cover and surrounded by two other huge uppercase letters. G on the left and D on the right. Of course, the fingerprint represented the letter O and together they spell GOD. Underneath was written PRINT. The name of the book is Godprint: Making Your Mark for Christ.

In thinking about our own unique call from God to a special relationship and purpose, I have come across many Christians who are confused about that calling and what it means. It reminds me of a young man who was sad, confused, and perplexed about seeing his dad, who claimed to be a Christian acting one way when he was around church folks and completely different when he was outside of that setting. Controlled by anger, rage, confusion, and fear, the dad would fly into cursing fits when the pressure mounted at home and work. He was often consumed by his rage and took it out on anyone and everyone around him. The son confronted him one day and challenged him, “Why are you acting this way? I thought you were a Christian!” The father snorted back, “I’m saved, forgiven, and on my way to heaven! It doesn’t matter what I do and how I act!”

Clearly, he got the first part right! By faith, he had placed his trust in God’s plan to save him from his sins. He had trusted in Jesus—and the moment that he confessed with his mouth that Jesus was the Son of God, and invited the Lord to be his Savior—God did what He promised He would do! He applied the blood of Jesus toward all payments that were due because of sin. God laid claim to the dad’s soul and prepared for him a place in heaven. The first truth is that God frees us from the penalty of sin and death by merit of Christ’s sacrifice on Calvary’s cross. We are set free!

But the reality of faith begs that we ask several important questions. The first question we must ask is, “Set free from what?” The answer is from the eternal separation from our creator God that was created by our sin.

The second important question that we must ask (but is all too often seldom asked) is, “Set free to do what?” Most Christians understand the first part. However, many Christians misunderstand the second part of God’s plans and purposes. Here is God’s truth and plan for each one of us—we have been set free from sin and death so that we are free to choose TO LIVE FOR GOD! God didn’t save us so that we would live for ourselves (although we are certainly free to choose to do that). Our choices matter! Your choices matter! What we do, how we act, how we treat others, and how we live our lives does matter. It matters to our loved ones. It matters to those around us. And it matters to God. Our choices are critical and crucial to the plans and purposes of God. We, whom He had claimed as His spiritual children, are invited into a special relationship with Him. We have been adopted as spiritual sons and daughters of the Most High God. And in that special relationship, now unimpeded by the penalty of sin and rebellion, we are called, commanded, and commissioned to live for Him! As Heitzig suggests, we are called to leave a “Godprint” on this world.

“A Christian leaves a Godprint whenever he or she, by the power of the Holy Spirit, positively influences the world for the cause of Christ...[and] every Christian has the opportunity to leave a lasting, God-centered, positive impression upon the Earth,” insists Heitzig.

In fact, each of us does indeed leave evidence of our presence and activity in this world. A carbon footprint is an ecological impression each person makes upon the natural world and our planet, for good or for ill, a measure of the impact our activities have on the environment and upon the lives of our fellow citizens.

The concept raises an interesting question for Christians. Are we supposed to leave some kind of mark? Should we care about the impression we leave? Should we be concerned with our spiritual footprint? Our legacy? Our impact? Of course, we should! That’s why God called us to salvation and then called us to live for Him.

Heitzig continues, “While I firmly believe we should be good stewards of God’s good creation, I think we should have a far greater interest in something more than reducing our carbon footprint. This something is what I call a “Godprint.” A Christian leaves a Godprint, a living testimony whenever he or she, by the power of the Holy Spirit, leaves a God blessing upon this world. God informed Abram, you will be blessed as you obediently go “to the land which I will show you” and leave the unmistakable evidence of my presence and love. The gospel writers gave evidence of God’s love revealed in the finished work of Christ on the cross.

And so must you and I leave Godprints wherever we go. What a great idea! What a great opportunity? What a fantastic, wonderful journey God has sent us on—to leave Godprints all over this world. Everywhere we go. Everyone we meet. We are touching them and leaving beautiful fingerprints of God all over them. Would you do that today for His honor and glory? Blessings and peace, Pastor Jack.

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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Life’s Journey With A Purpose  
It All Starts With God

By Glenda Ward  
McDowell County

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His Will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the beloved.”*  
Ephesians 1:3-6

It is in Christ Jesus that we find out who we are and what we are living for. Long before we first heard of Christ, He had His eye on us, had designs on us for glorious living, part of the overall purpose He is working out in everything and everyone who knows Him. It is In Jesus Christ *“in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace; wherein He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of His Will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him”* (Ephesians 1:7-10).



Thinking about our purpose in life; that being our spiritual journey, a principle of purpose-driven living that each of us can reflect on. God has good, pleasing, and perfect plans for His children. He wants us to be new people with renewed minds, living to honor and obey Him. Reflect on what Paul is saying in 2 Timothy 2:7, *“and the Lord give thee understanding into all things.”* We are to take time and reflect on and seriously consider what we read in scripture. Take time to think about the implications for your life. The Bible says, *“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, Will of God”* (Romans 12:2). Don’t just read, Interact with what you read. Underline it. Write your own thoughts in a journal making it your book. Personalize it! React to what you read, don’t just read.

- Point to Practice = Romans 12:2
- Verses to Remember = the most important habit you can begin is to copy verses onto small cards to carry with you and reflect on them when you have a free minute.
- Questions = write down questions about what you have read and discuss with others what you read.
- Spiritual growth = is never isolated. It is produced through relationships and community with other believers. Allow the Scripture to speak for itself.

A life devoted to things in this world is a dead life, a stump; a God-shaped life is a flourishing tree. (Paraphrased from Proverbs 11:28).

It all starts with God. It is not about us. God’s purpose in our life is far greater than our own personal fulfillment, our peace of mind, or even our happiness. If you want to know why you were placed on this earth, you must begin with God. You cannot arrive at your life’s purpose by starting with a focus on yourself. We must begin with God, our creator. We were born by His purpose and for His purpose. Focusing on ourselves will never reveal our life’s purpose. Our attention to God and focusing on His Word leads us out into the open, into a spacious, free life. We were made by God and for God – and until we understand that, life will never make sense. (Reference Colossians 1:16).

Question: Despite all the advertising around us, how can we remind ourselves that life is really about living for God, not ourselves?

What is the meaning of life and the purpose of life? It is a revelation. We can turn to what God has revealed about life through His Word. The easiest way to discover the purpose for our life is to ask the creator: Ask God. Real discipleship implies real commitment – pledging our whole existence to His service. If we try to save our physical life from death, pain, or discomfort, we may risk losing our true eternal life. If we protect ourselves from the pain God calls us to suffer, we begin to die spiritually and emotionally. We lose our intended purpose. When we give our lives in service to Christ, we discover the real purpose of living. When we don’t know Christ, we make choices as though this life were all we have. But in reality, this life is just the introduction into eternity. How we live this brief span of life, determines our eternal state. Evaluate all that happens from an eternal perspective, and you will find your values and decisions changing. (Reference Matthew 16:25-26).

The only accurate way to understand ourselves is by what God is and by what He does for us. The key to an honest and accurate evaluation is knowing the basis of our self-worth – our identity in Christ. In Him, we are valuable and capable of worthy service. Don’t miss your true value in God’s eyes. (Paraphrase of Romans 12:3). Nothing matters more than knowing God’s purposes for your life, and nothing can compensate for not knowing them.

- Benefits of Purpose-Driven Living
1. Knowing your purpose gives meaning to your life.
  2. Knowing your purpose simplifies your life.
  3. Knowing your purpose focuses your life.
  4. Knowing your purpose motivates your life.
  5. Knowing your purpose prepares you for eternity.

You weren’t put on earth to be remembered. You were put here to prepare for eternity.

Living in purpose is the path to peace. *“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee”* (Isaiah 26:3).

Each of us will stand personally before the judgment seat of God.... Each of us will have to give a personal account to God for the choices we make.

- Something to Think About God may ask:
1. What did you do with my Son, Jesus Christ? The only thing that will matter is, did you accept what Jesus Christ did for you, and did you learn to love and trust Him?
  2. What did you do with the gifts I gave you? Read the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:15-30.

The first question will determine where you spend eternity. The second question may determine what you do in eternity. Jesus said, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father; but by me”* (John 14:6). This life is in preparation for the next. Sadly, many people will have to endure eternity without God because they chose to live without Him here on earth. To God Be The Glory!

*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.*

Crossword Solution

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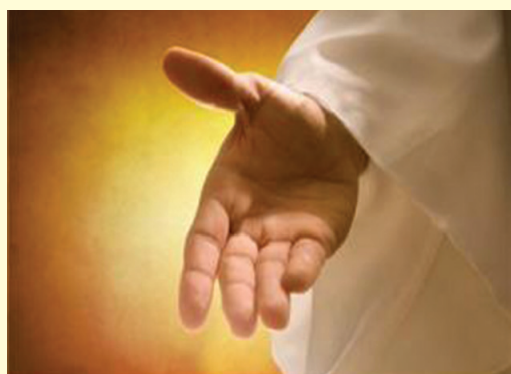
Sudoku Solution

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# Evergreen Church

## The Wasted Years

By John McCoury  
Roan Mountain, Tennessee

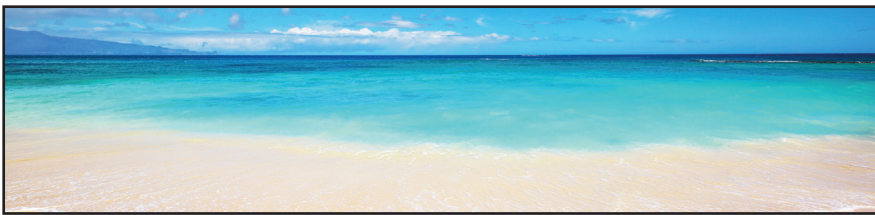


*“The two angels arrived at Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of the city.”* Genesis 19:1a The expression at the beginning of this account, sitting in the gateway of the city, is an Eastern expression that needs to be understood. This does not mean Lot was simply passing the time of day in the gate. This is a technical phrase that means he was the chief magistrate of the city of Sodom. His job was not only to give an official welcome to visitors of the city but also to investigate the nature of any strangers who might come and also administer justice concerning any quarrels. The nearest equivalent we have today would be the office of mayor. I want to be fair with Lot; I believe he meant to do the right thing. It is clear from the story of his life that though he wanted to get something out of Sodom, he also expected to put something into Sodom. He probably thought to himself, Well, I may do these people well. I may be able to win some of them from evil to faith. I can make money faster here than anywhere else, that's true, but I also may help clean up the city a little bit. It's a wicked place, and perhaps I can improve its moral life.

When Lot moved into Sodom, this is undoubtedly what he had in mind. Before long he became the mayor of the town, the most respected man in the city, the leader of its civic life. I would like to ask Lot a question. Lot, you made a great success out of your life. You've won your way from a nobody to the mayor of the city. You entered as an unknown, a foreigner, and you've achieved both wealth and honor here in the city of Sodom. My first question is this: How has your choice of life in Sodom affected your own inner life? Notice the extent of the evil of this city. This is the reason God visited it in judgment. Verse 4 says that *“all the men of the city, both young and old, surrounded the house.”* All the people of Sodom were involved in homosexuality. As you read this account, you can see that Lot's reaction is disgust and shame. And this is no isolated instance; this was just a common ordinary event in Sodom. Second Peter says *“Lot was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard”* (2 Peter 2:7b-8). This is a picture of discontent, bafflement, and frustration. Lot's soul was continuously vexed. He had tasted enough of the higher things of fellowship with God that he could never be satisfied with these sordid, ugly, obscene, and lewd things of Sodom.

Where are rest and peace and quietness of heart? It is up there with Abraham in his tent under the oak tree. But here in the city of Sodom is this man Lot. What good is it to have luxuries and wealth and every material gain if the heart is continually filled with a great hunger that cannot be fed or satisfied? Lot's answer to that question must be that his own life is grievously thwarted and blighted by the life of the city of Sodom. Lord, deliver me from wasted years where I sacrifice fellowship with You for success in the eyes of this world. In pursuit of worldly success we can seriously damage the inner life of the soul. Do we need to re-assess our goals and invest our lives in eternal values?

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



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The Other White Meat

By Christy Lowman  
Burke County



Can you guess what the 5th smartest animal in the whole wide world is? They are so smart they learn their name when they are only two weeks old. They make over twenty different sounds with different meanings and their voice can be as loud as 115 decibels, which is louder than a supersonic airliner! They have the intelligence of a toddler, are smarter than every kind of dog, and are better at playing video games than some primates. Have you guessed this month’s animal?

It is a PIG! Are you surprised to find out how smart they are? Not only are they smart but their genetic makeup is very similar to ours. In fact, pig stem cells are used for research and experiments for cures for humans. More than forty medicines including insulin are made from pigs. Doctors are also able to take heart valves from pigs and use them to replace damaged heart valves in people! How cool is that? There are also several products that we use regularly that come from pigs like weed killer and makeup. The traditional covering for a football is pigskin because their hide is very tough.

Pigs were the very first animal to be domesticated more than 6000 years ago. The Chinese were the first to raise them for food. Pigs can be found on every continent except Antarctica. The country of Denmark has so many pigs, people there, are outnumbered 2 to 1! Hernando do Soto brought the first pig to the United States in 1539. The world’s largest pig, named Big Bill weighed 2552 lbs. He was 5 ft. tall and 9 ft. long.

Pigs are omnivores. They have over 15,000 taste buds on their tongue, while we only have 9,000. Pigs will eat almost everything except for cucumbers. They will only eat these if they are very hungry and have no other choice.



I don’t like cucumbers either, in fact, I often say, “If a pig won’t eat them then I’m not going to either.” The funny part is that I love pickles!

Pigs can become bloodthirsty. We have had them eat the tails off of a cow that was lying down at the farm.

On average a baby pig weighs 2.5 lbs at birth and grows anywhere to 300-700lbs. Adult pigs usually gain 2 lbs a day. To gain this much weight they must eat 6 lbs of grain a day. They drink a whopping 14 gallons of water each day on top of their massive grain consumption! Even though adult pigs weigh a lot they are still able to run a 7 min. mile which equals up to 11 mph. This is amazing when you factor in their weight and small lungs.

The most piglets born at once on record were 37! Can you imagine having this many children? Momma Pigs, called Sows, are known to sing to their children when they are nursing. Pigs are very social animals and will often sleep nose to nose. They love to snuggle and they have dreams just like we do.

Pigs have tiny eyes and very poor eyesight. However, their sense of smell is phenomenal! They have 1113 active genes for the smell. They can smell so well that they can tell the difference between different kinds of mint with 100% accuracy. They can find food several feet underground and can pick up smells over 5 miles away. Pigs have been used by the military, known as soldier pigs, to sniff out underground mines. Pigs are also trained to find truffles and missing people. Pigs are very clean animals. They will not use the bathroom where they sleep unless they don’t have enough space. The reason they wallow in the mud is to keep them cool because they do not sweat, and to keep from getting sunburnt.

Did you know that if a pig becomes loose and is left that way it only takes around one week before its skull starts to change and become the shape of a wild boar? In this short time they are becoming feral (wild.) Overtime (a few months) they will grow out their tusks and snout, and grow hair on their backs and become aggressive. Feral piglets will have stripes on them.

This reminds me of how similar we are to pigs. It only takes one misstep, one backtrack, one sin, to get us off the path and to upset our relationship with God. It is so easy for us to walk away from God and to change into a different person, a different lifestyle. The good news is that no matter how many steps we take away from God He is waiting on us to come back and it is only one step back to get back to Him. Every day we need to pray that we only make minimal mistakes. Pray that God protects us and helps us stay close to Him.

This makes me think of the story in the Bible of the son who wanted his inheritance early. He then went away and spent his inheritance. Eventually, he came home to his father ashamed of what he had done. His father was happy to see him and welcomed him with open arms. That is exactly how God is with us! Isn’t that the best news ever? That He will forgive us of our sins and give us another chance no matter what we have done as long as we ask Him to.

Dear Lord, please help us to not turn our backs and become like feral pigs. Guide us to stay the course and live our lives according to your teaching. Help us have a constant personal relationship with you. Teach us to only make minimal mistakes in our life.

“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” 2 Peter 3:9 NIV

\*\*\*The story of the prodigal son is found in Luke 15:11-31 if you would like to read it.\*\*

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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](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](mailto:christyssoaps@yahoo.com).





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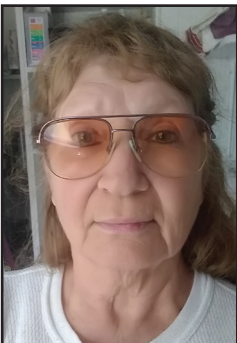
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Poem

By Jackie Denton  
McDowell County



*"A Tiny Seed".  
If I take a tiny seed,  
And plant it in the sod.  
It can become a mighty thing,  
If it is blessed by God.*

*He sends a little rain,  
And a whole lot of sun.  
Then He smiles down upon it,  
And a new life has begun.*

*We too are tiny seeds,  
Who need lots and lots of love.  
And the precious smile of God,  
Sent down from up above.*

*Mom and Dad our minds are open,  
Please fill it with God's love.  
So that when this life is over,  
Our souls can be planted with God above.*

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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# Mine Creek Baptist Church

## Laborers in His Kingdom

By Chris Rathbone  
Mitchell County

Jesus teaches a parable about the kingdom of heaven in Matthew 20:1-16. A parable is an earthly story or example that teaches a heavenly truth. Jesus used everyday examples that people could identify with and used these examples to teach eternal truths. An object lesson so to speak.



In this parable, the owner of an estate goes out very early in the morning, probably at dawn to hire laborers to work in his vineyard. He hires laborers and agrees to “a penny a day” or a denarius, which is a day’s wages in that time. He goes back out at 9 am and hires more. At noon, at 3 pm, and 5 pm he does the same. At the end of the day, he gathers all the laborers to pay them their wages for the day. He begins with the last ones to be hired and pays them a penny, or denarius, which again, is a day’s wages. This continues down to the laborers he hired at the beginning of the day. Every laborer was paid equally regardless of when they were hired. When the ones hired first saw what everyone was paid this was said: verses 10-12 state: *“But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house. Saying, These last have wrought but one hour and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.”* In other words, these men who had started at dawn felt like they should receive more pay even though they had agreed on the wages at the start of the day.

The owner of the vineyard responds to them in verses 13-15: *“But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?”* These laborers were not wronged in any way by the one who hired them, he paid them and the others what was agreed upon. And besides that, he was the owner of the vineyard and could do with his own what he wanted. Jesus ended this parable with this statement in verse 16: *“So the last shall be first and first last: for many are called, but few chosen.”*

Remember, this parable is to teach us about the kingdom of heaven and salvation. The owner who hires the laborers is representative of God. The laborers who are hired represent believers. God offers to each one to become part of His kingdom. The ones He calls to believe have the choice whether or not to agree to be “hired” or believe. Once they believe they become laborers in His vineyard, His kingdom. They entered only because of His grace! He does with His own what He wants! Whether we come to salvation early in life, late in life, or in the middle of our lives we all receive the same gift of salvation. Those who may have served Jesus for many years are not “more saved” than those who were saved yesterday! We all are in His kingdom by His grace and His grace alone. To think that any of us are better than someone else because we have been saved longer is a work and attitude of this world and sinful flesh. To think we have an advantage over someone who has only just recently been saved is just plain wrong. The statement Jesus makes about the last being first and first being last isn’t about switching places, or rewards, or having an advantage over someone else. It is about being equal. It’s about the fact that we all have entered the kingdom of God by grace, we have all been chosen to labor in His kingdom by grace, we have all received the gift of eternal life by His grace, and He by his grace has bestowed upon us all as sinners the gift of eternal life!

My friends, rejoice not in how long you have been saved and rejoice not that you have been saved longer than someone else. Don’t think that you or I have some sort of advantage over another because we’ve been saved longer. Rejoice in the fact that God through Christ has saved us period! We rejoice not in how long we have been saved but in the fact that we have been saved! Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift! Thanks be unto God that we are laborers in His kingdom!

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



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# Bear Creek Baptist Church

By Bruce Cannon  
Mitchell County



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

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

A few days ago my wife and I were walking in our yard and Wendy asked me, “Can you feel it?” I did not know to what she was referring. I didn’t know how to answer so I responded with a question, “What are you sensing?” She replied, “Change, and it’s not good.” She is very preceptive and felt in her spirit that trouble was afoot; that something was quickly changing in our county/state/nation.

As you and I listen to the news, as we see what is taking place on our streets and in other areas across our country, we are seeing this change. Lawlessness is rampant; respect for persons and property has waned. And that is exactly what our Lord prophesied would happen before His return. The word translated “iniquity” in Matthew 24:12 is actually “lawlessness” in the original language. And we are seeing it daily.

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

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

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

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

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

I, like many of you, am dumbfounded at our national celebration of gay pride, the use of the rainbow as the symbol of support for homosexuality, the teaching of and support of Critical Race Theory, wanting children to remain genderless until they reach a certain age to declare whether they want to be a boy or a girl, and so much more. America is the modern-day Sodom and Gomorrah!

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

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

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

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Darryl Strawberry

By Jim Smith  
McDowell County



Freedom Life held its Darryl Strawberry event on a beautiful evening at Big League Camp on June the 17th. There were approximately 1400 community and area gatherers who came together in support of this event.

Some of you may still ask, “who is Darryl Strawberry?” Though Darryl was extremely successful in his major league baseball career, his personal life was plagued with addictions, abuse, divorces, cancer, jail time, and other issues. Darryl finally found true redemption and restoration in Jesus Christ.

“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

Today, 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. Darryl travels the country speaking and bringing a message of hope and restoration in Christ. Most recently he has been with Franklin Graham speaking at events sponsored by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.

Freedom Life invited Strawberry to come and speak to the community about overcoming his addiction. “The more we can share stories of overcoming addiction, the more those in addiction can understand it can be done,” Jim Smith, Development Director. “One of our goals through this event was to bring more awareness to our community that hopelessness in addictions can stop and a new life can begin,” Danny Hampton, Executive Director.

Freedom Life works with clients that are and have been incarcerated. Many of these clients also are addicts and Freedom Life begins working with many clients right in jail.

Over 150 volunteers came together to aid in parking, preparing the bbq meals, the VIP dinner, and the popular kid’s zone. The Kids Zone was a hit for our young ones with inflatables, a water slide, snow cones, face painting, and balloon animals.

Many volunteers are or have been clients of Freedom Life. Some of these clients are part of a very special Federal Second Chance Act Program awarded through the Department of Justice. This program gives formally incarcerated individuals the intensive support and resourcing needed for a prolonged period to gain and maintain new life capacity and sustainability. These special volunteers took pride in setting up / cleaning up and supporting many of the guests who came to the event. “It was such a blessing to see them feel ownership and pride in giving back to the community that at one time they had been afraid of, and in their past – they had been so afraid and to face.” Danny Hampton. “I am enjoying giving back to my community by being part of something bigger than me,” Tim B. Another client made white corsages to give to those in attendance that had lost friends or family to addiction. This event turned out to be just as much of an “in-reach” as an “outreach.”

The VIP event was inside where pitching and batting practices happen. Darryl met with those in attendance and took a photo with each table.

Many local human services agencies participated in the evening. It was a joy to see so many agencies along with the Emergency Management, Sheriff, and Marion Police teams all participating.

Darryl began to speak, referencing having a praying mom. “My early years were a real struggle because I grew up in a very broken, dysfunctional home. My dad was a raging alcoholic and he would come home night after a night drinking and be very loud and, you know, disturbing the whole house, waking us up in the middle of the night.

And when I was fourteen, he woke us up one night and he was drunk. My older brother Michael said, “Why don’t you just get out of here and leave us alone?” And he pulled out a shotgun and said he was going to kill the whole family at that particular time. And had it not been for my wonderful mother getting us boys out of the house—because we went into action, we were very serious about protecting our mother, it would have been a tragedy in my life.

We were young, but at the same time, we were hurting, you know, because of what was happening, the pain was real. And I think a lot of people don’t understand that brokenness is real. Lawlessness brings about brokenness and brings broken generations one after the next.

And from that point there, my father was never around after that night. And the next day, my mother decided that she would move him out of the house and she would go on to divorce him. So she saw her kids responding in such a way she’d never seen us respond,” said Strawberry.

“She was dying at the age of fifty-five. And we found this journal under her bed, which was incredible. She was praying to God, writing about all her kids, all five of us saying, “God save them, save them from the drugs, save them from their lifestyle, save them from this, save them from being [in] the sinful lifestyle.” And she went on home to be with the Lord. And we saw that afterward. And I was heartbroken because my mother was a sweet woman that raised five of us by herself and took care of us with no man and only God in her life.”

“And I ended up being a heathen and living a heathen lifestyle from this beautiful woman who lived a faithful life serving the Lord Jesus Christ. And to come to a place of getting healed and getting well was going to be a process for me. But it was her prayers. I know it was her prayers, you know because God kept me. Because when I think about it, you know, I say a heathen lifestyle—womanizer, alcoholic, drug addict, sinner, ended up in a Florida state prison with a T17169

because of addiction. And there I ended up with cancer twice and losing my left kidney. There it was, God was doing for me what I couldn’t do for myself because of my mother’s prayers to cover her children.”

“God would save me. And He would eventually use me to lead my entire family to get saved. And my sister, when she was dying at age fifty-one, I had to rush to the hospital to lead her in The Sinner’s Prayer to be saved. God sends me to see my father in a hospital after He saves me and He sends me to repent to my father, for me keeping him out of my life. And He speaks to me: “How dare you not forgive him when I forgave you.”

I asked my father to forgive me, and he did. A tear came out of his eye and he said, “Yes.” And I just lost it. I just laid in his lap and cried so hard and then God says, “Raise up.” Then I raised up and He says, “Lead him in The Sinner’s Prayer.” And there was the man that rejected me and beat me that left me scarred and wounded. God uses me to lead him in The Sinner’s Prayer to lead him to the Lord.

God released me from any anxiety, depression, and everything because God made me understand that the forgiveness was not for [my father]. It was for me. God made it clear that two wrongs don’t make a right. So two wrongs in a situation you can’t bring right to it. You can’t bring healing to it. And there was my life of who I was being transformed and all the broken pieces that were in my life that God would put them back together.” “God made me understand that the forgiveness was not for my father. It was for me.” – Darryl Strawberry

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

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## Stormy Weather

By Caron Cline  
Burke County



The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration National Weather Service reports that about 1800 thunderstorms are happening at any given time, resulting in about 16 million storms per year. Most last thirty minutes or less and are typically about 15 miles in diameter, with the greatest threats being lightning and flash flooding. Tornadoes and hurricanes occur less frequently but are much more powerful, often destroying homes, businesses, and lives. Summer storms are quite predictable and the rainfall is much needed for crops and plants. Thankfully, modern technology offers early warnings for severe storms allowing residents time to prepare or even evacuate if necessary. Unfortunately, the storms of life usually arrive with little warning. No one can forecast their length or intensity and evacuation is not an option.

Whether a storm is mild or severe, there are at least three Biblical truths that can serve as anchors for the soul; the sovereignty of God, the sacrifice of the Son, and the seal of the Holy Spirit. Meditating on and clinging to these three principles will ensure that our faith remains rooted and grounded during difficult times. The first anchor necessary to survive any storm is the foundational truth of the sovereignty of God. Our God created the heavens and the earth by His Word. *"All things were created by Him and for Him and in Him all things hold together"* (Colossians 1:17). *"Not one sparrow falls to the ground unnoticed and even the hairs on our head are numbered"* (Luke 12:7). *"Nothing can touch our lives that is not first filtered through the loving fingers of our heavenly Father. The plans that He has for us may be painful and confusing but He promises that they are not for evil but for our good"* (Jeremiah 29:11). The fiercer the storm, the stronger the tree. In God's economy, difficult times are essential for maturing our faith and conforming us to the image of Christ. Isaiah 43:1-3 says, *"Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine! When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, nor will the flame burn you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior"*. In the darkest storms of life, our Father promises that He will never leave us or forsake us. The sovereignty of God is a sure anchor in every circumstance of life. The second anchor necessary for survival is the sacrifice of Jesus. The Father proved His love for the world by sending His only begotten Son so that no person need perish (John 3:16). Romans 8:32 emphatically states: *"He Who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?"* Jesus willingly emptied Himself and became a servant, offering Himself as a ransom for whoever would receive His gift of eternal life. When the winds of life threaten destruction, remembering the unfathomable sacrifice of Jesus will anchor the soul and bring peace and hope. The third anchor that guarantees survival is the seal of the Holy Spirit. When we place our faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior, our body becomes the temple of the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 1:13 promises that we are now sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise. The Spirit witnesses with our spirit that we are truly the children of God. He is our guide, our comforter, our counselor and so much more. The Spirit will consistently shine the light of the promises of God into our hearts and minds. During seasons of extreme pressure, amid multiple fears and doubts, the seal of the Holy Spirit is a sure anchor for the soul. He is the guarantee that God will give us the heavenly inheritance He has promised to all who believe. Storms are common in the human experience, but there is no need for panic if we utilize our soul anchors; the sovereignty of God, the sacrifice of Jesus, and the seal of the Holy Spirit. Regardless of whether our storm is mild or severe, we are hidden with Christ in God; no one can snatch us out of His Hand!

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

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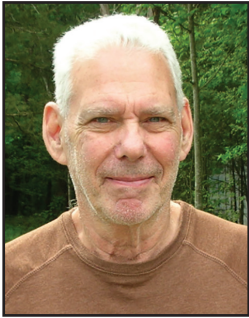
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What About The Children?

By Robert Garner  
Rutherford County



May I recommend to all parents that you select a quiet time of day to read God’s Words, the Bible, to your children of any age? Also, the reading of the bible to the developing baby in the womb of the mother will be a blessing to the child and mother too. They don’t need to understand the verses. Just read the verses you select exactly as written in the bible. I would greatly recommend The Authorized King James Bible. Romans 10:17, *“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing the word of God.”*

All humans start out being born under sin. Psalm 51:5, *“Behold I was shapen [guilt] in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.” This is the Word of God, but don’t fret thyself, read on. Psalm 51:6, “Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: [the seat of the mind and thoughts] the hidden part thou shall make me know wisdom.” Isaiah 44:24, “thus saith the LORD, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the LORD that maketh all things, that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself.” Job 33:4, “the spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty has given me life.”*

Certainly, those who love the LORD have great awareness that we live in a time of great spiritual trouble. As concerned parents of any age, or as grandparents of our children who have children; we listen to the comforting words of the LORD; *“If thy children will keep my covenant [contract between God and man] and my testimony that I shall teach them, their children shall also sit upon thy throne for ever more;”* Psalm 132:12.

We know that the LORD is our strength in times of trouble. In the Old Testament book of Psalms, we read; *“give ear, O my people, to my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old: Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from our children, shewing to the generations to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength, and the wonderful works that he has done; for he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: that the generation to come might know them, even to the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children; that they might see their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments;”* Psalm 78;1-7. *“If ye love me, keep my commandments;”* John 14:15.

We see great reference to children as “children” are given special attention in the Bible. Of course, we who love the LORD recognize that we are His children, He is our heavenly Father. We also know that many times as adults we’re referenced as children in the Scriptures; God speaking to Moses; *“Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt;”* Exodus 3:10. *“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together;”* Romans 8:16&17.

Children are a “heritage of the LORD”. Heritage refers to taking possession or occupation. In a God-fearing family, God owns our children! They are God’s heritage, His people. That’s why we are told in Proverbs 22:6; *“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”*

*“Lo, children are a heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb his reward; as arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are the children of thy youth. Happy is the man that has a quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate;”* Psalm 127:3-5.

Arrows, bows, and spears are modern-day guns and bullets. All are weapons of war used to physically threaten, wound, or kill an enemy. The spiritual arrows of God are lightings, evils and calamities inflicted on men. A quiver is a place of hiding the arrows that rattle when the quiver is struck. Also, the arrow makes a strident noise [Latin for a harsh sound] as it travels through the air.

The rattling of the arrows in the quiver just before the flight of the arrow through the air is a threatening sound. The arrow can symbolize a shot as heard

from a gun in the present-day world. A shot from a gun gets our attention and rattles the nerves! God’s words can be spiritual arrows.

The Word of God both saves and destroys. *“Who whet their tongue like a sword [God’s Word] and bent their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words;”* Psalm 64:3.

Jehovah is mighty in battle. The children of a God-fearing family become “mighty adults” – as they speak God’s Words as arrows – of which can save or spiritually destroy the enemies in the gate, people of the world, or city. The happy man, mother, and father of their children – “will not be ashamed” – because their children will not fail in their hope or expectation. They place their confidence in God Almighty.

*“But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children’s children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments and do them.”* Psalm 103:17&18. *“Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD; Psalm 34:11. In the fear of the LORD is strong confidence [trust]: and his children shall have a place of refuge [shelter of falsehood]”* Proverbs 14:26.

*“The Just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him;”* Proverbs 20:7

Your comments are always appreciated. Contact email; valleygravel@outlook.com

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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1st Thessalonians 2:1-2  
Paul's Example of Godly Vindication  
By Terry Cheek Th.D...  
McDowell County

1 Thessalonians 2:1-2 *“For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain. (2) But even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict.”* (NKJV)

In Chapter one Paul explains why he and those with him were so thankful. I recommend you take time to read the book of 1st Thessalonians, it is an encouragement. But here, in chapter 2 Paul begins to discuss one of the main purposes of writing this epistle. It can be described as a Godly vindication of Christian character and ministry. It begins with an understanding of the very first word, Gar translated “for” in the English Bible actually creates a literary bridge between the chapters. Chapter 2:1-16 is an expansion of chapter 1:5-10, and chapter 2:1-12 looks into Paul’s arrival in Thessalonica and his conduct there. While 2:13-16 describes the Thessalonian's response.



But, chapter two doesn’t just repeat chapter one, while chapter one shows the Thessalonians’ knowledge and the response to their election, and chapter two builds upon the same theme to set down Paul’s defense against insinuations about him having ulterior motives in ministry and Christian service.

We don’t have specific names of Paul’s accusers. I’m certain if names were important, the Lord would have provided them. It’s enough that we know Paul faced not only physical but verbal and social persecution. The thesis we find here is a proper defense when we find ourselves wrongly attacked. Whether our attackers come from religious or secular foundations. Paul corrected heretics, Judaizers, spiritualists, Gnostics, and Jews, he confronted government officials, religious leaders, and the worldly, all sought his life because of the gospel he preached.

The strength and encouragement we find in the first two verses of 1st Thessalonians two comes from God and ultimately leads back to His glory. Paul first tells the Thessalonians they (he and his companions) are not there in vain, in other words, there is no immoral or evil intent in their coming. Many were opposing Paul and his companions and they were spread among many cities, each one trying to destroy reputation and character before the Apostle and his preachers arrive. Then Paul reminds them of his previous treatment and suffering at Philippi. He didn’t want sympathy. Paul wanted the Thessalonians to know, despite the attempted discouragement, physical assault, wrongful accusations, and character assignation he was not hindered in preaching the gospel. Paul uses the word parrēsiazomai, translated bold in the English Bible, to describe his approach in proclaiming the gospel even during conflict.

I titled the article “Paul’s example of godly vindication” because every truly born-again Christian will face persecution, to some degree or another, from inside the church and outside the church. When we do, how we approach it will determine how we are remembered. Paul could have fought fire with fire and had a following of people to help him, but God's plan for Paul would have been injured. Instead, Paul vindicated himself and his companions with the gospel. He boldly led a godly life and preached the gospel. We cannot lead a godly life and not preach a godly gospel. Neighbors, when you need vindication against wrong let the gospel be your guide and follow it boldly.

Until we meet again, either in print or in person, may God richly bless you is my prayer.

*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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“Lord, Why Am I Having to Wait?”  
By Russell McKinney  
Mitchell County



I was listening to a Christian radio station one day and happened to hear one of those call-in promos such stations do. This promo featured a woman who had called the station to voice her appreciation for the station’s influence on her life. I listened as she explained how she had interviewed for a certain job and had been forced to wait a week before finally hearing that she had gotten the job. Upon hearing that news, she had called the radio station to say a quick word about how we all need to learn to be patient and trust God. So, there I am, driving down the interstate, listening to this woman’s testimony, and I’m thinking, “Wow, you had to wait a whole week, huh? I’ve been waiting YEARS on the fulfillment of a couple of promises that I feel that God has made to me!”

Please understand that I don’t mean to devalue that woman’s experience. I’m sure that to her that week seemed like an eternity. But to those of us (and you know who you are) who have been waiting a long, long, long time for God to do a certain thing, one week seems like child’s play, right? Can I get an “Amen”?

The Bible stories are numerous. Abraham and Sarah waited twenty-five years to hold baby Isaac (Genesis 12:4, 21:5). Isaac and Rebekah waited twenty years to hold their twin babies, Jacob and Esau (Genesis 25:20-21,26). Joseph waited thirteen years to become a ruler in Egypt (Genesis 37:2, 41:46). Moses waited forty years in Midian before returning to Egypt to lead the Israelites (Acts 7:30). The woman with the issue of blood waited twelve years before Jesus healed her (Luke 8:43-47). The woman who was stooped over and couldn’t raise herself waited eighteen years before Jesus healed her (Luke 13:10-13).

Keep in mind now that none of those people, as far as we know, added even one day to their waiting by way of their disobedience or lack of faith. Instead, the appointed times of their waiting were all preordained by God, and all the praying in the world wouldn’t speed Him up any. His process simply had to run its course.

I often think of the Israelites and their 400 years of bondage in Egypt. They didn’t do anything except mind God to get themselves into that fix, and they couldn’t do anything to shorten their days of waiting on His deliverance. Whether they realized it or not, they were living under the time clock of a prophecy that God had spoken centuries earlier to Abraham, the father of their race. God had told him, *“Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs and will serve them, and they will afflict them for four hundred years”* (Genesis 15:13). Really, the length of Israel’s waiting in Egypt had as much to do with God delaying judgment upon the inhabitants of Canaan as it had to do with Israel (Genesis 15:16).

And so how should you apply all of this to your life as you continue to wait on God to do that certain something? Allow me to suggest two ways. First, you should consider the possibility that your waiting has more to do with others than it does you. You see, God making you wait doesn’t necessarily mean that it’s all your fault. It might just be that God is sorting some things out in the lives of others in your orbit.

Second, if you know that God has promised you something, hang in there with Him and keep expecting the fulfillment of that promise until you receive it. You should take encouragement from the fact that the Israelites in Egypt got no warning whatsoever that Moses was going to hit the town with their deliverance as his destiny. Nevertheless, one day there he stood with Aaron (Exodus 4:27-31). What had changed? Had the Israelites finally uttered just the right words in prayer? Nope. Had they finally managed to do everything God wanted them to do? Nope. Had they finally perfected their faith? Certainly not (as Moses would come to learn all too well). What had changed was that God’s time clock had finally struck midnight and it was time to begin a new day in the nation’s history.

Here’s hoping that your clock is about to strike midnight like that. Who knows? Today really could be the day. So, don't give up on God, and keep trusting in His perfect timing. Yes, He does indeed miss numerous opportunities to be early, but it's also true that He never runs late.

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



# Morganton Seventh Day Adventist Church

## Dog Days And Glory To God

By Steve Bietz  
Burke County

Yes, we are in the middle of the "Dog Days" of Summer. I was looking at a news article online that claimed that from mid-July till mid-August we Americans consume more liquids than any other time of the year. Makes sense to me, after all those are the "Dog Days" of Summer. During the summer, our bodies try and cool down through the natural process of sweating, hence the body asks and at times even begs for more fluids. The news article also mentioned that even sitting in an air-conditioned house or an office has a very drying effect on our bodies so that we still need extra hydration even as we stay cool.

Did you know that our brains and hearts are composed of 73% water? So no doubt about it, we must keep our bodies hydrated during these "Dog Days." No one would argue this point, but what liquids should we consume to keep our hearts and our brains and the rest of our bodies hydrated? After all, Paul tells us that *"whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."* (1 Corinthians 10:31) Do you think God is concerned about what we drink? Well, I think God is very concerned about our health.

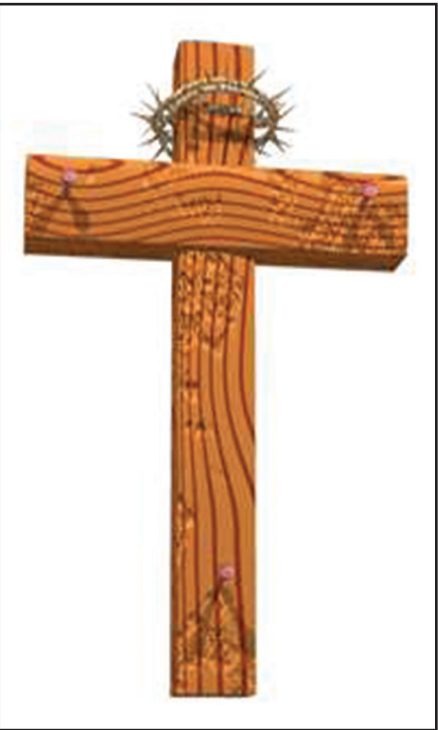
Public health researchers at Harvard University reported that people who drink two or more sugar-sweetened beverages a day--drinks such as soda, sports drinks, and sugar-sweetened fruit drinks, have a far greater chance of dying early than people who drink one or less a month. I wonder if it brings God glory when what we drink causes us to die younger than He planned for us?

Now we might suggest that now that we have this information, it will be the death of soda! How likely do you think that is? I do not doubt the findings of Harvard concerning the early health problems that come from drinking sodas. But even though we know the truth, it does not seem to stop us from doing bad things to ourselves. It was stated a few years back that processed meats cause cancer. Sales of processed meat were not affected at all.

The Bible says that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. We're told drinking sugary drinks shortens our lives. There are about ten tablespoons of sugar in a bottle of most sodas. God did not design our bodies to take that much sugar in one hit. God can enable us to drink to His glory during these "Dog Days" of summer. Thankfully, God has the power we need to bring about wonderful changes in our lives.

So indeed, stay hydrated during August's Dog Days. But drink to the glory of God and grab a bottle of water instead of a bottle of soda. Your body will thank you for it.

Steve Bietz, Pastor, Morganton Seventh day Adventist Church.



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To Know Christ is to Know the Truth

By Tim Tron  
Burke County

“I’ve always thought that the most powerful weapon in the world was the bomb, and that’s why I gave it to my people, but I’ve come to the conclusion that the most powerful weapon in the world is not the bomb, but it’s the truth.” – Andrei Sakharov

Every day, we are confronted with a multitude of information that puts us at odds with our ability to focus on the word of God, the truth. This dilemma comes in one of two variations. First and probably the most obvious are those distractions which are from a variety of sources; devices, media, radio, podcasts, etc. The other, and sometimes not as obvious, are the things of this world; the very objects we use to serve Him become so tremendously immense in nature that they overpower our Spirit-led intentions. We become consumed by the weight of their responsibilities. Under a load of this forbearance, we find ourselves struggling to keep God in our minds, let alone to hinder that departure from our hearts where we have placed Him, our last bastion of safety within, sheltered from all else.

To maintain our sanity, we must filter the cloud of noise, purging the false, or more popularly referred to as “fake news,” from the truth. In my grandfather’s milk barn, there was the room where he kept the Separator, as it was known. In my mind, I can still picture the stainless-steel piece of equipment that stood about chest high. Grandpa Tron would pour in the whole milk, which was straight from the cow, and it would spin the cream away from the milk, where it could then be collected and used to make the other by-products of the dairy; cheese, butter, etc. It was apparent when the Separator was done. Unfortunately, cleansing the input into our mental pallet is not as easy.

In a documentary in the early 1990’s Bill Moyer, an ordained minister in 1954 and a reporter for CBS and NBC News, presented a vision of the future as part of a special documentary, “A World of Ideas,” whereby he predicted we would soon be living in the “Age of Information.” However prophetic his words were at that time, albeit too soon for what was really to come in 1990; we now live in that time. From the traditional nightly news to the other end of the spectrum where anyone with a keyboard and access to social media can output information, be it true or false, we face a world of a constant barrage of data. Yet, more and more, unlike in what now seems ancient times, there are little to no references given, no facts to back up said purported info. Instead, there are sound bytes thrown like frisbees, tossed into the mix sometimes simply to cause a sensation; they aim to go viral, another operative of many that dwell in this spectrum.

What say you then of what Christ would say to those Jews who were on the fence of becoming believers, “*And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*” -John 8:32

To know the truth is to be the truth. “If it were only that simple,” you might respond.

Winston Churchill, “Truth is the most valuable thing in the world, often it is protected by a bodyguard of lies.”

Today, we struggle to resolve fact from fiction, not only in the blatant manner in which we often think but also in what is relevant to our purpose in Christ.

Churches and denominations across the globe face an attack from a force not of this world, trying to sway their leaders and congregations into softening their stand for the truth. Giving in to the world was not an option in the Apostle Paul’s time. As he spoke to the church in Corinth, he was brutally honest when he told them, “*For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ’s sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honorable, but we are despised. Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place; And labor, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: Being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.*”

Paul was making an ironic statement about the apostle’s sake. These words are something that could be taken totally out of context in today’s world and often are literally used against unknowing Christians, being misquoted to advance other ideologies. Thus, the lies once more surrounding the truth. Paul and the apostles



were anything but fools in Christ although, they were despised and hated by the Jews of their time. They were constantly under attack of defamation of character and literal persecution. Yet, as they would leave a town, either after a miraculous healing or near-death torture, they would, as my new-found friend Jimmy Clark would say, “Rejoice in their labors of the Holy Spirit.”

Jimmy had been part of a mission team to South Africa a few years back. There, they were scheduled to visit a prison where the mission team was to speak to some of the prisoners as part of their mission work. On their walk to the prison facility, Jimmy said he was overcome with a message that God had given to him, so much so that he asked the others if he might be able to share his vision when they arrived, to which they agreed. He described walking back to the hotel from the prison after his sermon as it being one of the greatest feelings in his life; his rejoicing in the Spirit had begun.

Our path isn’t always lit with the best of lighting. As we strive to walk down the pathway which we feel God hath set before us, we must feel like the psalmist when he wrote the words to the 23rd Psalm, “*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*” No matter where you are in the world, no matter where you are in your walk of faith, if you have begun, you still encounter the world in which you live. Through this perspective, we must give insight as to the physical and emotional challenges that being of the flesh entails.

Although your journey may be apparent, there will be at times where you will face avalanches of problems and trials. Nothing ever comes easy when you finally find yourself walking in faith. As one of my good friends and missionary Jeffrey Canada said to me once, “You know you are going in the right direction, with regard to faith, when you feel that significant headwind in your face.” Just as Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, we are buffeted, and nothing is for sure. Sometimes it feels as if you can barely hang on when another wave crashes over the bow of your ship, swamping you once more. Slowly, your grab onto the railing and pull yourself up. Taking a deep breath, you stand to your feet and take another step forward.

Do we give up?  
Do we quit?  
No, for we must not be vanquished. “*For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.*”-2 Corinthians 4:6-10

He, Jesus Christ, is the way, the truth, the light. Yet, in all the struggles and tests of our faith, we must not forget that once we come to know Him and truly serve, we can put our trust in Him. In this hope, for it is not simply a mystery, we have a guarantee of life eternal, that of which we cannot begin to comprehend in our earthly realm of consciousness. “*But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.*”-1 Corinthians 2:9

To know Christ is to know Truth. Confess your sins to Him, seek Him, knock, and the door shall be opened. “*That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*”-Romans 10:9

Finally, when we are left with little hope, when we have been knocked to our knees for what seems the last time, remember the words of Christ, shortly before leaving this earthly realm, when he spoke these words to his disciples, “*Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.*”

Know that through all we face, all the trials, persecutions, and adversarial relations, there is one thing we can count on; the Word of God, for it, is the ultimatum of truths, and for this, we shall ever be thankful.

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](mailto:twtron@live.com)



New Writer

By Joe Sturz  
Shenandoah, Virginia

I learn much more in the deep dark valleys of life than I do in the bright mountain-top experiences. The mountain top experiences often puff up my pride and set me up for a fall (Isaiah 2:17; Romans 11:20-22). In the valleys of losses, crosses, and defeats I learn the painful lessons of humility that stick with me. Growth experiences come in my trials and tribulations. (James 1:2-6) while temptations to be prideful and backslide often come in my successes (Proverbs 16:18; I Corinthians 8:1-3; James 4:6). In the Lord's plan for my life (Jeremiah 29:11; Ephesians 2:10) He knows just what I need and when and how to teach me the humility to develop my character (Proverbs 13:18; Galatians 5:22-25).

So let us rely on God's rod and staff to comfort us when we go through our "valleys" (Psalms 23:4; knowing that all that happens to us as we obey the Lord will be for our good (Romans 8:28; Hebrews 12:6). So when God in His love chastises us (Proverbs 3:11-13) and allows humiliations to come our way (Job 1:1-22) let us commit to humble ourselves as we pray for the grace of humility (Psalm 51:1-13). Let us remind ourselves we are hell-deserving sinners and deserve much worse! (Job 42:1-6; Romans 6:23; Galatians 6:3; Ephesians 2:1-2).

Brother Joe "humbled in the valleys" Sturz (Thursday, July 1, 2021, www.sturzchristiancounseling.com) Sharing what the Lord has taught me through: His Word, my mistakes, failures, and successes, and 47+ years as a Biblical counselor in my short, daily Bible messages on my Facebook Timeline and Sturz Christian Counseling Group. Seeking to apply all of the Bible to all of life. If they help you understand the Bible better and you would like to read more of them then click on "Like" and please share them with friends. If you want to receive them by email then send a request to my email joesturz80@gmail.com

To become a Christian you must believe in Jesus Christ the God-man (John 3:16) and the saving work He did shedding His blood on the Roman cross (I Corinthians 2:2; 15:3-4) as the only way to God and His heaven (John 14:6). Jesus suffered and died on the cross to take the holy God's just and fair punishment due to the sins of His people and remove their sinful guilt. Therefore satisfying the Holy God's justice and allowing Him to be merciful and forgive their sins without violating His justice. God raised His Son Jesus Christ from the dead on the third day showing His acceptance of His Son's sacrifice in their place and so secured for them a place in heaven (I Corinthians 15:1-4, 12-24; Romans 4:25; 5:1).

Confess to God the Father and turn from your sins and accept His Son Jesus Christ's person and work for you personally and have His forgiveness (I John 1:9).

Now you will want to Live in obedience to Him and His Word: active, serving, and accountable in a Bible-believing church from now on (John 8:31-32; Hebrews 10:22-26).

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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Celebrating Recovery

By Christy Young  
Mitchell County

Do you see the evidence of the presence of God in your life? Psalm 16:5-11 says, “The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot.6 The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.7 I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel: my reins also instruct me in the night seasons.8 I have set the LORD al-ways before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope.10 For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.11 Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.” When David looked at his life, he saw God’s presence all over it. As Christians, we need to train our eyes to See God and notice the indication of His never-ending presence. I can attest that I have seen the miracles of God in my own life. How often do we give Him the credit for it? Do we often consider it a chance, Qu incidence? The answered prayers, the blessing of a new day, the health of our family, the encouragement of a friend, the salvation of a child, breaking the bonds of addiction, and much more are only a few to mention of the miracles that we encounter. Appreciating the Lord’s handiwork etches the reality of His care more deeply within my life. A heart of praise and thanksgiving will create a special relationship with our Heavenly Father.

We should not only recognize the blessings of God, but we should adhere to His teachings and the direction that He puts before us. Matthew 5:8 states, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.” In other words, having clear conscience and holy thoughts will allow us to dwell in the presence of God; it will become a lifestyle. We will recognize our failures and try daily to improve. We will be more aware of God’s involvement in our lives and circumstances. The evidence of God in our lives creates power. It allows you to have boldness and peace that only comes from above. Viewing the world with spiritual eyes changes our perspective. We depart from an attitude of “I can’t” to “I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me.” Jesus’ power can pull us through anything if we will allow Him to shine and direct. God allows us to have choices; we can choose to ignore the presence of the Holy Spirit and live without Him or allow Him to dwell within us. Life is hard, especially in the struggles of today. Nevertheless, God wants a relationship with each of us. He wants to reveal Himself daily in our lives, giving us hope that we are never alone. Train yourself to See God daily and live your life with the confidence that a loving, omnipotent God is directing your way. The Master of the Sea, the creator of the universe, the Messiah, the Savior of the World is the power to pull us through. Seek and you shall find!

Christy Young is the blessed wife of Chris Young and proud mother of Hunter and Holden. She is a life-long resident of Mitchell County, works at Mitchell County Finance Office, and is a member of Bear Creek Baptist Church.



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“Something To Think About” -  
You Never Know Who’s Hiding

By Dennis Love  
McDowell County



I would say that the vast majority of us have read or heard what God says in 1 Samuel 15:22. However, not many of us take the time to really heed and follow through with what God is saying. Listen closely to what the Bible says in 1 Samuel 15:22; *“So Samuel said; Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as He has in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed the voice of God than the fat of rams.”*

I read a very interesting story about a man named Stephen Grellet. Stephen was a pioneer evangelist to the lumbermen in the Rocky Mountains. He felt the Spirit of God leading him to a particular lumber camp to preach. He obeyed the voice of the Lord and went. However, when he got there, the place was absolutely deserted. (Now right here is where most of us would have turned around and gone back home) But Stephen said; “Lord, I don’t understand, but I’m going to be obedient to your voice.” So, he opened up his Bible and preached a full-length sermon to absolutely nobody in that camp, or at least that is what he thought. Then after he preached, he pled for people to come to Christ for salvation. Imagine pleading for people to come to Christ for salvation when nobody is there! Years later, a man walked up to him in England and said, “I was the foreman at the lumber camp. I had come back to the camp to get an ax, and I heard you preaching. I stood behind a pile of lumber and listened. As you preached, my heart was warmed, and I accepted Jesus as my Savior. I later witnessed to four other men. Now, all five of us are missionaries preaching around the world.”

Obedience is better than sacrifice just as the Bible says in 1 Samuel 15:22. Do you know why we are not obeying God more than we are? It’s simply because we are not hearing what God is saying. We are simply not spending enough time listening to God. We pray and we ask, but seldom do we take the time to listen to what the Spirit of God wants to say to us. That’s why it is so important for us to have a quiet time with the Lord. It’s so important for us to get alone with God in a nook with His great book as we read it and listen to Him.

I remember driving up the road one day while on my way to a meeting when the Spirit of God spoke to my heart and impressed upon me to go and see a man who had never accepted Jesus as his Lord and Savior. I listened to the voice of the Spirit that day and made that visit. We talked about various things and we even talked about the church, but I didn’t pressure him to make a decision for Jesus that day. All I did was encourage him to come to church with his wife, and with his daughter. He started coming and one Sunday morning during the time of invitation, he stepped out from the pew he was in, and with tears in his eyes, and deep conviction in his heart, he invited Jesus to be his Lord and Savior. We had a lot of shouting and praising the Lord going on that day in the house of God!

So, even if it doesn’t make any sense at that precise moment. Even if it is in the middle of the night and the Spirit of God says to go and see someone. Obey the Spirit of God and God will do some great and awesome things in your life and the life of others. Just ask Stephen Grellet. You never know whose hiding and that’s something for all of us to really think about!

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

Sudoku

Solution on page 14

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

Seize the Moment

By Ken and Jan Merop  
Avery County



Moments come and moments go.  
They slip by so fluidly that God’s voice is easy to miss. Those moments are intertwined with others and can keep us from focusing on the softest whisper of the Holy Spirit.

It has been a quest of mine through this whole pandemic year to hear God’s voice...or his stirrings in my soul...more clearly. To know it is him and not just a fleeting thought of my own.

Being sheltered at home gave me much-needed time to dwell on this, learn and grow and become more familiar with the breezes blowing through my spirit.

When Jesus told Nicodemus that he must be born again to see the kingdom of God, Nicodemus was perplexed. All his religious training collided with this announcement. These had been the moments that had shaped his life.

And, yet, he apparently had missed that gentle whisper in his soul.

Then Jesus described how the birth of spiritual life through the Holy Spirit is like the wind blowing through the trees. We can hear it *“but can’t tell where it comes from or where it is going.”* (John 3: 8 NLT)

Such is the Spirit. Like the wind chimes singing the breeze’s song just outside my window. He softly blows in and through our lives directing, comforting, teaching us to be sons and daughters of the King of kings.

Early one morning, I put some Christian instrumental music on my tablet as I prepared to pray and have my quiet time with the Lord. It was peaceful, but it wasn’t stirring my thoughts or sensitivity as I had hoped.

So, I found another site and clicked on it.

The music lifted up praise to God and his holiness. Almost immediately, the atmosphere in the room changed. My heart and soul rose above the clamor of thoughts that threatened to crowd out God’s voice.

The result? Worship.

As I read God’s Word and other devotional thoughts, I welled up inside with tears that spoke of his presence and pleasure.

That was a moment seized!

However, those sacred moments can come when creatively preparing a meal and thanking God for the provision he has made for the nourishment of my body. Or they can supersede the simple washing of dishes at the kitchen sink, the cleaning of windows and letting the sun sparkle through; or, any number of simple or complicated tasks that make up any given day.

Focusing on him makes the simplest of tasks sacred.

Moments to be seized, to ponder and treasure. Selah

Sit and wait awhile

*Walking softly along, my favorite spot  
beckoned me to sit awhile...  
an invitation I gladly accepted.  
My soul at rest, my mind calling on God,  
I inhaled His fragrance and beauty  
all around me...and waited on Him.*

*“Be still and know that I am God.”  
Psalm 46:10*



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



# Berry Chapel Baptist Church

## No Pain No Gain

By Steve Williams  
Mitchell County

“No Pain, No Gain,” these words are an old proverb from the 1980s as an exercise motto that promises greater value rewards for the price of hard work. This concept is that if you are to become a stronger person, Physically, Mentally, Spiritually you would experience pain along the way. We all know that you get out of something what you put into something. You put a little effort little gain, you put a lot of effort you get a greater gain. Pain is not anything that people want or like to experience. The reason being you have no true control over pain. Whether it is Physical, Mental, or Spiritual pain it is out of our hands. Yes, I know that you can take medicine for physical and even mental pains but for spiritual pain, you must work through or plow through it. So in reality they are all out of our hands.

We all want a pain-free life. Even in Paul's life, we know that he had a thorn in the flesh and he asked 3 times for it to be removed and we know that it wasn't. The Lord told Paul: 2 Corinthians 12:9 *“And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”* I want you to know that I'm allergic to pain because it hurts. If I were to announce to my church congregation that for the next several weeks we will all be coming together to practice and experience pain and suffering I doubt seriously that I would have very many people to show up, if any. C.S. Lewis wrote: “God Whispers to us in our Pleasures, Speaks in our Conscience, but Shouts in our Pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.” And it's sad to say many Christians have become hard of hearing.

May I ask you what motivates you to make changes in your life? Think back to a time when you made a change in your life and ask the question, “What motivated me to make that change?” The greatest motivator that I've seen in my life and for other people to take action and to bring change into their lives is Pain. Now if I have hunger pains, I'm motivated to find something to eat. If I am experiencing the pain of no money, I soon get motivated to get a job. If I experience enough physical pain, I am motivated to see a doctor. Pain is unpleasant, but it is a strong motivator and can be a call to take action in our lives.


In my life, I have experienced pain due to sins that I have committed. And when we sin we experience discipline. Discipline is painful. However, later on, that pain produces something good for those that have experienced it, like righteousness and peace. The Bible says in 1 Peter 4:12-13 *“Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ.”* So pain and suffering are normal! But you know what? I want to avoid pain at all costs. How about You? But you know what the Bible Says in James 1:2-4 *“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; (Pain) 3 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. 4 But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”* In other words, if I want to be mature as a Christian Disciple, which should be all Christians goals, then I need to not run away from my pains and problems, but I need to use them to develop my faith. In other words: use the pain as a motivation for Action and Change. All through the Bible, we see that it was the people's pain that led them to Jesus Christ. So if you experience Pain go to Jesus and ask Him for help. Remember the Bible says in Matthew 11:28-30 *“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”*

### Words Of Wisdom:

- Pain is temporary. It may last a minute, or an hour, or a day, or a year, but eventually it will subside and something else will take its place. If I quit, however, it lasts forever. Lance Armstrong
- The climb might be tough and challenging, but the view is worth it. There is a purpose for that pain; you just can't always see it right away. N/A
- Pain makes man think. Thought makes man wise. Wisdom makes life endurable. John Patrick
- Our Purpose in this life is far greater than our pain. N/A
- True pain is living your life and never trusting in God because when you die without knowing God your pain will never go away. Steve Williams

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







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Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. 2 Corinthians 3:17



By Dave Ramsey

Borrow your own money?

Dear Dave,

I have a question about self-banking with whole term life insurance. The way I understand it, you can accrue a cash balance, borrow against it, and then pay interest to yourself. Is this worth it, or should I stay away from it and continue using a bank? Kunal

Dear Kunal,

Actually, it’s a whole life policy, not a term policy. And it’s an absolute scam. Basically, with your whole life, you pay about 20 times more for the same amount of insurance that you would with a term policy. The extra money goes into a savings account, and you earn next to nothing on it, even after you finally start to build it up. One of the ways they’re pitching it now is the self-banking concept, where you can use your own money. It’s nothing magical or anything because with a regular checking account you use your own money.

My advice is to stay away from the company that’s offering it and anything else they have. It’s a really bad product, and it’s a scummy way to sell whole life insurance—which is an awful product, to begin with. No one, except for folks in that business, believes in it or talks positively about it anymore.

Being able to borrow your own money? Really? Why on earth would anyone want to borrow their own money? It’s ridiculous! - Dave

Should I tithe on my business?

Dear Dave,

My wife and I are Christians, and we own a successful small business in our town. Should businesses tithe? Barker

Dear Barker,

This is a good question. Giving is never a bad idea unless you do it irresponsibly and to the point of putting your family in financial danger. To the best of my knowledge, the Bible only addresses the topic of tithing by individuals—not businesses.

Personally, I don’t give a tenth of my business gross or net until I receive my paycheck. When that happens—meaning it’s profit that I’m going to pay taxes on, or it’s salaried income out of my business—I tithe on the profits.

So, I can’t tell you I’ve found Biblical instruction to give a tenth of your business. Hope this helps!

—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](http://daveramsey.com) and on Twitter at [@DaveRamsey](https://twitter.com/DaveRamsey).

Founding Fathers and Influencing Citizens. How They Served Our Country—Nancy Morgan Hart

By David Streater, PhD  
Burke County

This is an American history educational moment of those who made a difference during the Revolutionary War era and how they served our Country.

Around 1735, Nancy Morgan Hart was born in either Pennsylvania or North Carolina. Nancy grew to become physically agile with a commanding personality and an American patriot. Even though Nancy was illiterate, she was a survivalist living off the land, as a sharpshooter, and a farmer. She and Benjamin Hart married had six children and raised their family in Georgia.

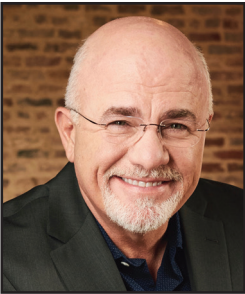
Being a lady of legend, some tales are more credible than are others. As a spy, Nancy dressed as a man and went into a British camp. Acting bizarre to keep others at bay, she was able to gather information and pass it to the patriots. Tories often harassed the Harts. On a particular home visit, the Tories killed Nancy’s only turkey, and then demanded she cook it for them. Patronizing them, Nancy cooked the bird and served them liquor while secretly sending her daughter to summon help. Nancy was caught hiding their guns—she was able to kill one and the others surrendered. When Benjamin and their neighbors responded, they suggested the Tories be shot. Nancy objected, and reportedly said, “Shooting was too good for them”. Nancy demanded they be hung. In 1912, archaeological evidence supported this event. Hart was described as, “a honey of a patriot, but the devil of a wife”.

Since the American Revolution, Georgia memorialized her heroism by naming a militia, county, school, highway, and other entities after her. As was true of other frontierswomen, she was a fierce patriot safeguarding her country and preserving memories of the War of Independence that continues to echo today.

As a widow, Nancy retired to Kentucky to be near her son and lived to be around ninety-three. During her funeral, there was “a total eclipse of the sun”. Please visit your Charters of Freedom setting in most western North Carolina counties. A Charters of Freedom setting consists of the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. They are on permanent display analogous to the Charters of Freedom in the National Archives, Washington, DC. Please visit our website ([ChartersofFreedom.com](http://ChartersofFreedom.com)) to learn more about our existing settings.

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



**Matthew 24:**  
**6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.**  
**7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.**  
**8 All these are the beginning of sorrows.**  
**9 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.**  
**10 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.**  
**11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.**  
**12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.**

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# Obedient Heart Fellowship

## Eyes on the Prize

By Jim Huskins  
McDowell County



Wes Strickland and I recently exchanged greetings while I bought electrical supplies where he works. He said he was well, and then he added, “I keep my eyes on the prize.” I laughed and responded, “That’s good. Not many of us recognize the prize.” I left the store wondering if I am among those few.

I reject the popular notion that “truth” is subjective, but no rational person could argue that we are not each responsible for defining “the prize.” While attempting to articulate my definition, I recalled a Bible lesson from my college days. The core of Professor Boatman’s lesson was, “To obey is better than sacrifice.”

1 Samuel 15 tells of a special task given by God to King Saul. The instructions were specific. Saul decided that it was okay for him to obey some of his assignments. The result of his partial obedience was catastrophic. God tore the kingship away from Saul, transferred leadership to a ruddy-faced shepherd boy named David, and condemned Saul and most of his sons to die in battle.

The task God gave to Saul is repugnant to modern sensibilities. Israel’s first king was told to destroy the nation of Amalek. Every person and animal was to be slain. All of Amalek’s cities and their possessions were to be destroyed by fire. He was specifically told to kill King Agag.

Saul’s actions are summarized in verse 9, “*But Saul and the people spared Agag as well as the best of the sheep, the cattle, even the fatlings and the lambs, and all that was good, since they were not willing to utterly destroy them....*” When Samuel confronted Saul about this disobedience, his primary excuse was that the people wanted to sacrifice the good animals to God. That’s when Samuel delivered the powerful lesson found in verse 22.

Tom Bradford writes extensively on this chapter. He explains the Hebrew word Herem: the ban, or holy war. Saul’s assignment to destroy Amalek was not a geopolitical war, or border dispute, or excursion to capture spoil or slaves, or a preemptive strike against a potential aggressor. It was an act of divine judgment against a nation that God deemed deserving of annihilation.

Modern Christians often conclude that unity or tolerance is more important than clear, Biblical instruction. King Saul decided that God was being “way harsh.” Replacement theologians often teach that holy war is one of many aspects of Unchanging God that was “nailed to the cross.” The only way to reach such an un-Biblical perspective is to ignore the Book of Revelation.

Scripture teaches that the Jezreel Valley will one day be filled with the blood of God’s enemies to the depth of a horse’s bridle. Some claim that this image from Revelation 14:20 is figurative language, but I am unable to conceive of any plausible, figurative interpretation. God will destroy those described in Revelation 9:20-21. “*The rest of mankind, those not killed by these plagues, did not repent and turn away from the works of their hands—they would not stop worshiping demons and the idols of gold and silver and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk. And they did not repent and turn away from their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their stealing.*”

God is loving, but He is not tolerant. He desires that none should perish. He wants all to come to Him in repentance seeking forgiveness. Salvation is a free gift by grace through faith in Jesus, but God expects those who are blessed with that gift to respond by living life on His terms. Those terms are expressed in many places. John 14:15 says. “*If you love me, keep my commandments.*”

Bradford says, “King Saul would have made a good Christian. He just could not bring himself to fully obey God’s Word.” Many Christians believe the lie that a different Saul, aka Paul of Tarsus, revoked God’s instructions for living. Both the Father and the Son claim that Torah will be in full effect until the end of the age. The modern Church tends to disregard every portion of God’s Word that seems inconvenient or irrational.

The Bible is either entirely true, or it is all deception. God is either the same yesterday, today, and forever, or He changes at whim. His instructions for living are either binding for all generations, or they have a secret expiration date. God either saves us from sin so that we may live in righteousness, or He is happy for us to continue sinning. The Law and The Prophets will either be in full force for as long as heaven and earth remain, or Jesus is a liar. King Saul’s story is proof that, though we cannot earn salvation through obedience, we can lose it through disobedience. How else do we explain the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira?

Samuel told Saul that obedience is better than sacrifice, but he did not say that sacrifice is abolished. We are required to sacrifice. Jesus’ death makes animal sacrifice a moot issue, but Romans 12:1 states that “*we are called to present our bodies as a living sacrifice.*” When writers of the so-called New Testament say that salvation is a free gift through faith, they do not mean that obedience is now optional. Grace does not nullify righteousness.

Only those who know what is most valuable can focus on the prize. I was pleased to discover that it was easy to articulate my definition—a life well-lived that leads to eternity well spent. Scripture makes it clear that such a reward is only available to those who love God by serving Him in faithful obedience.

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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# YOUR GOVERNMENT PAGES

## NC Senate District 47



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

It's no secret that Gov. Roy Cooper fundamentally disagrees with the Republican-led General Assembly on many issues. In fact, The Carolina Journal recently reported that Gov. Cooper has vetoed more legislation passed by the General Assembly than all the other North Carolina governors before him combined. He's vetoed bills designed to reopen our schools, to get folks back into the workforce, and even to fund major priorities in our state. Cooper's total number of vetoes? 57.

In fact, near the end of June, the Governor vetoed a Senate-led bill, which I cosponsored, allowing folks with a valid permit to carry a concealed handgun at churches that have an affiliated school on their campus. The bill only applied to properties that are both a school and a religious gathering place, including religious schools, and it would not have applied to any properties owned by a local board of education or county commission. The Salisbury Post recently reported that "at least 19 fatal shootings have occurred at churches since [...] 1999." Senator Carl Ford, one of the main sponsors of the bill, said it best about the Governor's veto: "I guess the Governor thinks that the Second Amendment applies to everyone except people worshipping God." I agree. Gov. Cooper shouldn't be allowed to tell us where our rights can and cannot be exercised.

But perhaps the most appalling veto the Governor has issued came last month when he vetoed the Human Life Non-Discrimination Act (HB453) – a bill aimed at prohibiting abortions based on race and even the prenatal diagnosis of Down syndrome.

I find that unconscionable. No one deserves to be discriminated against because of his or her race or disability. In fact, we have several federal laws that prohibit this, including the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Six states already prohibit abortions motivated by the race of the child and nine states prohibit abortions motivated by a child's disability. I believe North Carolina should be next on both lists.

My colleague, Senator Amy Galey, said that "with a stroke of his pen, Gov. Cooper just told North Carolinians that it's OK to discriminate based on race or disability as long as it's in the womb. This bill simply put an end to eugenics. It shouldn't be controversial to protect an unborn child with Down syndrome." And the North Carolina Values Commission stated that "children shouldn't have to pass a genetic test to earn the right to be born." They're both right. Gov. Cooper's veto suggests protecting children based on the color of their skin or a perceived disability isn't a priority and that only certain genetic traits make a human life valuable. A terrible precedent to set.

I don't expect the Governor's veto pen to run out of ink anytime soon, but you can be sure I will continue fighting for the values and freedoms of all North Carolinians.

Senator Ralph Hise serves as the Deputy President Pro Tempore in the North Carolina Senate representing Mitchell, Madison, McDowell, Polk, Rutherford, and Yancey counties.

## NC Senate District 46



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

In late June a bipartisan supermajority passed the North Carolina Senate's proposed budget with a 32-18 vote and sent it to the House of Representatives for consideration. The Senate's 2021-23 budget sets in motion a 10-year, \$12 billion cash infrastructure and capital plan, including \$3 billion in cash over the next two years for projects. For the past decade, North Carolina Republicans have enacted smart, restrained budgets. Because of that, we've seen strong budget surpluses. The Senate's 2021-23 budget proposes sweeping tax cuts and major infrastructure improvements, including funds for much-needed projects in District 46.

The Senate's budget includes a sweeping tax cut that reduces the personal income tax rate to 3.99% over five years and increases the zero-tax bracket to \$25,500 for married filers. In addition to supporting this historic tax cut and infrastructure plan, the Senate budget allocates \$74 million to help meet critical needs in District 46, such as:

- \$5 million for repairs of county courthouses;
- \$12 million to repair and renovate buildings on the NCSSM-Morganton campus;
- \$800,000 for Avery County DSS;
- \$600,000 for the renovation and relocation of Avery County's DSS;
- \$5 million for an occupational training facility in Caldwell County; and,
- \$15 million for a regional emergency services training center on the campus of WPCC.
- Fully funds the NC School of Science and Math Morganton campus so it can open in 2022.

Here are a few of the highlights of the overall Senate budget:

The total proposed budget allocation is \$25.7 billion in 2021-22 and \$26.6 billion in 2022-23. It replenishes the state's reserves, including the Rainy Day Fund.

For transportation, it allocates \$2.8 billion over the biennium for Strategic Transportation Investments, increases the General Maintenance Reserve by \$250 million over the biennium to respond to storms and conduct routine maintenance, for a total of \$1.4 billion over the biennium. It also invests more than \$1.2 billion over the biennium for road resurfacing projects, provides more than \$560 million for the Bridge Program, and over \$140 million for bridge preservation.

Tax Cuts: The budget tax package increases the zero-tax bracket to \$25,500, cuts the personal income tax rate from 5.25% to 3.99% by 2026, starting with 4.99% in 2022, and increases the child tax deduction by \$500 per child. A family of four earning the median household income would see a 37% income tax cut.

Salaries and Benefits: The Senate budget provides 3% raises over the biennium for most state employees, including teachers and UNC/community college employees. It creates a new experience-based salary schedule for correctional officers, which results in an average 7% raise that is designed to reduce or eliminate the current 20% vacancy rate in our prisons. There are also bonuses for all state employees using federal funds: \$1,500 for state employees who make less than \$75,000, and \$1,000 for state employees who make more than \$75,000. Law enforcement, correctional officers and staff, and 24-hour residential or treatment facility employees receive \$1,500.

In K-12 Education, the Senate budget spends \$10.4 billion in 2021-22 and \$10.5 billion in 2022-23, which represents an additional half-billion dollars in state dollars to public school education. Some of the highlights are \$40.9 million each year for school psychologists, which includes an additional \$9.8 million to ensure that every school district has at least one psychologist.

*God Bless America*



# YOUR GOVERNMENT PAGES

## NC House District 11



Rep. Madison Cawthorn  
828-808-2148

### From Washington:

I wanted to provide a little more insight into what my team and I have been up to in both Washington D.C. and the district.

This past week, I had the privilege of working alongside my colleagues in writing a letter to Senate and House Leadership for the immediate reimbursement of \$521 million in funding for our National Guard. When I came into office, I promised my support for both our veterans and our active-duty military. Without this vital financial support, our Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen, homeland response capabilities, and military readiness will be severely impacted. We owe it to our servicemen and women to offer them the same support they showed us during the five months they served in our nation's capital.

I was also proud to join Representative Cathy McMorris in sending a letter to the Secretary of Health and Human Services, Xavier Becerra, regarding the atrocious practice of partial-birth abortions. You, my constituents, deserve to know whether he will uphold and defend all U.S. laws, including the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act of 2003. I will always be firm against those who would silence the voices of the voiceless in our society.

A major issue facing our district and nation currently is rising crime and diminishing support for law enforcement. Unfortunately, the desire to back those who serve our communities and protect the most vulnerable has dwindled as a left-wing ideology has risen in its place. As major cities such as Chicago, Los Angeles, Atlanta, Portland, and New York City are afflicted by skyrocketing cases of violent crime, the Biden administration and his allies in Congress have placed a greater emphasis on defunding our law enforcement. The Biden Crime Crisis has cost innocent lives and has come as a direct result of their defunding of police departments across this nation. This is precisely what happens when we as a nation do not back the blue; a stance I continue to hold.

I also had the opportunity to address many conservative leaders and patriots at CPAC in Texas. I am proud to represent Western North Carolina on the national stage and bring our values into the broader national conversation.

### From NC-11:

Each time I have the opportunity to go back to my district and our mountains, I'm reminded again of why I ran for office.

This week, I had the privilege of visiting both the Veterans Healing Farm as well as the Velvet Morning Farms. With a district comprised of so many dedicated farmers as well as veterans, it was inspiring to see how Veterans Healing Farm has developed a means of integrating both communities with so much care and ingenuity. Our communities thrive when we are better able to support each other in ways that are both meaningful and sustainable.

My time at Velvet Morning Farms was equally as significant. Hearing directly from those who are working to feed and provide for our communities, understanding what their days consist of, and learning how I can better serve them allows for me too, in turn, continue to accurately represent them and their needs.

Within my district offices, my staff has continued to work relentlessly to rapidly resolve casework and give much-needed assistance to constituents in the district. We've received and resolved constituent concerns on a variety of topics including passport requests, IRS inquiries, stimulus checks, and veterans affairs cases. Whenever we can and however, we can, our team is here to serve NC-11.

I look forward to keeping you updated on my legislative work in Congress. My offices are actively responding to constituent calls and emails, as we are continually committed to meeting the needs of our district.

If I can be of service to you in any way, please don't hesitate to contact any of my five offices. One in Washington, DC, and four in North Carolina, or follow me on social media. On Twitter: @RepCawthorn and Facebook: @RepCawthorn, or on my website: <http://Cawthorn.house.gov>

## NC House District 86



Rep. Hugh Blackwell  
919-733-5805  
[Hugh.Blackwell@ncleg.net](mailto:Hugh.Blackwell@ncleg.net)

Following the economic turmoil and job loss created by the COVID-19 pandemic, putting North Carolinians back to work is Job #1 for the North Carolina legislature. Unfortunately, Governor Cooper vetoed the bipartisan bill, the "Put North Carolina Back to Work Act." As the economy comes back to life in North Carolina, small business owners and employers of all sizes are finding it hard to recruit workers who are still receiving weeks of COVID-enhanced unemployment payments. North Carolina Senator Chuck Edwards of Henderson County, who is also a MacDonald's franchise owner, has correctly said, "With the pandemic largely behind us, thousands of jobs are waiting to be filled, but this veto ensures that "Help Wanted" signs will remain up for months to come and more jobs will be sent to other countries where our manufacturers can find the workforce they need."

I am confident that most of you have seen the signs on what seems to be almost every small business, restaurant, both sit-down and fast-food, "Now Hiring" or "Help Wanted". Making it even tougher for employers to recruit workers, the Cooper veto also means that \$250 million in child-care assistance for eligible parents who want to return to work will not be available.

With the passage of the "Put North Carolina Back to Work Act," North Carolina would have joined 25 other states in ending the \$300 in extra weekly federal unemployment benefits. The bill also would have tightened job search requirements for those seeking to collect unemployment. Thus, to continue to receive unemployment pay, a recipient would have to accept a job if it paid at least 120% of weekly unemployment benefits. The Back to Work Act also would have required those seeking unemployment pay to respond to a job interview offer within 48 hours and to show up for job interviews. These all seem reasonable steps to encourage the return to work now that so many jobs are, in fact, going unfilled.

## NC House District 85



NC Commissioner of Labor  
Josh Dobson  
1-800-625-2267

We've seen so much positive change since the last edition of the Labor Ledger. I just two months, the COVID-19 vaccine has become readily available to all adults which has allowed more businesses to fully reopen and more people to safely gather in person for professional and social events. I'm thankful for the incredible work of the medical community, without which none of this progress would be possible.

Due to the loosening restrictions, I've been able to travel our state and visit with companies and worksites more frequently. In April, I visited the new Belmont Middle School in Gaston County. Beam Construction, the general contractor, and Gaston County Public School officials invited me to tour the newly completed school which will open to students in August. During the two-year construction project, Beam Construction reported no lost time workplace injuries of its employees or any of its subcontractors. Read more about my visit to this impressive project on Page XX.

Later in April, I attended my first Carolina Star Ceremony in Durham. We presented the certificate and flag to Amentum, the on-site contractor for GE Aviation. I was so impressed by Amentum's commitment to the safety of its workers and I look forward to returning to the facility soon for a tour. See Page XX for more information about the Carolina Star presentation.

As we enter summer, teenagers are looking for jobs and businesses are looking to hire. As you may know, in May our Wage and Hour Bureau rolled out a new process for issuing Youth Employment Certificates. I recognize that this is a significant change for employers, and our staff is committed to helping every business, parent, and youth work through this new process. See Page XX for more details.

One of the best sources of information for NCDOL's activities and accomplishments is our annual report. Our 2020 annual report is now complete and posted on our website. This report highlights the impressive work of our staff here at NCDOL, but it also highlights the many ways in which our department works together with employers and employees across the state.

Enjoy these first weeks of summer, and I look forward to seeing you soon!



# First Baptist of Marshall

## First Baptist of Marshall Humor - Laughter is Healthy for You

By Buddy Freeman  
Madison County



A couple had just been married when the wife said to her husband, “Honey, I’ve been thinking, now that we are married I think it’s time you quit playing golf. Maybe your should sell your golf clubs.” The husband gets this horrified look on his face. She asked, “Darling, what’s wrong?” The husband says, “Here for a minute you were sounding like my ex-wife.” She screams, “You never told me you were married before.” He says, “I wasn’t until now!”

The bride was escorted down the aisle and when she reached the altar, the groom was standing there with his golf bag and clubs. She asked, “What in the world are you doing with those gold clubs at our wedding?” He replied, “This isn’t going to take all day, is it?”

Seen on a tombstone in England, “Sir John Strange. Here lies an honest lawyer, and that is strange.”

A funeral director at the graveside was handing out pens inscribed with these words, “J.R. Phillips, a gravedigger. I’ll be the last one to let you down.”

The nice old maid believed in prayer. One night in a fit of loneliness she knelt at her bedside and said, “Dear Lord, I ask nothing for myself, but please send my mother a fine, handsome son-in-law.”

None-too-brilliant Jim Jukes came to the minister on Monday and said, “Parson, I want you to pray for me. The doctor says I have a floating kidney.” “But James, I don’t know how to pray for physical things. I pray for spiritual betterment, so I wouldn’t know how to pray for a floating kidney.” “Then Parson, how come yesterday in church you prayed for all the loose livers?”

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

# Walnut Grove Church

## Identical Twins

By Kurt Bomar  
Avery County



I read an interesting article in Jonathan Cahn’s The Book of Mysteries that I wanted to share. It centers around the story of the Scapegoat in Lev. 16:7-10. In short, on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement (the holiest day of the year for the Jew) the High Priest would be presented with two identical goats. He would reach into an urn and pull out two stones and randomly place them on the heads of the goats. One would be set free and one would be sacrificed.

Almost every event in the OT sacrificial system is a picture of something in the NT that would follow. This is no exception.

When Jesus stood before Pilot, there was another present at that time. His name was Barabbas. Of course, Jesus was sacrificed and Barabbas was set free.

But for this picture to be accurate, the two would have to be identical. Certainly, they were not identical in their lifestyles. Jesus lived a perfect life and Barabbas was the very picture of sin. So how could they be identical?

The key is in their names. The story is recorded in all four gospels but interestingly in the book of Matthew it says:

Matt. 27:15 *“Now it was the governor’s custom at the festival to release a prisoner chosen by the crowd. 16. At that time they had a well-known prisoner whose name was Jesus Barabbas.”*

So they had identical first names. But wait, there’s more. Jesus Christ was called the Son of God, or the son of the Father. But what about Jesus Barabbas. What did his last name mean?

Barabbas is broken down into two words: “Bar” which means “the son of” and “Abba” which of course is “Father”. So in fact they both had an identical last name. Both were called “the son of the Father”.

So once again, an OT picture was fulfilled by an NT event. What does that mean to us? In addition to the confidence of yet another OT prophecy being fulfilled by Jesus, we see that the picture is still active today.

We are all Barabbas’. We are all the very picture of sin. We are the scapegoats that have been released because of the sacrifice of Jesus.

Let us thank the Lord that our salvation is made possible by his sacrifice. Selah (think about it)

*Kurt Bomar is pastor of Walnut Grove Church.*

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# Evangelism Explosion International

## Scripture Calls Us to Share

By Rev. John B. Sorensen

The Bible is filled with words of hope. God’s Word assures us that if we put our faith and trust in Jesus Christ alone, we will spend eternity with Him in Heaven. That promise gives us the hope to endure what we go through in this life. But through the Scriptures, God also gives us a purpose, a task for us to carry out here on earth – to share that hope with others.

Sharing the Gospel is not restricted to trained pastors and missionaries. God calls every one of us to share our faith. Matthew 10:8 reminds us, “*Freely you have received; freely give.*” But talking to others about our faith can be scary. We face possible ridicule or rejection. Many believers don’t share because they don’t know what to say or how to even begin a spiritual conversation.

Scripture reminds us what motivated Jesus. “*When He saw the crowds, He had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd*” (Matthew 9:36). Jesus acted out of His love for others. They desperately needed hope, and He knew that the only way they could be truly free and reconciled to God was through Him.

That’s good news! But in that same scripture, Jesus also turned to His disciples and said, “*The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few*” (v.37). Through His immeasurable grace, God chooses us as the carriers of that message. Paul even calls us “*Christ’s ambassadors*” (2 Corinthians 5:20) – to share with the world that we can be reconciled to God. But sadly so few actively share their faith regularly.

1 Peter 3:15 tells us to “always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.” *As believers, we are sent into the world to share the Gospel with every man, woman, and child. “I have made you a light...that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth”* (Acts 13:47).

That is a critical task! Thankfully, God promises in His Word that He will not send us to accomplish it alone. He will send the Holy Spirit to help us. “*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses*” (Acts 1:8). We cannot be salt and light in our own strength. The Holy Spirit gives us the power to share our faith with others. When we step out in faith, Luke 12:11-12 encourages us not to worry: “*the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say.*”

Paul says in Romans 1:16 that the Gospel is “*the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes.*” Isn’t it amazing that God chooses to use us – fearful and fallible human beings – to share that power? When we do, He gives us the amazing opportunity to witness His power in action as it changes lives for eternity.

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](http://evangelismexplosion.org).



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# Morganton Baptist Church

## The Lesson of Contentment

By Dan Quorllo  
Burke County

Culture is driven by the prominence and prestige of possessions. The more that one has, the more he is regarded as being successful. Advertising is built upon this basic appeal and attempts to create a desire or perceived need for a particular product. This desire to appear successful has created an increasing attitude of discontentment.

The Bible speaks much on the topic of contentment. Paul acknowledged that this was a process that did not come naturally; instead, it was a learned process. Paul wrote in Philippians 4:11, “*Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.*” Paul’s contentment was an inward reality that was not contingent upon circumstances. It was a reality that he had come to learn because he learned the source of true contentment.

Hebrews 13:5-6 teaches us this source of contentment by stating, “*Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. 6 So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.*” The writer of Hebrews admonishes us that we are to avoid a lifestyle (conversation) that constantly desires more. Such a lifestyle is not characterized by contentment; rather, it is characterized by discontentment. Rather than desiring more, we are to be content with what we currently have, regardless of how favorably or unfavorably you perceive it to be.

Naturally, you might question how such a mindset is possible when you consider what you have. To begin, I would encourage you that you are more blessed than you realize. But the attitude of contentment comes by recognizing what we have in Jesus Christ and the resulting implications. Only those who have placed their trust in Jesus Christ can claim the promise by God, “*I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*” What more do we need than God’s presence in our lives? Until we learn that, we will never be content. The discontent person actually does not regard God’s divine presence as enough. Such a mindset creates boldness in verse 6, not fearing what man can do, for the Lord is my helper.

Most believers would quickly acknowledge that God has been very good. The next time you are tempted to complain, consider what you are saying: “God, you have been good, just not good enough for me.” Learn the lesson of contentment.

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



# The Orchard at Altapass

## Orchard At Altapass Looking For Volunteers

By Kate Groff  
Mitchell County

The Orchard at Altapass is looking for “a few good men” and women, teenagers, seniors—volunteers to resurrect the O’s butterfly garden. A few years after the purchase of the Orchard at Altapass, co-founder Judy Carson and naturalist Elizabeth Hunter planted a butterfly garden in memory of their friend Jan McKinney Conley, who had recently died. Over the past two-plus decades, this plot of showy flowers has seen good and bad times. When Judy died earlier this year, the garden was completely overgrown. Japanese chestnut trees shaded most of what remained of the garden, and weeds choked out the rest. In her memory, a generous outpouring of support flowed from friends and those who wanted the see the garden bloom again. And next year it will.

Marianne Cicala, landscape designer and recent transplant from her own biodynamic organic farm in Virginia, is working with the Orchard to create a sanctuary of utilitarian beauty in and around the existing butterfly garden. It will be almost twice the size and feature benches on which to sit and contemplate or watch as children frolic up and down the paths throughout, informational signage and plant identifiers, and a memorial for Judy. Each climate-friendly plant was carefully chosen for its benefit to the ecosystem, the butterflies, honeybees, and for its beauty.

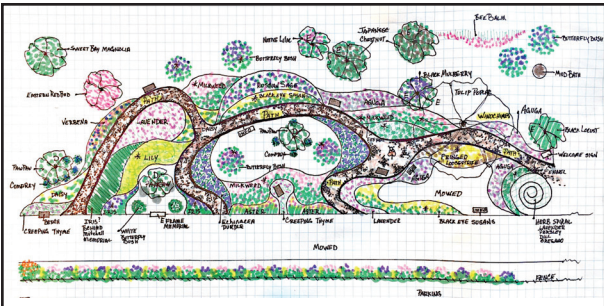
“We are breathing new life into Judy’s vision—through the Orchard’s family of supporters to the donation of plants and trees to companies who have offered to help clear the land and remove the heavy overgrowth. What remains are volunteers, ready and willing to give of their time and energy to make it all happen,” said executive director Beth Hilton. Reconstruction is scheduled to begin in August—once a week—with weeding out the old, invasive plants and preparing the soil for new and transplanted flowers. (Of the existing varieties, 10 will remain or be replanted in different garden locations.) Overgrown trees will be limbed, chipped, and the ground cleared for expansion. September will bring path definition, fencing, and delivery of new plants that will go in the ground during the cool days of October. (Twenty-one new varieties of plants and trees will be added.) November has colder weather, installation of Judy’s memorial, and completion of the butterfly garden that will blossom in spring.

Volunteers must be willing to get dirty, to make the garden happen. They’ll weed and mulch, dig up and transplant existing, dig in and plant new. They’ll stand for just a moment or two, shake off their gloves and shake hands with their fellow volunteers. And they’ll leave each afternoon with a satisfactory smile, knowing that they are helping the Orchard and its mission to “save the good stuff.”

“This rebirth of the garden is such an important addition to the Orchard, not only by providing enjoyment for visitors but by adding a significant layer of plant diversity that will expand the pollinator’s benefit in the Orchard,” added Cicala. To view the proposed plants, a bigger layout of the butterfly garden, and more about volunteering, please follow the menu bar under “What We Offer” or visit <https://altapassorchard.org/what-we-offer/the-monarchs/butterfly-garden>. Can’t wait? To lend a hand, get in touch right now by emailing [information@altapassorchard.org](mailto:information@altapassorchard.org).

Located at 1025 Orchard Road near Spruce Pine at mile marker 328.3 on the Blue Ridge Parkway, the Orchard is a not-for-profit working small batch heirloom apple orchard, music, and educational venue. Hours are 10 AM to 5 PM, Wednesday-Sunday. Family- and pet-friendly. Wheelchair accessible. Buses welcome. For information, please visit [www.altapassorchard.org](http://www.altapassorchard.org) or call 828-765-9531.

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





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The Answer Key to Pass Your Tests in Life

By Joyce Meyer



Have you ever prayed for patience and then you experienced a difficult time or a challenge? Or maybe you asked God to help you be more loving and encountered more people who are hard to love? A lot of times we pray for a promotion, or something better in life, without realizing we’re actually asking for a test.

James 1:12 (NIV) says, *“Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.”*

I’ve learned through my own journey in life that you can’t have a testimony of God’s goodness and fulfill your God-given potential without first having a test. Being abused by my father for so many years was very painful and difficult, but God has redeemed my pain and now He’s using it for His greater good. And I want to encourage you that if you let Him, He will do the same for you. Emmanuel, God with Us

In our tough times, it’s easy to feel like we’ve been abandoned. But it’s important to remember that one of the many names of God, Emmanuel, literally means “God with us.”

When going through a test, I often turn to Psalm 139:7-8 (NIV) for comfort. It says, *“Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.”*

God is always with us...everywhere we are, at all times. And He will never leave us, nor forsake us (see Deuteronomy 31:6). God doesn’t promise to instantly deliver us from everything when we want to be delivered from it, but He does promise to be with us in it.

If you’re hurting right now—if you’ve lost a loved one, if you’ve lost your job, if you’re struggling financially, if you’re heartbroken over a breakup, if you’re sick and experiencing physical pain—no matter what you’re going through, God understands. God knows right where you are, and He feels everything that you feel.

**The God of Redemption**

When we’re going through a test, it’s easy to forget we have a Savior who took on human form. He suffered the same trials and temptations that we face and He understands what you’re going through today.

While He doesn’t promise to take away all of your problems, if you invite Him into your life, He will redeem them and do something good through them. In fact, God takes what the world would throw away and turns it into something beautiful. He promises to give us His *“beauty instead of ashes...joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair”* (Isaiah 61:3 NIV)

Matthew 19:26 says that God is able to redeem any difficult situation, including yours.

**The Purpose in Your Times of Testing**

Tests are good because they bring out our weaknesses and show us where we need to improve. And we can only be prepared to move on to better things after we’ve passed them.

When God spoke to me more than 40 years ago and said, “You’re going to go all over the world and teach My Word,” I thought for sure I’d be on my way the next day. But there were many years when God had to work in my life, preparing me for that ministry through a variety of tests before it could come to pass.

If you’re going through a test, ask God to help you persevere, do what’s right, and continue to trust that it’s leading you to something better for your life. You can be sure God will use you, whatever your situation may be.

*Tests Increase Your Faith*

James 1:2-3 (NIV) says, *“Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.”*

God is faithful and the more experience you have with Him, little by little, the more you learn to trust Him. So each time you pass a test, your faith gets a little bit stronger.

I remember when God spoke to my heart and said, “Joyce, I always want you to remember this: However many people I let you help, that’s how many people you can hurt.” At that moment, I realized I had no business being in a position of leadership until I passed my tests, grew in my relationship with Jesus, and developed the character to love others the way God loves me.

I want to encourage you today to allow the tests in your life to do the same thing for you. You may be hurting right now, but God is working for your good and He is with you every step of the way.

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



By Carolyn Dotts  
Mitchell County



The COVID19 pandemic has brought innumerable changes to our lives in so many areas, and the Western Carolina Church GriefShare ministry was not exempt from these changes. The last time GriefShare met in person was in November 2019. Plans were being made for the Spring cycle of 2020 when all public gatherings were shut down, but just as quickly, GriefShare began working on offering virtual meetings. Despite mounting losses of life due to COVID and other causes, throughout 2020 no meetings were held, either in-person or virtually. I just could not imagine how effective a virtual GriefShare meeting would be. Because of multiple requests, despite my reluctance, I made plans to have a 2021 Spring cycle. I was not prepared for how God answered prayer and used that cycle to begin the healing process for the four women who participated. One of the benefits of virtual meetings is they allowed people outside our local community to join the meetings. One participant was from Virginia!

WCC GriefShare Fall 2021 cycle will begin on Thursday, August 19, 2021, at 6:00 pm and continue each Thursday. In-person meetings will be held at Western Carolina Church, with a virtual option through Zoom available for each session. Interested persons can register online at [www.griefshare.org](http://www.griefshare.org), or call Western Carolina Church@828-765-4633. The cost for the workbook is \$15, and scholarships are available if there is a need.

For those who are unfamiliar with the GriefShare Ministry, it is an international organization under the umbrella ministry of Church Initiative, based right here in Raleigh, NC. In 2007 after I lost my husband, Jimm, in a car accident, I participated in GriefShare in Boone. I knew this was something that was greatly needed in Mitchell County, and in 2008 our first meeting was held. Since then, GriefShare has become established in Mitchell County as a ministry of Western Carolina Church. All GriefShare ministries are required by Church Initiative to be associated with a church.

GriefShare meetings usually last 1 ½ to 2 hours and use a format of video viewing, discussion, and the workbook. Groups are usually small, no more than 10, and confidentiality is well respected among participants. No one is required to speak, although participation is encouraged. Tears and silence are common appropriate responses.

There is hope and healing found in GriefShare. Over the last 15 years over 100 persons have sought support from the program itself and others who are participating in a second and even third cycle. If you would like more information, please call Carolyn Dotts@828-467-1433.

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





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# Crossword

Crossword 269 and Solution  
ACROSS  
1 abbr. for the ninth book of the Old Testament  
4 Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the \_\_\_\_ offering?" (Gen 22:7)  
9 They proclaimed \_\_\_\_ and seated Naboth (1,4) (1 Kings 21:12)  
14 to seek an \_\_\_\_: He will cast lots with arrows (Ezek 21:21)  
16 In the last days , God says, I will \_\_\_\_ out my Spirit (Acts 2:17)  
17 A \_\_\_\_ who oppresses the poor is like a driving rain that leaves no (Prov 28:3)  
18 Lift up your skirts, bare your legs, and \_\_\_\_ through the streams (Isa 47:2)  
19 will awake: \_\_\_\_ to everlasting life, others to shame (Dan 12:2)  
20 we spend our years as \_\_\_\_ that is told (1,4) (Ps 90:9) KJV  
21 Pharaoh Neco made \_\_\_\_ son of Josiah king in place of his (2 Kings 23:34)  
23 Who would approach him with \_\_\_\_? (1,6) (Job 41:13)  
25 Brought up or raised (Lam 2:22)  
26 made the tomb secure by putting \_\_\_\_ on the stone (1,4) (Matt 27:66)  
27 The \_\_\_\_ cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" (1 Cor 12:21)  
28 mumbled, murmured (Luke 15:1-2)  
32 he who \_\_\_\_ righteousness reaps a sure reward (Prov 11:18)  
35 in nakedness and \_\_\_\_ poverty, you will serve the enemies (Deut 28:48)  
36 they would have repented long \_\_\_\_ in sackcloth and ashes (Matt 11:21)  
37 do not \_\_\_\_ what is evil but what is good (3 John 11)  
39 Oh, that you would bless me and \_\_\_\_ my territory (1 Chron 4:10)  
41 But you would be \_\_\_\_ with the finest of wheat (Ps 81:16)  
42 Bring my sons from \_\_\_\_ and my daughters (Isa 43:6)  
44 A state of confusion  
45 he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and \_\_\_\_ at my word (Isa 66:2)  
48 the Israelites went through the \_\_\_\_ on dry ground (Exod 14:22)  
50 Forts and towers in the wooded \_\_\_\_ (2 Chron 27:4)  
51 every tenth animal that \_\_\_\_ under the shepherd's rod (Lev 27:32)  
55 Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be \_\_\_\_, and repent (Rev 3:19)

58 Daniel prospered during the reign of Cyrus the \_\_\_\_ (Dan 6:28)  
59 the turtle and the \_\_\_\_ and the swallow (Jer 8:7) KJV  
60 We hear that some among you are \_\_\_\_ . They are not busy (2 Thess 3:11)  
62 They begged him to let them touch even the \_\_\_\_ of his cloak (Mark 6:56)  
63 You have loved righteousness and \_\_\_\_ wickedness (Heb 1:9)  
64 I have \_\_\_\_ to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? (Matt 3:14) KJV  
65 From the \_\_\_\_ of your foot to the top of your head (Isa 1:6)  
66 twice as much , two \_\_\_\_ for each person (Ex 16:22)  
67 The wicked plot against the righteous and \_\_\_\_ their teeth at them (Ps 37:12)  
68 Abner son of \_\_\_\_, the commander of Saul's army (2 Sam 2:8)  
DOWN  
1 so that the \_\_\_\_ and the reaper may be glad together (John 4:36)  
2 every kind of clean animal, \_\_\_\_ and its mate (1,4) (Gen 7:2)  
3 The ram that you saw represents the kings of \_\_\_\_ and Persia (Dan 8:20)  
5 as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it \_\_\_\_ down (2 Kings 21:13)  
6 in a manger, because there was no \_\_\_\_ for them in the inn (Luke 2:7)  
7 abbr. for the fourth book of the Old Testament  
8 Cyrus king of Persia had them brought by Mithredath the \_\_\_\_ (Ezra 1:8)  
9 The ark came to rest on the mountains of \_\_\_\_ (Gen 8:5)  
10 if Christ has not been raised, your faith is \_\_\_\_; you are still in (1 Cor 15:17)  
11 I will send \_\_\_\_, saying, Go, find out (1,3) (1 Sam 20:21) (KJV)  
12 Go, \_\_\_\_ everything you have and give to the poor (Mark 10:21)  
13 Adam and Eve both ate from the \_\_\_\_ of good and evil (Gen 3:12-13)  
15 the row on the side \_\_\_\_ the sanctuary was a hundred cubits.(Ezek 42:9)  
22 the fear of the LORD is the \_\_\_\_ to this treasure (Isa 33:6)  
24 Each frame is to \_\_\_\_ cubits long and a cubit and a half (2,3) (Ex 26:16)  
26 Who \_\_\_\_, O Sovereign LORD, and what is my family (2,1) (2 Sam 7:18)  
29 it is a \_\_\_\_ thing that the king requireth (Dan 2:11) KJV

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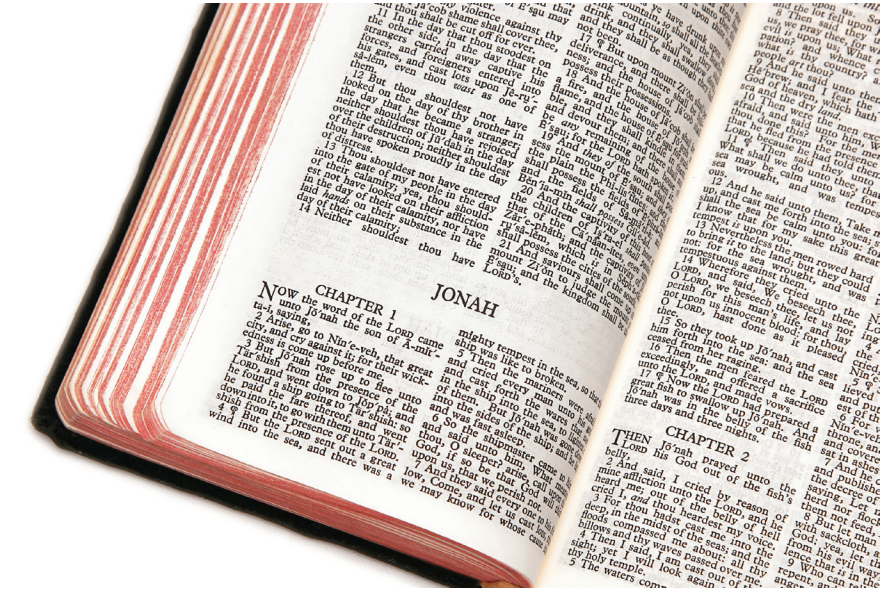
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30 They hatch the \_\_\_\_ of vipers and spin a spider's web (Isa 59:5)  
31 Man \_\_\_\_ not live on bread alone (Matt 4:4)  
32 Take them down to the water, and I will \_\_\_\_ them for you (Judg 7:4)  
33 Take a pot, and put an \_\_\_\_ full of manna therein (Exodus 16:33) KJV  
34 for \_\_\_\_ is the gate, and broad is the way (Matt 7:13)  
35 David returned from \_\_\_\_ the Amalekites (2 Sam 1:1)  
38 Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' \_\_\_\_ (1 Tim 4:7)  
40 increases his wealth by exorbitant interest \_\_\_\_ it for another (Prov 28:8)  
43 transportation beast (Matt 21:2) KJV  
46 fish, and all \_\_\_\_ of ware, and sold on the Sabbath (Neh 13:16) KJV  
47 Pride only \_\_\_\_ quarrels, but wisdom is found in those who (Prov 13:10)  
48 one who in judging seeks

justice and \_\_\_\_ the cause of righteousness (Isa 16:5)  
49 O Lord, let your \_\_\_\_ be attentive to the prayer of this your servant (Neh 1:11)  
52 Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and \_\_\_\_ (Matt 15:21)  
53 The first was like a lion, and it had the wings of an \_\_\_\_ (Dan 7:4)  
54 look of contempt or scorn (Isa.57:4)  
55 the wall will cry out, and the beams of the woodwork will \_\_\_\_ it (Hab 2:11)  
56 Bring me a heifer, a goat and \_\_\_\_ (1,3) (Gen 15:9)  
57 price for his release is to be based on the \_\_\_\_ paid to a hired man (Lev 25:50)  
58 give attention to your servant's prayer and his \_\_\_\_ for mercy (IKing 8:28)  
61 shall be cast into the \_\_\_\_ of lions (Daniel 6:12)

*Solution on page 14*







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