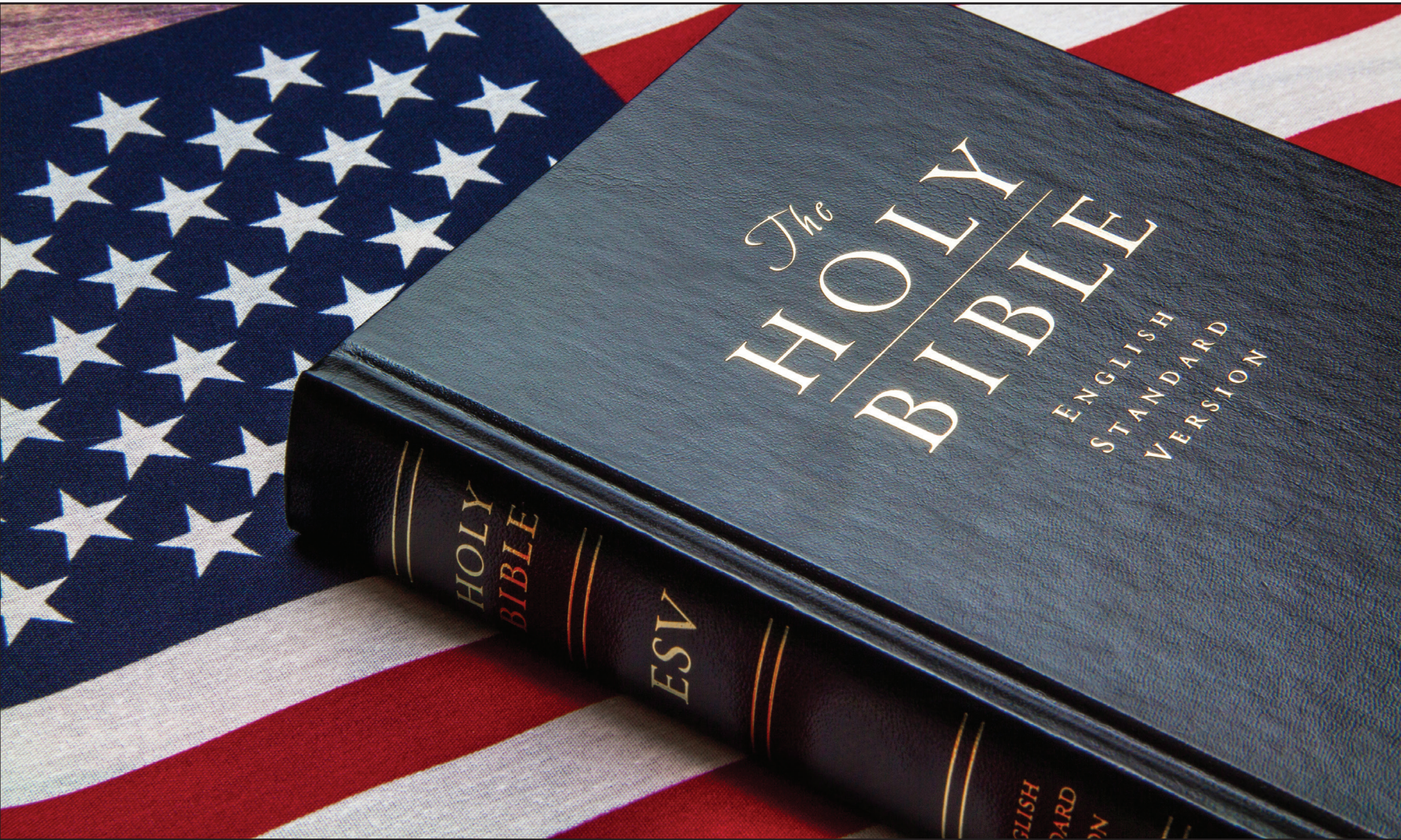




# BLUE RIDGE CHRISTIAN NEWS

## God Bless America



### Bear Creek Baptist Church

#### God Bless America, Please!

By Bruce Cannon  
Mitchell County



We have all heard the expression, “Christmas In July.” The song below is actually a Christmas song sung by the group Casting Crowns. “While You Were Sleeping” has a tremendous message! It expresses the fact that while the Jewish nation was sleeping the Savior of the world was born. While they were sleeping (spiritually) He became man but they, like so many today, had no room for Him. While they were asleep He lived a life of love and light among them for years and they missed it completely! And they crucified Him! How could they have been so blind? So deceived? As I write this article mid-June for the July edition of the Blue Ridge Christian News several very troubling news stories have broken:

- 1) A “Big Gay BBQ is being promoted to take place in Spruce Pine just off the Blue Ridge Parkway. How can this happen?
- 2) The Joint Chiefs Of Staff have just celebrated gay pride month by hosting a ranking officer in the Navy who proudly boasts of his gay lifestyle. How can this happen?
- 3) A sex-trafficking ring has just been busted in east Tennessee and included a Bakersville man. How can this happen?
- 4) Several more businesses are closing in our area and many restaurants cannot have indoor dining or have closed altogether, simply because they cannot get workers. Why? Folk would rather get handouts rather than work which further busts the American economy. How can this happen?

The answer is: we have been sleeping as the Church. We have failed to take note of our spiritual condition and have not begged our God for mercy, grace, forgiveness, and help. Check out these words to “While You Were Sleeping” and see if they are not a commentary on our condition:

“Oh, little town of Bethlehem Looks like another silent night  
Above your deep and dreamless sleep A giant star lights up the sky  
And while you’re lying in the dark There shines an everlasting light  
For the King has left His throne And is sleeping in a manger tonight, tonight  
Oh, Bethlehem, what you have missed While you were sleeping  
For God became a man And stepped into your world today

Oh Bethlehem, you will go down in history As a city with no room for its King  
While you were sleeping While you were sleeping  
Oh, little town of Jerusalem Looks like another silent night  
The Father gave His only Son The way, the truth, the life had come  
But there was no room for Him in the world He came to save  
Jerusalem, what you have missed While you were sleeping?  
The Savior of the world Is dying on your cross today  
Jerusalem, you will go down in history As a city with no room for its King  
While you were sleeping While you were sleeping  
United States of America Looks like another silent night  
As you were sung to sleep by philosophies That save the trees and kill the children  
And while were lying in the dark Theres a shout heard cross the eastern sky  
For the Bridegroom has returned And has carried His bride away in the night, in the night

America, what will we miss While we are sleeping  
Will Jesus come again And leave us slumbering where we lay  
America, will we go down in history As a nation with no room for its King  
Will we be sleeping? Will we be sleeping?  
United States of America Looks like another silent night”

With all the lawlessness pervading America today, with all the Coronavirus has caused, with the “civil war” between the races underway, and with sin abounding unlike any of us have ever seen, more people are talking about the coming of the Lord today than in recent past. They are using Scriptures such as Matthew 24:7,8 to ask, “Is this the beginning of sorrows Jesus spoke of in the Olivet Discourse?” Are we seeing the precursor to the Great Tribulation period? Are we so close to the coming of the Lord for His bride that wedding music is beginning to be played in Heaven?

As we have our birthday this July the 4th pray with me that somehow, someday America can wake up, confess her sins and that God in His wonderful mercy and grace will be able to turn back this tremendous onslaught of evil that has risen up in our midst today. “God Bless America, land that I love,” PLEASE LORD. In Jesus Name, we pray! 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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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

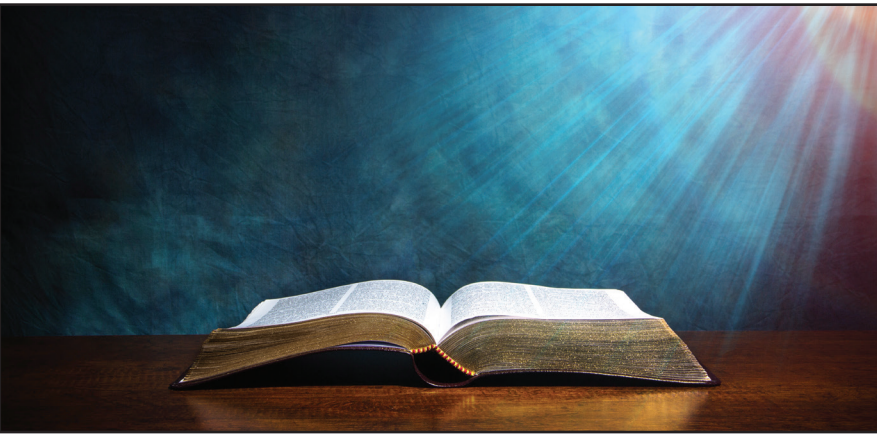
Our soul, the essence of our being, was created by God to exist forever. That forever is spent in one of two places: eternally present and in union with God because of His forgiveness and salvation or eternally separated from God because of sin and unbelief. At the moment that our physical body dies, 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)





# Contents

## In Every Issue

Life Lessons - p. 9

Your Government - p. 32

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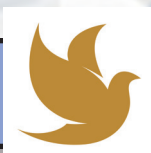
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*“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace: that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation: that saith unto Zion. Thy God reigneth!”*

Isaiah 52:7 KJV



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# Church Directory



## 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

[opcmmikecloy@gmail.com](mailto:opcmmikecloy@gmail.com)

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

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

## Berry Chapel Baptist Church

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

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## 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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## 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

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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 6:30 pm

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

## Newland Christian Church

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

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## Burkemont Baptist Church

4668 Burkemont Rd.  
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828-437-2357  
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### Dr. Luke A. Lane

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

## Marion Seventh-day Adventist Church

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

### Pastor Tim Sheridan

Sabbath (Saturday)  
Bible Study - 9:15 am  
Sabbath Worship - 10:50 am  
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Gospel of Jesus Christ!  
[www.marionnc.adventistchurch.org](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

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## 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

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# Obedient Heart Fellowship

## Rock or Sand

By Jim Huskins  
McDowell County



Abraham Lincoln famously described the national bloodbath of his age as a struggle to determine the longevity of a nation “conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.” America carried the scars of that test as she regrouped and built a singular society based on the solid foundations of civil liberty, free enterprise, and Godly principle. Every human society is imperfect, but people from around the world flocked to the US because they wanted to live as Americans.

Sixteen decades later, the notions of liberty and equality are again under assault. Constitutional freedoms, long considered the bedrock of our society, now seem more like sand castles as many express an eagerness to swap freedom for “safety.” A powerful economy that long tended to reward effort and wisdom has been sacrificed on the altar of greed and unholy alliance. Postmodern denial of the existence of “absolute truth” causes many to view Godliness as “antiquated” and a hindrance to “unity.” Our legal codes legitimize practices that God’s Word labels abomination.

These situations would have scarcely been thinkable a few decades ago. They might still be viewed with disdain if Americans were better students of our national identity. Those who know the history of our country can see our current state for what it is—terrifying!

Those who believe and attempt to follow the Bible now comprise the only segment within our culture who still hold to standards that were long-accepted gauges of public and personal morality. Groups who oppose powerful trends within any society are always subject to attack. Our Constitution once guarded the rights of free thought, free speech, and free association. These protections are mostly gone, and the vestiges of liberty which do remain no longer apply to people who claim to love and serve the God of Abraham, Issac, and Jacob.

Any who question this assessment should attempt to use some popular social media platform to promote Biblical teaching on morality, sexuality, or infanticide. Scriptural principles, which for most of our history expressed widely-held conviction, are seldom tolerated by Google’s minions. Even worse than the rejection of Godly standards by secular society is the now widespread rejection of those same standards by many who claim to be Christians.

Modern Christianity is a tale of whittling scripture down to size. As long as God’s people ground their lives in God’s Word, then God’s Church has the power to withstand satan’s agenda. When Biblical truth is compromised to maintain “harmony,” the Church ceases making “disciples of all nations” and becomes merely another outlet for pop psychology. Jesus resisted the devil by quoting Scripture, not by empaneling a focus group. God’s instructions for living, which King David called “a light to my feet and a lamp to my path” are almost universally ignored. A disturbing number of preachers and teachers claim that Christians are not even bound by the foundational teachings of the Ten Commandments. This is not surprising since most Christians long ago abandoned the Fourth Commandment.

God’s Word is unchanging. “You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of YHWH your God that I command you. (Deuteronomy 4:2)” “Everything that I command you, you shall be careful to do. You shall not add to it or take from it. (Deuteronomy 12:32)” Chapters 7 and 28 of Deuteronomy describe the blessings that God will bestow on those who follow His instructions. Those same chapters also detail the curses which fall on those who do not.

The net effect of compromising the Bible is sobering: Every mainline denomination is near collapse. In so-called “successful” congregations, Biblical truth often takes a back seat to professional entertainment. Children who grow up in Church seldom remain in the faith, especially if they attend college. Many Christians who describe themselves as Evangelicals support same-sex marriage, find nothing wrong with cohabitation, and/or deny Bible miracles. Some question the deity of Christ.

None of this would be possible if Christians knew and implemented the first five books of the Bible. They spell out what Jesus and the New Testament writers call “righteousness.” Paul, Peter, James, John, and Jude quoted those books extensively. Jesus’ every action was guided by them. He stated emphatically that what is taught in them will be in full force as long as heaven and earth exist. Paul would be dismayed to learn that modern believers think he revoked them.

Our nation’s founders learned from the Bible that everyone is created equal. Through unimaginable sacrifice, and with little regard for personal safety, they established a nation built on freedom and equality. They warned that such a system is fragile. Great civilizations always crumble from within. This year’s celebration of Independence Day is poignant because powerful opponents freely walk among us. Many who have been nurtured by America now claim that civil liberty, free enterprise, and Godly principle are evil.

Many Christians are ashamed of what the Bible teaches, embarrassed by God’s call to holiness, afraid to be considered “intolerant” by secular society. They are like Jeshurun: “But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation. (Deuteronomy 32:15)”

The Nation of Israel was protected by God as long as they followed His instructions. When they chose unrighteousness, He abandoned them to their enemies. God paid an unimaginable price for our freedom from sin, but the Bible does not teach that He is obligated to preserve that freedom when we refuse to live life on His terms.

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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# First Baptist of Marshall

## Humor

By Buddy Freeman  
Madison County



Rev. Buddy wanted to start a Preaching Clinic for the freshmen class coming to GWC. They had to come one week before college started. He wanted to teach them how to preach and how to develop sermons, along with praying.

Buddy used three kinds of sermons: 1-First, the TEXTUAL SERMON. The Textual Sermon uses only 2-4 verses of scripture. 2-Second, the TOPICAL SERMON. The Topical Sermons is where the preacher tries to find scripture to support the topic. 3-Third, Then he can use THE EXPOSITORY SERMON. It uses a lot of scripture. It can use a whole chapter of the Bible.

Buddy invited the students to come from Monday-Friday. They had two books and the Bible. Each one spent time in the Library studying from 6:30 PM to 10:00 PM. He had an excellent preacher each day to come to preach to the students. Then students took time each day for praying and studying.

Remember, the person could choose one of the three kinds of sermons: THE TEXTUAL SERMON, THE TOPICAL SERMON, or from the EXPOSITORY SERMON.

There was an older student who thought he knew everything. He would criticize the other students daily. Each student had to preach a 10-minute sermon. When the last day came, Buddy put the older student as the last student to preach. When he walked to the front Buddy asked that student "Which one of those three sermons did you choose to preach?" He gave a big smile and, so help me, he said, "I preached a SUPPOSITORY SERMON."

Buddy and the students were rolling in their seats. This is the truth.

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

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# Morganton Seventh Day Adventist

## A Gift From God Called July 4th

By Steve Bietz  
Burke County

On July 4th, 1946, John F Kennedy - then 29 years old, the Democratic nominee for a Massachusetts Congressional Seat, and still a lieutenant in the Navy Reserve - was the featured speaker at the City of Boston's Independence Day celebration. Kennedy spoke at Faneuil Hall, the same building where long ago the Colonists had gathered to protest taxes imposed by King George and his Parliament.

But Kennedy did not begin his speech on the topic of taxes or the British, but instead, he opened his remarks by talking about religion. Kennedy said, "The informing spirit of the American character has always been a deep religious sense. Throughout the years, down to the present, a devotion to fundamental religious principles has characterized American thought and action." Kennedy would connect his thoughts to Independence Day with these words. "Our government was founded on the essential religious idea of the integrity of the individual. It was this religious sense which inspired the authors of the Declaration of Independence and their words: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights.'"

I like those thoughts that Kennedy stated over 70 years ago. I like the fact that the signers of the Declaration of Independence thought that without the Creator there would not even be a July 4th to celebrate.

On January 20th, 1961, in Washington DC in his inaugural address, Kennedy stated: "The same revolutionary beliefs for which our forebears fought are still at issue around the globe - the belief that the rights of man come not from the generosity of the state but from the Hand of God." Kennedy is still correct as that battle still is being fought. Governments are in place by God's grace so that these same governments can protect the God-supplied rights from the Creator's Hands.

I cannot guess what Kennedy's motives were as a politician for emphasizing these points, but didn't he have it exactly correct? That amid all the fireworks and hot dogs on the grill this July 4th, there is no escaping this truth. This country has always believed in rights that are God's gift to us all. I indeed subscribe to a belief in the separation of church and state. And I stand behind the First Amendment's clause that prohibits Congress from establishing a religion. Our planet has seen horrible results when a government is also in charge of religion. However, I do believe that the best way to be citizens is to take the American slogan, "In God We Trust" and live those words. After all, Americans and the world have been "endowed by their Creator."

Wow, now that is worth celebrating not just on the Fourth of July, but all the time!

Steve Bietz, Pastor, Morganton Seventh day Adventist Church.



# Evergreen Church

## The Most Astonishing Thing

By John McCoury  
Roan Mountain, Tennessee



*"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God". 1 John 3:1*

Here is an astonishing thing. It is not the fact that God loves, but how God loves. What manner of love is this! Literally, the Greek for what manner is of what country is this! It is an exclamation of astonishment, of surprise. What kind of country is this, what foreign land is this, that is represented in love like that! It is the strangeness of God's love that is in view in this whole thing. How is God's love strange? Well, John says, in that it makes us the children of God, perhaps some of you are thinking. You may be surprised at this, but I'm not. Why shouldn't I be a child of God, like anyone else? If you think this, then you do not understand righteousness.

Romans 5 reveals to us how God saw us when He found us: When we were still powerless when we were helpless. When we were unable to make any contribution to the redemption we desperately needed, when there was not a thing we could do about it, and even our good was tainted with self-interest so that we could not contribute whatsoever, at just the right time, *"when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly,—for us"* (Romans 5:6). But it does not stop there: *"While we were still sinners, Christ died for us"* (Romans 5:8). While we were still sinners, or while we were proud, overbearing in our attitude toward God, treating Him with haughtiness and indifference, Christ died for us. Even this does not exhaust His description. He goes on a verse or two later to say, if, *"when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son..."* (Romans 5:10). If, when we were God's enemies; not only without strength, not only sinners, proud and prickly our Christ died for us.

When we were opposed to God, enemies of His grace, treacherous, hateful, resenting what God was doing, and resisting every attempt He made to reach us, Christ died for us. Now, John says, what amazing love! God flings the blood-stained mantle of His love over us and calls us His children. And He not only calls us this, but He makes us so: *"And that is what we are"* (1 John 3:1b)! Isn't that amazing? Do you ever think of yourself in this condition when God found you? What would you still be like if God had not found you? What kind of pride is it that makes us think of ourselves as some kind of special catch that God has made? How fortunate He ought to feel that we have consented to join his side! No Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called sons of God. That is the extent of God's love. God desires that His enemies should become His children and that his children should become mature sons and daughters. Lord, I echo these words of John: What manner of love has been bestowed upon me, that I should be called a child of God; and so I am. I know it is true, even though I do not always act like it. Teach me to live as Your obedient child. God is the Creator of all mankind, but not the Father of all mankind. We are only children of God by faith in Jesus Christ! How has this truth astonished & affected us?

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







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# High Country Prison Ministry

## Tribute to Claude Vess

By Jody Griffin  
Avery and Mitchell Counties



Matthew 25:23a “His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant;”

A Memorial Tribute: Avery Mitchell Correctional Institution has been shaped since its opening by the lives of those who have given of themselves to bring hope to the men incarcerated within its boundaries. One gentleman who left an imprint of faith on this place through his faithful service was Mr. Claude Vess. On May 23, 2021, Claude left his beloved wife Pat and their family to enter the gates of Heaven. There is no doubt that his contributions of time and energy brought the Light of God’s Love to the men who have spent time in this place. For years Claude taught Sunday School and led worship for offenders wishing to attend. Therein, they would hear of Claude’s love for Christ and his earnest hope that they be encouraged to trust the Lord and to learn and grow in keeping with the Holy Scriptures. He truly wanted them to experience the Love and Grace of God and to find the Peace of Christ that passes all understanding.

For several years, Claude led the AMCI Community Resource Council (CRC), a group made up of a few facility staff and several ‘outside’ community members who worked to sponsor events designed to foster hope in men who were facing the oft felt hopelessness associated with incarceration. Claude led this group with confidence that God would bless and provide for the ‘team effort’ of providing each offender a gift bag of a few pieces of fresh fruit, some small candies, other snacks, a copy of selections of Scripture, and more. Then Claude would assist as we filled these bags with these small tokens of kindness and personally handed them to each individual offender, along with a smile and a personal greeting.

The CRC also sponsors events meant to boost staff morale. One such event is an Ice Cream Social wherein staff members are served a bowl of ice cream complete with a choice of toppings.

Claude also served on the Board for High Country Prison Ministry who sponsor the Community Funded Chaplain position at AMCI. He supported and prayed and encouraged the efforts of those who work to make it possible for this ministry to be available. There too he served with determination to bring the message of reconciliation between God Almighty and fallen humanity through the atoning sacrifice of God’s Son Jesus to all he encountered.

As Chaplain, I was blessed to serve with Claude in these activities. He and his beloved wife Pat would bring a spirit of joy to the tasks of procuring and then providing these gifts to the population and staff at AMCI. Having been given the privilege to share life and this mission with Claude, and having witnessed his heart’s desire to serve in a spirit of excellence, I am convinced that on the day he drew his last breath on this earth that he heard words very much like those expressed in the verse above.

Grateful to have served beside you, our Brother! We pledge to continue the work of spreading the Good News of Christ in the place most people would never go and to do so with the same commitment to excellence that you displayed. Together, all who knew you and were blessed by your service declare, “Well done!”

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

**Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Galatians 5:1**

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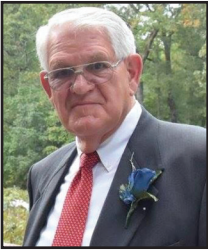
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Life Lessons

By Doug Harrell  
Mitchell County



We are bombarded today with bad news everywhere we turn. We see news of people hating this group or that group, we see news of daily shootings, random drive-by shootings, and killings, stabbing people to death just to see them die. We see people sucker-punching old men and women for no reason other than just the thrill of it. We see lawlessness exploding everywhere around us while our police forces are being defunded and prosecuted because they were doing their jobs. We see all these things and we wonder why so many people are on antidepressants, so many are just giving up on life in general! Our only solution is to get back to the very word of God!

*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.”* John1:1-5 KJV

The light of God has not quit shining. It is unchanged and unchangeable. The problem is that the darkness of the souls of so many has become so black with sin that they no longer comprehend the light! There has never been a time in history that getting in His word is as important as it is today! The only way we can keep balance in the storm is to surround and immerse ourselves in God’s word. When winter comes you put on coats and sweaters, you dress for the weather. Let me tell you, folks, we are in the winter of society and if you don’t dress for it you will literally freeze to death in your spirit. All the mess will destroy you from the inside out!

If there was ever a time that you needed the full armor of God, now is the time. We must be more diligent day by day. The forces of evil are amassing around us like never in my lifetime and we must put on the cloak of righteousness if we are to survive the winter breezes!

*“Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.”* Deuteronomy 31:6 KJV

*“Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.”* Isaiah 41:10 KJV

*“But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: Let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee.”* Psalm 5:11 KJV

Plant these seeds of wisdom in your hearts and minds that you may be able to stand the wiles of the devil! That you may be able to withstand the very winds of hell that blow with ever increasing intensity today. Resist the devil by having the very word of God planted and taking root in the fertile soil of a righteous heart.

The hymn “Take Time to be Holy” rings in my mind as I write these words this morning:

“Take time to be holy, speak oft with thy Lord;  
Abide in Him always, and feed on His Word.  
Make friends of God’s children, help those who are weak,  
Forgetting in nothing His blessing to seek.  
Take time to be holy, the world rushes on;  
Spend much time in secret, with Jesus alone.  
By looking to Jesus, like Him thou shalt be;  
Thy friends in thy conduct His likeness shall see.  
Take time to be holy, let Him be thy Guide;  
And run not before Him, whatever betide.  
In joy or in sorrow, still follow the Lord,  
And, looking to Jesus, still trust in His Word.”

Make sure you are putting on the cloak of God’s word today and be thinking about how you can be an influence for change, for revival, for a turning back to God. Think about Paul and his writing in Timothy where he is admonishing Timothy to preach without fear.

*“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God;”* 2 Timothy 1:7-8 KJV

When we read these verses we need to understand where Paul was when he wrote them. He was sitting in confinement in Rome where he was to soon be put to death for preaching the story of Jesus’ life and the fact that He was the risen Savior, That He and He alone was the only true way to eternal life. He was telling Timothy to not be full of fear when it came to sharing the story of Jesus Christ and His saving grace. I think Paul would be saying these same things to us today in this world of political correctness, this stupidly unbelievable woke society. We are in a world today that rather than wanting to hear and follow the word of God wants to rid our country of all vestiges of God’s teachings, wants to destroy our Christian symbols and houses of worship, a world that celebrates gay pride month and wants to fly BLM flags at our embassies around the world. Stepping out of the so-called closet and proclaiming that you are gay or transgender is a call for rejoicing! Heaven help us in our morbid stupidity.

Paul would want us to not let fear, but faith control our lives. He would have us preach the word of God without fear of reprisal but in a spirit of confidence, that we would not be afraid of rejection by our reprisal for standing firm on the foundation of God’s unchanging and infallible word. We don’t have to be a preacher or teacher, just a believer that is willing to stand up and speak out in a spirit of thankfulness and strength, not wavering, not double-minded, not luke warm but

with conviction and strength.  
*“For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”* 2 Timothy 1:12 KJV

Sing the song Onward Christian Soldier in your mind today and pray diligently that you and I would be able and willing to not flinch from the critics that we may face. Carry the royal banner high and let your life be a living testimony to Jesus’ grace and saving power to all that are willing to believe and proclaim their acceptance of His love and faithfulness. This is a critical mission for each of us today.

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

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An Unexpected Friend

By Tim Trons  
Burke County

“The brain is considered to be the primary generator and regulator of emotions; however, afferent signals originating throughout the body are detected by the autonomic nervous system (ANS) and brainstem, and, in turn, can modulate emotional processes.”

There were blue patches between the clouds as the sunrise sought to find a hole through which to shine. As my footsteps reached the landing behind Anne-Belk Hall to start my morning run, raindrops began to fall. The warmth of the season was still distant, but the air, humid and close, was welcoming, so the sparse rainfall was likewise a comfort.

Running on campus is not one of my favorite locations. It is much more visually rewarding and inspiring to find oneself on those trails leading up our nearby mountains. Yet, today was a short day, so the pavement and sidewalks of the urban jungle were my forests this morning. As is my new tradition, I began quoting the Gospel of John as my legs began to propel me forward. Yesterday’s run was still lingering in these old joints, but the joy of finding oneself welcoming the dawn while in the Word is something to behold. So, pushing on, the words began to overwhelm the pain, and soon it was more of an emotion, the spirit, if you will, carrying me onward.

The sentences laced together like a vine weaving its way up a majestic oak until these words escaped my lips, *“Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body.”* At that moment, just before me, was a young man running in my direction, smiling broadly. At first, it appeared that he might know me, so welcoming was his smile. My eyes searched the face but could not place it. As he drew close, he said, “Mind if I join you?”

“No, not at all,” was my reply. We were just opposite the street from Stick Boy Bakery.

He turned around and began running alongside me on the sidewalk. I quickly introduced myself, and he said his name was Max. I mentioned to him that he caught me in chapter 2, and so I repeated the verse in which he had suddenly appeared. When I got to the line, “But he spake of the temple of his body,” my new friend literally leaped as if he had just hurdled over a log in the path. “Wow,” Max beamed with an expression of revelation, “I was just meditating on just such a philosophical aspect of training; how the body and the mind are connected. Keeping the body fit helps the mind remain active, alert, and able to grow.” He looked at me with wild eyes in amazement at the confirmation and the rarity of occasion that someone had spoken of something upon which he too had been thinking.

Likewise, as he spoke, my mind was trying once more to wrap around the Godly coincidence to which I had been afforded. “Where does that come from,” my new friend asked, with regard to the scripture.

“Chapter 2 of the Gospel of John,” came my measured breath as we made our way up the hill toward Daniel Boone Inn.

“What’s that,” he asked?

In my mind, the words, “OH MY LORD,” was screaming, followed by, “Thank you, Jesus, for sending me someone to whom I could share this morning.”

At this point, I want to stop and make a point.

No matter where we go, no matter what our course of trajectory the day’s plans



take us, we should always be ready to give an account of the Gospel. 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.”* Earlier in the week, it became apparent that I was going through one of those despondent episodes of sanctification; whereby, you find it challenging to remain in the spirit, and God seems to be ignoring you. This sense of being alone seemed to convey something I recently read about what C.S. Lewis wrote, “The real thing is the gift of the Holy Spirit which can’t usually be—perhaps not ever—experienced as a sensation or emotion. The sensations are merely the response of your nervous system. Don’t depend on them. Otherwise, when they go, and you are once more emotionally flat (as you certainly will be quite soon), you might think that the real thing had gone too. But it won’t. It will be there when you can’t feel it. May even be most operative when you can feel it least.”

And so, as my new friend began to chime in with his interpretations, it became apparent that God had created the calm before the storm. How much more remarkable is the dramatic production when there is a sequence of acts in which little to nothing happens before the climaxing scene? For in these moments, the tension slowly builds so that it has a greater impact upon the senses when the dramatic conclusion erupts. The same was the case on this particular day so that as the sun was slowly rising above the distant mountainside, in the dusk of those shadowed roadways, a day full of fellowship, sharing, and evangelism had just begun.

As we continued our way up to King Street, heading south, Max mentioned how Rappers, with all of their gold jewelry, were saying that, yes, all of this was nothing compared to being here and now, to the legitimacy of life regardless of wealth and pleasure. Some of the things he related to scripture were very strange, and repeatedly I had to ask him what he meant. He would then reword his comments until they were along the same lines of language that I could follow, for it seemed as if we were from different planets regarding how he spoke and to what I could comprehend. The voice of today’s youth, imparted upon by the worldly attributes of music, social media, and video, lends to another realm of interpretation that I never cease to stop learning – it is ever-changing. To reach this generation, we must learn to speak in their voice, as strange and foreign as it may sound.

The farther we ran, the more it sounded as if my new friend was speaking from a background of faith, but it was difficult to fully know, so relegated were his words in that alternate word speak of his. When he got to the point where he mentioned how we were like beings surrounded by dark forces, it triggered my thoughts, and from my mouth, like a well springing up into eternal life, the scriptures of John 1 began to flow, *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.”* Max remarked how what he just heard was so powerful and true. He went on to continue to speak in his own words the scripture he had just received. Knowing that this was his way of comprehending, I remained mostly silent and listened, correcting by suggestion only when he had completely fallen off track.

By now, we were making our way back to my office, moving up Howard Street toward Peacock Hall, the School of Business. Our conversation was moving along faster, especially since that stretch of roadway went downhill, affording my lungs the extra space with which to literally gasp for air. Max continued to seek more of what he had heard, and as time would allow, we continued to cover as much as possible. But before we knew it, we were standing back at the base of Ann-Belk Hall. It seemed as if our train had abruptly pulled into the station, and for a moment, we stood staring at one another, wondering if we wanted to get off or not. Feeling like this was one of those moments where Jesus had said, *“Herein is not the saying true, one soweth and another reapeth,”* it was difficult to say goodbye so soon. Nevertheless, God had provided an opportunity, and it was in that instance of time that He allowed me to share with one that was ready to receive.

So often, when we feel as if nothing is happening in our spiritual lives, God is there, working out something in the background. In times of isolation and quiet, we must remind ourselves that He is preparing a way even when we feel like we are disconnected. When those periods of isolation seem to be a deafening roar of silence, focus on what you can control; like your own being. Like the temple of the body to which Jesus had meant, we must remain mindful of how we treat this vessel. Not only should we think in the manner of things to which we ingest, both materially and spiritually, but how we care for in our physical strength. Not only should our bodies be kept whole through consumption but also through activity. If we care for what God has endowed us with, how much greater will be our ability to focus on Him because of a strong mind and body?

Lastly, keep in mind that seeds are planted at the times we least suspect. Remember to always carry your parcel of seeds with you, for you never know when God will break the ground and ready the soil for planting.

Continue always in prayer and supplication for that day when the time is right, when those prayers are answered or when you are asked to step up and speak His word.

Thanks be to God.

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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)

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July 2021 - Blue Ridge Christian News page 10



Called to Feed

By Ryan Yost  
Burke County



My family had a busy life while I was growing up. Football, Dad working, baseball, school, studying, spending time together – the list goes on and on. Amid the craziness, my mom made us all sit down together at dinner every night. She is a wonderful cook, and these times with my family were quite happy. Our time around the dinner table was a chance to connect and recenter ourselves as a family.

The other memories I have involving food were when I would spend my summers in the Gulf of Mexico fishing with my grandfather. When we would get back in from fishing for the day with coolers loaded with fish, he would show me how to fillet fish and peel shrimp. The finesse he used astounded me. Even though he passed away some years ago, I cherish the memories with him.

When I was a child, I had absolutely no idea what I wanted to be when I grew up. Most boys would say they wanted to be firemen, doctors, or astronauts. As I grew older and reflected on the happiest times in my life, I realized those memories often revolved around food, and I realized that God was calling me to use my cooking skills to serve my neighbors.

Food is what brings us together as a family, as friends, in times of hardships, and in times of joy. God commands us to love our neighbor, and the way I do this is by cooking for others. Colossians 3:17 says, “*And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*” This job as the Food Ministry Manager at Burke United Christian Ministries is my calling. I have held other jobs in the foodservice industry, and all of those jobs were steps that led me to this position. Each of my previous positions has taught me something new and strengthened my skill set to be able to serve the Burke County community. I am so thankful to have God and my family’s support through the steps and missteps that have led me here.

In the soup kitchen, it is very important to create conversation. Having these conversations with anyone who walks through the door allows us to connect, grow, and learn about each other. The conversation is imperative in any ministry; it allows small talk to grow to a deeper connection that allows us to understand how vital this ministry is to our community.

Jesus’ teachings often were done in conversation with people who were dining together. Other than the Resurrection, the only miracle that was recorded in all of the Gospels is Jesus’ feeding of the five thousand. With just five loaves of bread and two fish, Jesus was able to feed the crowd. Not only did he feed them, but he brought them together as a community. The narrative ends that the five thousand ate and were satisfied. Just as Jesus did, we will Love God. Love People.

Ryan Yost is the Food Ministry Manager at Burke United Christian Ministries.

God Works For Good

By Christopher L. Scott  
Moses Lake, Washington



A guy I know went to the birthing classes with his wife when they were pregnant with their first child. He learned about the process of delivering a baby and how to help his wife during her labor contractions.

Months later when his wife’s contractions began he knew what was going on in her body based on the science of what he was taught. However, it became very clear that she knew what contractions were on a deeper level than he would ever know! My friend knew intellectually what contractions were; his wife knew what they were from experience.

Likewise, often we know in our heads that God will work out our circumstances for good, but often we don’t have the experience in our hearts.

Paul told the believers in the city of Rome, “*And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them*” (Romans 8:28, NLT). One of my favorite Bible teachers—J. Vernon McGee—writes about this verse, “We come now to the new purpose of God. If Romans is the greatest book of the Bible, and chapter 8 is the high-water mark, then verse 28 is the pinnacle.”

How often is this verse quoted from memory yet not experienced? Like my friend’s limited understanding of his wife’s contractions, sometimes we know that God works out things for our good, but we don’t really feel it, especially when going through difficult times.

We also need to remember that this is happening now. “*God causes everything to work together*” is a present active verb in Greek (Paul originally wrote in Koine Greek). This is something that God is actively doing. It’s not something He does when He feels like it, when He’s in a good mood, or when we have been loyal to Him. God continually causes everything to work together for good for us.

Another truth we need to remember is that God has a plan and “purpose” for us “*because we are united with Christ, we have received an inheritance from God, for he chose us in advance, and he makes everything work out according to his plan*” (Ephesians 1:11, NLT).

God has a plan even if we might not always understand it. Even if we can’t see Him working out circumstances, He’s using them for good. Warren Wiersbe has said, “We don’t always discern God’s plan, nor do we always understand His plan, but knowing that the Lord is in command puts peace and joy in our hearts.” And that joy should be known in our hearts that God works out our circumstances for good.

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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# Mine Creek Baptist Church

## Waiting for Things to Get Better

By Chris Rathbone  
Mitchell County



Have you ever heard someone say, “Seems like everything has gone wrong lately in my life”? Then they begin to tell you of all the things that have happened, one right after the other, and they can’t seem to catch a break. Well, it seems like that is what has happened around my household!

About a month ago, I went up to Roan Mountain for a hike. After the early morning hike, I got into my truck and headed back down the mountain towards Bakersville. Just a little way down something happened in my truck engine. The check engine light came on and it was quite obvious that the engine was missing really bad. After doing some research the problem was narrowed down to something that was going to cost close to \$2000. Well, the truck is in pretty good shape with just over 100,000 miles I concluded it would be worth the investment to have it fixed, especially after pricing another one! The mechanic gave me a day to bring the truck into the shop for the needed repairs. While there it was discovered the truck needed a steering column also to take care of the play in the steering. After bringing the truck home it started missing again. Also, the shipping on the steering column part was delayed for almost 2 weeks. Back to the shop again. Finally seemed to get everything going after being without my vehicle for about 2 weeks and sure enough, the truck is missing again. After some more research, it has nothing to do with what has already been repaired, UGH! So right now I’m waiting for the part to come to hopefully replace it myself!

However, that’s not all! There are 4 drivers in my family. Each one has work or school each day and everyone, of course, requires transportation. My oldest son’s truck also needed a repair while mine was in the shop. We were down 2 vehicles which made it interesting getting everyone where they needed to be. His was repaired only to bring it home and guess what, it wouldn’t start the next morning because of a completely different problem from what had already been repaired. So the next day I head to the parts store for an alternator and battery. Thankfully it was a job I could do myself.

Just so you don’t get bored with all my silly vehicle problems I’ll condense this story a little. My truck still needs to be fixed when the part arrives, hopefully, tomorrow. My son’s truck has got to have shocks and brake work, my wife’s car is making a loud clicking noise under the dash, something to do with the heat and air plus something is leaking underneath, another one apparently is needing axle work in the front end.....etc, etc, etc. All our vehicles have way over 100,000 miles with 2 of them with over 220,000. Repairs are inevitable with these kinds of vehicles but it seems to have all happened at one time! Whew! When is it gonna let up? Well, I’m through whining now...

For sure, car troubles pale in comparison to the things this old life may throw at us sometimes. There are times and chapters in this life we may go through where one thing after another comes in succession and there seems to be no end in sight. We will tend to feel doubt, to lose heart, to even come to the point of giving up or throwing in the towel, so to speak. Michelle has had to remind me several times during the last month amidst all my vehicle frustrations that this too will pass and we’ll get them all fixed. (I think she gets tired of my whining!) We must also remember that when we are going through these chapters in life that we will, with the help of the Lord, make it through. Things may be different when we come out on the other side, but we will get through them. Jesus is faithful. He never leaves us nor forsakes us, and He is a Savior who understands our struggles, heartaches, and frustrations. He knows when we come to our wit’s end and get tired of the struggles. That’s when we have to trust Him and Him alone. Maybe that was the point the entire time, that we would get to the end of ourselves and trust totally in Him. After all children, isn’t that what we are supposed to be doing anyway while we are waiting for things to get better?

Psalm 18:2 “The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer: my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.”

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



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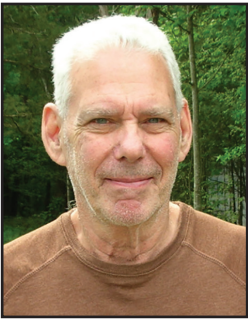
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Real-Time Revelation

By Robert Garner  
Rutherford County



Present-day “Real-Time Revelations” such as the biblical timeline of “End Times” events; Daniel 12:4, “*seal the book to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased;*” Daniel 12:9, “*the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end;*” Ecclesiastes 8:5, “*a wise man’s heart discerneth both time and judgment.*” Daniel 12:10, “*many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none shall understand, but the wise shall understand*”. All this scripture and much more places the true believer, the child of God, in present-day “real-time revelation”.

Searching these things out in the scriptures, personal prayer for wisdom and knowledge (James 1:5); along with various means of research and investigation brings forth reliable truths. “For Example”, by knowing the corporate church’s refusal to make corrections of faulty doctrines, the truth can be discerned regarding the failings of the corporate church denominations. “*For the time has come that judgment must begin at the house of God [the corporate church]; and if it first begins at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel [the words] of God?*” 1 Peter 4:17.

As required by God, changes of doctrine declared are perfectly acceptable when we discover errors. God’s inspiration of wisdom and knowledge continues as we; 2 Timothy 3:16; search the scriptures and make corrections. “*Be not carried about with divers [various sorts] and strange doctrines,*” Hebrews 13:9.

In a modern-day expression of “I don’t get it” about a subject matter, we can see Peter, James, and John’s confusion high up on a mountain when Jesus was transfigured. Mark 9:1-10; “*and they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.*” These men were living in their present-day “real-time revelation”, witnessing the revelation transfiguration of Jesus Christ. We could speculate they were saying to each other “I don’t get it” what the rising from the dead should mean?

The mystery of heavenly events and instruction given to the apostles, prophets, Paul, holy men of old and the Gentile nations of people is the Revelation of Jesus Christ. The word “Revelation” (Lighten-Manifestation) as found in bible scripture is best defined as; a disclosure of truth and instruction concerning things that were before unknown. The term “Progressive”\_\_ Revelation is not found in the Bible yet it is commonly recognized as a step-by-step unveiling of truths as one studies the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. The Bible is the “Book of the Living” Psalm 69:28. Hebrews 13:8; Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever.

As we take into account that the Bible is a Spiritual book written by Holy men moved under the direction of God Almighty; 2 Peter 1:21; a perfect timeline of God’s planned events referred to as “progressive revelation” is revealed throughout the Scriptures. During these end-time days of judgment and testing by God, what events could unfold “that if possible” (allowed by God) could deceive and seduce the very elect? Can we anticipate some earthly happening, something unexpected, “out of the blue” which has been woven into God’s plan of “real-time revelation” in these end-time days of testing and judgment?

Mark 13:22; “*false Christ’s will arise showing great signs and wonders?*” That’s one hell of a demonic deception!

The 20th century (1/1/1901-12/31/2000) defines an absurdity of human events unlike all of mankind’s previous earth history. Space Age exploration, moon landings, deep space planetary satellite probe technology literally takes off with the hope of finding systems of alien life; at the same time, the Atomic Age of technology develops nuclear bombs with the ability to destroy human life. The Wright Brothers made their first flight on December 17, 1903. Today, 118 years later we have the Mars Rover self-contained laboratory exploring the Martian service analyzing dust of the ground for the key ingredients required to discover alien forms of life. “*And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul*” Genesis 2:7.

“Surely History Will Repeat Itself”. As public disclosure intensifies about these systems of alien life explorations, “real-time revelations” if the reality of the facts is true, can you imagine the impact of these consequences? This Paradigm Shift has already begun. The non-biblical, worldly thinking of evolution, will now be searching for the extraterrestrial source of the human gene pool. A cosmos new world order, another new god realism along with the reality of ET’s new energy sources. The scientific community will point to the new intergalactic earth history and origin of mankind. The facts of these happenings have never before been a reality to the people of earth. Past generations may have experienced similar events without knowing their true source. Many biblical archeologists are asking the question, who exactly were the gods of Egypt?

Who is the Host of Heaven? Genesis 1:1 & 2:1; “*in the beginning, Jehovah God created the heavens and the earth; thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. Lest you corrupt yourselves and make graven images, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female.*” Deu. 4:16, “*And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the LORD thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven;* Deuteronomy” 4:19.

“*For though there be that are called gods [deities, divinities] whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords [title of honor] many.)*” 1Corinthians 8:5.

But to us, there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him. Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with the conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. 1 Corinthians 6, 7.

“*If I [Jesus] told you earthly things, and you believe not, how shall you believe, if I tell you of heavenly things;*” John 3:12.

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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Blessed Is The Man

By Glenda Ward  
McDowell County

“Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.  
Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.” Romans 4:7-8

Belief and faith in Jesus is the intervening distinguished, entity through which Justification is founded. Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. God sent forth His Son Jesus as a sacrifice of atone- ment, through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, present, and in the future through the forbearance of God. Christ purchased our freedom with His life. (Reference: Romans 3:24-25). By The One Sacrifice of Him- self, the Lord has made us perfect forever. “Nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it:” (Ecclesiastes 3:14).

We, through the Spirit, gain the hope of righteousness by faith. The Spirit gives victory over sin and the Spirit is against the flesh. Christian character is the possession and prov- ing of God’s grace produced by the Holy Spirit. If you are led by the Spirit; works in the flesh make clear and proves that your Christian characteristics are displayed in your life. Together they present a moral portrait of Christ. This character is possible because of the believer’s vital union with Christ (Reference: 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; John 15:5) and is wholly the fruit of the Spirit. In Christian life, the Spirit is unified in purpose and direc- tion; which, in contrast with the life in the flesh we find inner conflicts and frustrations.



We that are in Christ have crucified our sinful afflicted conditions to the Cross! If we live in the spirit, we will also walk in the Spirit, not empty of God’s glory.

Characteristics displayed in the life of a Christian should be justified by our faith in Je- sus Christ and faith alone. Christian Justification is to vindicate or to set right, a judicial act of God based upon Christ’s completed work. It is God’s divine declaration of “Not Guilty” in that of a sinner. Requirements of justification are all fully met in Jesus Christ. The act of Justification by God declares one righteous based upon the complete righ- teousness of Christ. Justification is credited upon the completed work of Jesus, “For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteous- ness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The immediate benefit of Justification is the remission of sin. God sees us all through the perfect sacrifice of Jesus. We appear to Him as if we have never sinned. Not only is God’s eyes are we Justified and free from condemnation but we are ushered into God’s eternal Kingdom, as righteous people. Read God’s promise in Romans 8:16-17. Justification brings eternal life for all who believe in our Lord, Jesus Christ. It marks the beginning of the fullness of life spoken of in Scripture. It can be a life in which we can enjoy God’s blessings and His presence forever.

Justification by faith is what separates Biblical Christianity from any other belief system. Only in true Biblical Christianity is a person saved as a result of grace through faith. Justification is a complete work of God and is instant. Justification takes place the moment we trust in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. We are at that moment, declared righteous and with it our guilt is removed. Knowledge of Justification and grace motivates good works and spiritual growth in the receiver. Justification leads to sanctifi- cation – an ongoing process of growth in which we become more Christ-like (the act of “being saved”). Sanctification occurs after Justification: and Justification being a finished work of God means that Christians have the assurance of their salvation. Without an understanding of Justification by faith alone, we cannot truly perceive the glorious gift of God’s grace. Our Justification by faith helps us maintain pure devotion to Christ. Hold- ing to the promise of Justification by faith; it is only by God’s grace, in response to our faith that God has credited to us the Holiness of His Son. “The Just shall live by faith” (Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38). “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

The goal of Justification is “peace with God” and that Justification and peace with God are only available through our Lord, Jesus Christ. Peace comes from God but comes through the sacrificial mission of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

Justification Through Christ:  
Justification originates in grace.  
Justification is through the redemption and work of Christ Jesus who fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies of redemption (redemption purchased by the blood of our re- deemer Jesus Christ).  
Justification is by faith not our works.  
Justification may be defined as the judicial act of God. He justly declares and treats as righteous the one who believes and puts his faith in Jesus Christ. The Justified believer has been declared by God, the Judge Himself, to have nothing laid to his charge.  
Justification is an act of God.  
Justification takes place the moment we trust Jesus Christ.  
Justification declares the sinner righteous.  
Justification removes the guilt and penalty of sin; not the power of sin in this life.  
Sanctification:  
Sanctification is the proceeds from Justification.  
Sanctification makes the sinner righteous.  
Sanctification is in us.  
Sanctification is a work in progress.  
Sanctification removes the growth and the power of our sin.  
Sanctification is a lifelong process.

Christ paid the penalty for our sin. God moves into our hearts and lives by the power of the Holy Spirit to make us the kind of people we should be as Christians. God does not leave us in sin when He saves us through His gift of Salvation. The Justified sinner, through Salvation, has died and rose again in faith – in Christ Jesus. However, we never reach the place where we are dead to sin. Satan is still alive and we still have that old sinful nature because we still live in this earthly body that was born into sin! But we do reach a place through Sanctification where we want to live for God in His likeness. This is God’s great truth. “But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. (1 Corinthians 1:30). Sanctification is the proceeds from Justification, and both originate in Christ, is crucified in Christ, and are risen in Christ.

Four keywords indicate the believer’s personal responsibility about God’s Sanctifying work.  
1- Know the facts of our union and identification with Christ in His death and resurrec- tion (Romans 6:3,6,9).  
2- Reckon or count the facts to be true concerning ourselves (Romans 6:11).  
3- Yield or present ourselves once for all as alive from the dead for God’s possession and use (Romans 6:13,16,19).  
4- Obey in the realization that sanctification can proceed only as we are obedient to the Will of God as revealed in His Word (Romans 6:16-17).  
Let us rejoice in the “glory of God” and the eventual joy of being in the very presence of our Lord God Himself.

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 mate- rial 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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8	4	1	7	2	6	9	3	5
5	6	2	3	9	8	1	7	4
6	2	8	5	4	9	7	1	3
4	5	9	1	3	7	8	2	6
1	3	7	8	6	2	5	4	9
9	7	5	2	8	4	3	6	1
2	8	6	9	1	3	4	5	7
3	1	4	6	7	5	2	9	8



# Marlene’s Meditations

## Freedom for a Godly Mindset

By Marlene Houk  
Burke County



*“And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year; and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family.” Leviticus 25:10*

July 4, 1776, is the birthday of our freedom as the United States of America. My fourth great grandfather, born in 1768, Thomas M. Cate Hardin, was eight years old then. I imagine his eyes widening in wonder as he listened to the emotional voices of adults who realized they were truly free as a nation. Although I have no original papers from my ancestor, still his connection to world-renowned events inspires me to applaud him for simply surviving. He lived through fourteen presidents, two wars, and the escalating tension of pre-Civil War America.

I realized that Ruth’s story in the Bible reminded me of Thomas’s freedom to choose his own mindset, even in uncertainty. During nine decades of turbulent events, my ancestor decided the direction of his thoughts. Did he consistently focus on the hard-won freedom and choose gratitude? Perhaps his actions exhibited great courage or maybe fear engulfed him. Ultimately, the stormy times that Thomas endured prompted me to consider Ruth’s freedom to decide how to think during troubled times. Like my Thomas, she became an ancestor. Her great-grandson changed the world as the mighty King David. And we trace her virtues in the king’s actions and his heart for the Lord. Ruth shows us four ways that we can exercise our freedom to focus on godly thinking.

Courage: Ruth lived in Moab, a nation that fought frequently with Israel, but she chose to travel to Bethlehem, a village in Israel where she met prejudices against her. The reapers seemed to sneer at Ruth—even her name was Moabitish—as they call her “the Moabitish damsel.” They repeated the name just in case Boaz, the owner of the field in which she was gleaning, had missed it. They said she “came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab.” (Ruth 2:6). Ruth chose to focus on caring rather than conflict.

We may feel like Ruth at times, living in unfamiliar territory. Dwindling Christian freedoms and a mounting stigma associated with godly morals reshapes our culture daily. We, as believers, need to choose courage as we stand for biblical values.

Gratefulness: Ruth realized that she was different from the other women who gleaned in Boaz’s field. She could have been rejected because of her nationality. When Boaz offered her provision and protection, she recognized his efforts by bowing with humility and grateful words (Ruth 2;10,12).

Being grateful changes our body: relaxing our muscles, refocusing our mind, and relegating injustice and insecurity to the back burner. Thankfulness is one of the most powerful tools for dispelling grief, banishing doubt in God, and overcoming confusion. Ruth shows us how to turn poverty of heart into the pleasures of heaven.

Focus: As I read her story today, more than 3,000 years later, I hear the steely determination in Ruth’s voice as she proclaims her plans to care for Naomi and pursues her God to the end (Ruth 1:16-17). She follows through in beautifully healing ways for the rest of the book. Ruth is simply present. She cares for Naomi physically and listens to her. Ruth leads Naomi gently back into society as she gleaned, talks about Boaz, and helps her mother-in-law to focus on something other than her despair. She obeys Naomi and eventually lays baby Obed in her empty arms.

One of the most powerful ways we can free our minds is to focus on our relationship with Jesus Christ and delve into the delights of Scripture. As we absorb biblical ways of thinking and a perspective that views life through God’s eyes, we crest the mountain of our emotions and focus on eternity. All life is brought under the scrutiny of His Word, and our focus changes from failure to our Father. Ruth teaches us how to turn our focus from fear to faith.

Patience: Ruth gleaned during the barley and wheat harvest in April and May for at least seven weeks and perhaps longer. Gleaning is back-breaking work, bending over repeatedly to pick up stalks of grain and then beating out the grain from the stalk. Day after day, regardless of the heat or rain, Ruth continued to glean and care for Naomi. Upon her return to Bethlehem, Naomi had declared that she arrived empty. Ruth displayed great gentleness as she remained silent during this bitter statement even though her presence proved Naomi wrong. She persevered through the seven-day journey to Bethlehem, the weeks of hard work, and finally the uncertainties and confusion of Boaz taking legal responsibility for her. Through the long days, she brought hope and new life to her beloved mother-in-law.

Patience rises to the top of virtues in Titus chapter two as God commands the aged men and women to be patient (Titus 2:2-3). In Hebrews 12:1-2, patience connects to words like “enduring” and contrasts with weariness and faintness of mind. When we focus on being with Jesus for all eternity, the joy set before us energizes our patience and helps us focus with gratefulness and courage until we meet Him.

When he died at ninety-one years old, my great-great-great-great-grandfather, like King David’s great-grandmother, Ruth, must have felt the breath-taking value of freedom. He lived through decades of conflict, escaped fatal hardships, and fathered my great-great-great-grandfather, ensuring my existence. I’m sure my ancestor committed to many decisions in his nine decades of life. And he possessed liberty to direct his thoughts.

We all have the freedom to look at our lives through our reactions or God’s eyes. We can simply allow our feelings to control our thoughts. Or, like Ruth, we can exercise our God-given freedom to choose a godly mindset. Ruth encourages us to develop:

- courage to stand for Jesus,
- gratitude for His care,
- fortitude for a steely focus on the Lord, and
- determination to live for Him. Happy Freedom Day!

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

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July 2021 - Blue Ridge Christian News page 15



Protecting Loved Ones from Nursing Homes

By Steve Gaito  
McDowell County



If COVID-19 has taught us anything it is that being in a Nursing Home is not an ideal place when there is a pandemic. Recently I was providing a lunch and learn, and we were discussing Long Term Care. I asked the people attending what was the first thought that came to their mind when they heard the term Nursing Home. #1 response was the smell, #2 was the food, and surprising to me, #3 was it was not a place you wanted to be when a pandemic happens. The statistics of deaths attributed to COVID-19 to Nursing Homes are staggering. It is a combination of compromised immune systems and in the case of COVID-19 an incredibly contagious virus. Now I doubt that any person intentionally plans to spend their final years of life in one of these institutions, but without proper planning, it is exactly what happens. In NC, the cost of 24/7/365 skilled care has exceeded \$100,000 and I have clients that tell me that they are paying much more for parents that have either Alzheimer's disease or dementia.

At almost every seminar I discuss the ways to pay for Long-Term Care. It is usually one of the more responsive parts of my seminar as those attending have either had direct experience with their parents or they know someone that has gone through it. It is real to them. They know how expensive it is and what it can do to the surviving spouse. What they do not know or have misinformation about is how to best cover this risk. Most people have chosen to self-fund the expense. If traditional Long-Term care were the only option, I could possibly justify this method, but there are so many other more efficient ways to cover the cost. There are 5 ways that most can cover the cost.

1. Self-Pay or pay as you go.
2. Traditional Long-Term Care (Like Homeowners Insurance)
3. Life Insurance Rider
4. Asset-Based Long-Term Care
5. Annuity with Doubling Income Feature

There are pros and cons of each and usually an option for every budget. In my opinion, anything is better than nothing. In my last seminar, I got asked the question about if you have enough saved is it not best to just pay for it out of pocket? My answer is if you can qualify the Asset Based LTC is a more efficient way to pay for your care. You already have the money allocated or at least should have it allocated, so why not leverage it, and if you do not use it pass it along to your heir's income tax-free. Once I show the illustration and the client understands the benefits, they love these plans.

The second question that I get is what if I cannot qualify for the asset-based plans? This is where the Annuities come into play. They also come into play when people need income and Long-Term care coverage. Recently there has been a new product that provides income and if you have 2 of the 6 ADL's (activities of daily living) your income base doubles for up to 5 years. Since the average stay is between 2-4 years this is an attractive benefit.

As someone that specializes in helping people evaluate Long-Term Care options, I believe that I can help you understand your options and help you get the coverage you need. I promise that I will do my best to keep you from putting your loved ones through the trauma of seeing you in a Nursing Home and come visit you in your own home.

To schedule your free initial consultation, go to my website and schedule a time. [www.retirerm.com](http://www.retirerm.com)

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

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In Memory of Joy Baldwin  
Madison County

CHECKING OUT (A DREAM)

Long lines of people waiting for many hours it seemed,  
And when I looked at where I was, it really puzzled me.

Some clutch their items in their hands as if it were their  
life,  
As others waste away the day not thinking of their plight.

I stand in back for ‘bout a mile with candy in my hand.  
I looked intently at the crowd, oh this is just insane.

Disturbing folks along the way, they looked around to see;  
Observing my intentions said, “don’t get in front of me”.

I made my way up to the front, put the candy in its place,  
It’s not worth my precious time to stand in line and wait.

It seemed I was so thirsty, then water I did find,  
And much to my amazement, no need to stand in line.

Pure water there was free, the cups all sanitized;  
Each one fit my hand just right, a sparkling, clean surprise.

A lady smiled at me and said, “There’s water over there”,  
“Yes”, I said, “I found it, and there’s plenty more to share.”

She had tasted of this water and spoke with love no doubt,  
“There is plenty where I’m going” She was ready to check out.

A dream by Joyce Harwood Baldwin



By Joe Sturz  
Shenandoah, Va.

My prayer: “ Holy Father God in Heaven, my country has fallen more and more into wickedness as we have disobeyed Your Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:3-17).

Much of our businesses have made money an idol (Exodus 20:3-6). So many of our people have turned to sexual immorality (Exodus 20:14). We have desecrated Your Sunday worship day of rest with our regular work (Exodus 20:8-11). Violence and bloodshed of the innocent cover our land (20:13). Many of our public media have deceived us (Exodus 20:16). We have been carried away with greed and envy (Exodus 20:17) Theft of all kinds is widespread (Exodus 20:15).

We deserve Your judgment that is coming upon us in many ways (Proverbs 14:34). I ask for Your promised mercy to Your people that are a faithful remnant I Chronicles 7:14; Malachi 3:16-4:6;

Romans 11:1-5) We desperately need You to send the power of Your Holy Spirit to bring a great wave of humility to enable us to repent of our many sins and turn from our wicked way (Galatians 5:16-26).

So we can receive Your forgiveness that Your Son Jesus Christ purchased for Your people by suffering and dying in our place on the cross (I Corinthians 15:3-4; I John 1:9)." "I ask this in Jesus name, through what He did on the cross" (John 16:23-24)" "Amen."

Brother Joe "praying for my country" Sturz Saturday, June 12, 2021, [www.sturzachristiancounseling.com](http://www.sturzachristiancounseling.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](mailto:joesturz80@gmail.com)

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Joe Sturz, a Christian counselor at Sturz Christian Counseling Service now living in Page County, [www.sturzachristiancounseling.com](http://www.sturzachristiancounseling.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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Hope Line Services Available to Seniors  
By Carol Layton



The HOPE LINE (866.578.4673) of NC Baptist Aging Ministry is available daily, 9:00am – 9:00pm to receive calls from NC senior adults who are experiencing isolation and loneliness.

NCBAM team members and volunteers trained in evidence-based health coach techniques focus on listening and allowing callers to have a safe space to express themselves.

Knowing that many individuals in need of a friendly call service may not initiate a call, the Hope Line also offers outbound calls. The service is free and can be requested by calling 877.506.2226 or by emailing [ncbam@bchfamily.org](mailto:ncbam@bchfamily.org). A link will be sent to sign up for the friendly call service. Call recipients must be 65 or older and live in North Carolina. Requests can be made by individuals themselves or by a family member or caregiver.

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

*But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. James 1:25*

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A Deep-Sea Celebration

By Christy Lowman  
Burke County

This month we celebrate Independence of our country. I wanted to talk about an animal that would go with this theme. God has created such amazing animals. It was hard to pick just one, but this one seemed to go along perfectly!

It is called Halitrephes Massi Jellyfish or the Fireworks Jellyfish. It is known for its deep-sea firework display it gives off at 4000 ft underwater.

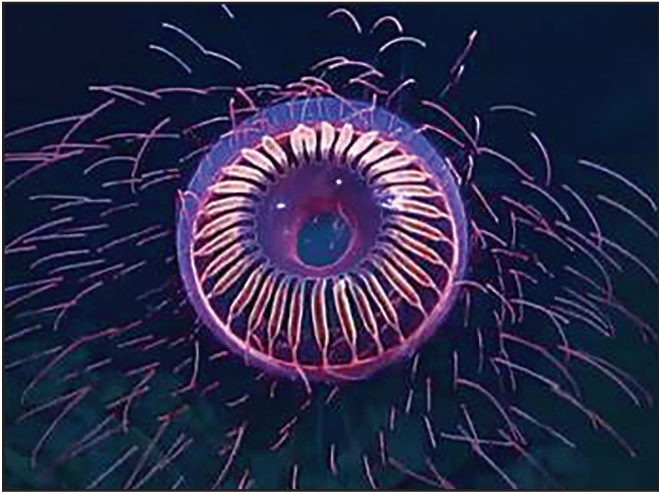
This beauty can only be seen if there is light shining on it, otherwise, it gracefully glides through the ocean water almost invisible to others. This invisibility, helps it to survive.

The Fireworks Jellyfish has been seen at the Revillagigedo Archipelago, close to California and Mexico by a submarine named ROV Heracles.

This jelly, like other jellyfish, doesn't have any bone structure. It gets its shape from the organs inside its body called the bell.

The Fireworks jelly has thin frilled tentacles. So thin, it makes them look like they are not attached to the jellyfish's body. This gives it the appearance of the explosion of a firework.

The bell of the jellyfish is made up of radial canals that send food through the jellyfish. The canals make a firework burst pattern.



When this almost see-through jelly is lit up with lights from a submarine or other light source, the body lights up in bright yellow and pink colors. The many outside tentacles show an array of vibrant purple, orange, and red lines. This display looks just like a beautiful 4th of July explosion! The backdrop of black deep-sea water is just like the dark sky when we watch a firework show.

If you would like to see this beautiful creature, here is a video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9D0eyl7-XQA>. Make sure you get your parents' permission to watch it first.

Fireworks have been used in China for celebrations since the 7th century. Americans have been using them to celebrate our Independence from England since the first anniversary of the victory. President John Adams wanted a huge celebration of fireworks, a parade, the ringing of bells, music played by the country's military band, a thirteen-gun salute to honor each colony, and one firework rocket for each colony was shot off among many other things.

Oh, how I would have loved to have been there to see it and to join in the celebration of freedom! I can smell the gunpowder and hear the loud booms of the fireworks. The military band would be awesome, stirring the sense of freedom deep in my soul along with wonderful things to taste and eat! In the midst of it all, I imagine God being there celebrating too, for He believes in freedom! Yes, I'm sure it was an awesome day!

Even though it has been 254 years since our first Independence Day celebration it is something we should never forget or take for granted. Our freedom came at a price. The price of the many soldiers' lives (on both parties). Our freedom only came because God allowed it. Can you think of a time or times in the Bible where God helped His people have freedom? He did the same for us. It would not have happened without Him.

There are countless stories of miracles that happened during the war that changed the course and ultimately helped us win our freedom. Did you know that the majority of the people that came to America were fleeing from religious persecution? Many were your ancestors and were just like you, meaning they worshipped the same God you do, and wanted to do so freely. God wants us to be free to worship Him. His desire is for us to have a relationship with Him. He also wants the very best for us, for us to be happy and free. That is why our Independence Day is so special and important. It wouldn't have happened without God's help, and of the lives of those, our ancestors, who passionately wanted freedom so much that they gave up their lives for it.

Please never forget how important this holiday is and thank God on this day and every day for the freedom He allows us to have here in America. A freedom many other people around the world would love to experience.

*"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."* Galatians 5:1 *"Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom."* 2 Corinthians 3:17

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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.*



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*Samantha B Brown and David Jonathan Sillman were married June 26 on a mountaintop in Burnsville, North Carolina. Zack Mason officiated. The bride is the daughter of Hal and Brenda Brown of Norway IL. The Groom is the son of Edward and Sally Sillman of Burnsville, NC. The couple will spend their Honeymoon in Key West, Florida. Samantha was born in Norway IL and currently works in graphic visualization/rendering. David was born in Antwerp, NY and works in Real Estate Finance in Western North Carolina. Samantha and David were engaged while on a mission trip in Alexandria, Egypt. They will reside in Spruce Pine, NC. and are members of The Grove Church. They enjoy outdoor adventures, volleyball, cycling, international travel and share a deep desire to serve God with their lives.*



# Berry Chapel Baptist Church

## Common Sense

By Steve Williams  
Mitchell County



The 4th of July is here. People will be breaking out the red, white and blue, banners, flags, shirts, and lights to show our support, honor, and respect for our nations and its leaders and soldiers who are serving and have fought and even died for our country. I pray that we do not forget to thank God for our freedom and that we never take our freedom for granted. I Love America. I know that America would not be here today if it were not for God. When we look at our money we can see that it has on it "In God We Trust", our Court House has on it "In God We Trust", our Police & Sheriff department vehicles have on them in Mitchell County "In God We Trust". We Sing God Bless America, and He surely has done that, to say the least. God has Blessed America but what has America done with its Trust for God, and the Blessing that He has given us so graciously?

Well, America, just like the children of Israel, have turned their back on God. His Blessings have turned into our bondage. His Grace and Mercy that He extends daily has turned into our freedom of choice to do and live as we please. America like Israel has turned its eyes to the idols of this old world. (Idols are anything that we put before God.) We have rebelled against God by serving our idols of pleasure, money, land, houses, children, sex, and drugs. If you study America just like Israel is also serving the idol of this government thinking that it will protect them and meet their daily needs. The Bible tells us to "Trust in the Lord," not the Government. The Bible also tells us in Philippians 4:19 says "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." When people fail to trust God to meet their needs in this world it is not long till Judgement follows.

Time and time again we have seen the judgment of God fall upon his chosen people, Israel. So there is no reason for you or me or America to think, that we are not going to face judgment. I believe that judgment is knocking at our door, this very hour. Why do you say that? Look at all the perversion that is going on in this land. Men and women alike do not know what gender they are anymore. Men and women alike fail to understand how God intended humans to reproduce. Look at all the people who are hooked on their idols of self, drugs and alcohol, pornography, and perverted sex. Look at all the murders that are taking place through anger and abortions. Just look how common sense is no longer in our homes, marriages, government, schools, colleges and it is sad to say that it has even come into many churches. We even say we want protection and today we have people who want to do away with that protection. People believe guns kill when in fact it is people that use guns to kill with. This just shows us clearly that God has already started turning people over to a reprobate mind. And if you don't know what a reprobate mind is, "It is a person who has rejected the Gospel to a point where God in turns rejects them and curses their conscience." This is where we are at today in America.

Until people once again start honoring and respecting and living by God and His precious Word they can all expect to experience the judgments of God in and on their lives. My prayer for America is: May we start respecting and honoring God once again before it is too late.

## Words Of Wisdom:

- When wealth is lost, nothing is lost; when health is lost, something is lost; when the character is lost, all is lost. Billy Graham
- Our society strives to avoid any possibility of offending anyone - except God. Billy Graham
- Freedom does not come without a price. We may sometimes take for granted the many liberties we enjoy in America, but they have all been earned through the ultimate sacrifice paid by so many of the members of our armed forces. Charlie Dent
- Life is a precious gift - a gift we often take for granted until it is threatened. N/A
- Don't take for granted your freedom to worship God, because if we do it might just be taken away.

## Something To Think About:

Mildred, the church gossip and self-appointed arbiter of the church's morals kept sticking her nose in the other members' private lives. Church members were unappreciative of her activities but feared her enough to maintain their silence.

She made a mistake, however, when she accused George, a new member, of being an alcoholic after she saw his pickup truck parked in front of the town's only bar one afternoon.

She commented to George and others that everyone seeing it there would know what he was doing.

George, a man of few words, stared at her for a moment and just walked away. He didn't explain, defend, or deny; he said nothing.

Later that evening, George quietly parked his pickup in front of Mildred's house... and left it there all night!

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

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# Christian Action League

## Why So Many Empty Churches? A Reminder and Warning for Southern Baptists

By Rev. Mark Creech

In my hometown, prominently sitting high on a hill, is an old and empty Episcopal church. No one attends there anymore. It's a historical edifice, which serves no purpose for the community except to reminisce about the way things were. For me, that old church depicts both a reminder and a warning.

In an interesting article for The Atlantic, Jonathan Merritt writes about "America's Epidemic of Empty Churches." Merritt says:

"Many of our nation's churches can no longer afford to maintain their structures – 6000 to 10,000 churches die each year in America – and that number will likely grow. Though more than 70 percent of our citizens still claim to be Christian, congregational participation is less central to many Americans' faith than it once was. Most denominations are declining as a share of the overall population, and donations to congregations have been falling for decades. Meanwhile, religiously unaffiliated Americans, nicknamed the 'nones,' are growing as a share of the U.S. population."

Merritt's assessment matches a recent report by Yonat Shimron, a Religious News Service reporter, who notes a study from the Center for Analytics, Research and Data, affiliated with the United Church of Christ. That study says "that in the decade ending in 2020, 3,850 to 7,700 houses of worship close per year in the United States, or 75 to 150 congregations per week." Shimron added these figures are expected to "double or triple in the wake of the pandemic."

Many reasons could be offered as to why such declines are occurring, but most of them, I believe, would only address symptoms and not the root cause.

In an article for ChurchLeadership.org, Dr. Richard J. Krejcir makes an astute observation:

"What we hear as responses from most of our church leaders are the excuses of 'cultural decay' and 'changing values' and that 'the average American views the church with little regard.' These are authentic factors, but they are just symptoms. The bigger question seems to be what led up to these 'symptoms?' What led to the problems of cultural decay and the downgrading of moral absolutes? There is more to it than changing values; after all, a change in values has a root cause. A symptom is usually caused by a systemic disease or an explicit psychological problem."

It may sound like an oversimplification of the dilemma, but I believe the real issue has to do with the sincerity and earnestness of our love for Christ.

In Revelation, chapter 2, is recorded Jesus' letter to the church of Ephesus. The letter commends the church's good points, such as their labor, patience, intolerance of those who worked evil, and their discernment of religious fraud. Nevertheless, said Jesus, *"I have this against you, that you have lost your first love"* (Rev. 2:4).

Some scholars say it's unclear whether the reference talks about their diminished love for God or their love for each other, but it's hard to read the Scriptures and not conclude that the two passions hang together.

Thus, Christ commands them to return to their first love, or he will remove their lampstand from its place, which speaks to the power of their influence.

In his commentary on the book of Revelation, Dr. Henry Morris says that in Ephesus, "the warmth of their original love – for one another, for the lost, for the Lord was beginning to cool. But this sad testimony can be applied to multitudes of churches in every age, and every church needs continually to search its heart and test its love...the Ephesian warning still applies."

Today, there is no church in the Turkish location once known as Ephesus. In fact, there is no Ephesus. Islam has been firmly established in the region - a region the apostle Paul himself once thoroughly evangelized. One can only wonder what that area might be like now if only the church had maintained and practiced its first love.

Do you remember what first love was like when you fell in love with your wife or husband? You could barely do anything but think of him or her. You were thrilled at your newfound relationship. You wanted to tell everyone. You couldn't do enough for the one you loved. You took every opportunity to be with your beloved. Such is first love, which tends to wane if we're not careful.

It can be this way in our churches too.

"We can build our lovely buildings and make them worshipful and comfortable. We can sing the sweetest music and listen to the most orthodox sermons," wrote the late Southern Baptist preacher, W. Hershell Ford. "We can have everything just right, but if it is not all done in love for Christ, it means nothing, and God is greatly displeased. Every true church is started in love. The people have a love for Christ, making them work and sweat and pray to get the church-going. Then when things are running smoothly, the danger of leaving love out arises."

When my fellow Southern Baptists meet in Nashville, Tennessee, for their annual convention in the next few days, I hope they will remember this lesson from our Lord about losing our first love.

This convention meeting is expected to host one of the largest, if not the largest group of messengers in convention history. A firestorm has already started, and some serious wrongs may need to be righted. This can be a necessary part of church life and shouldn't be neglected. Still, I earnestly pray it's not forgotten that no amount of religious orthodoxy, labor, or loyalty can ever suffice for a deficit in Christian love.

To forget this will only leave our great nation strewn with more empty church buildings. It may even mean the loss of our country.

*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 Orchard at Altapass

## Orchard At Altapass Extends Hours

By Kate Groff  
Mitchell County

The Orchard at Altapass is now open five days a week, from Wednesday through Sunday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., with engaging orchard experiences and free, live music every weekend into October. All are invited to take a listen to great music and a twirl (if so inclined) on the pavilion's wooden dance floor.

The Orchard prides itself on presenting the best mountain music, whether traditional rhythms or twists of contemporary cadence and this season's offering are no exceptions. All music is being performed on the temporary pavilion stage from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. On Saturday, June 12, we kicked off the weekend with Skiffle Creek, a band that self-describes its music—"Woody Guthrie and Leon Redbone meet the B-52's and John Denver at a Tom Petty Tribute." Continue into Sunday afternoon with the Butterbeans, a trio of musicians, and their "toe-tapping porch music."

But don't wait until the afternoon for a trip to the O. There's plenty to do all day. In addition to watching the rare-at-this-time-of-year monarch butterflies transform from caterpillar to winged traveler, play a game or two with a friend. On the back deck, amid the swooping of barn swallows feeding their young, play Jenga, cornhole, or a giant version of connect four. You can even sit down for the friendly competition of good ol' checkers. Or walk a trail, take a scavenger hunt with the kids, learn about the bees, the train that started the orchard, or just check out the General Store, filled with local handi-crafts and products.

Apple treats are a staple on the weekends with Bob's donuts, the fried apple pies of the Farmer's Wife, the Orchard's own hot apple pie, with or without ice cream. And don't forget Linda's homemade fudge in several melt-in-your-mouth flavors.

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 orchard, music, and educational venue. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., 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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Community Housing Coalition Partners  
with HUD - Landlord Event July 27

By April Beck  
Mitchell County



With soaring real estate values, record-low interest rates, and sharp increases in rental dues, the housing shortage continues to surge throughout our mountain communities. Individuals with low- to moderate-income are finding it impossible to locate affordable housing, whether for purchase or rent. The lower a family's income, the more difficult the search for quality housing becomes.

To increase rental opportunities for low-income families, the Community Housing Coalition is partnering with Northwestern Regional Housing Authority (NRHA) in hopes to reach unidentified landlords and share with them the benefits of renting property to Housing Choice Voucher tenants.

Because of its multi-county service jurisdiction, NRHA currently administers the seventh-largest HUD Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCV) in the State of North Carolina. Every month, NRHA pays part or all of the rent for more than 2,000 households directly to more than 700 participating private landlords; but tight rental markets across the mountain counties make it necessary for NRHA to recruit additional rental landlords.

On July 27, at 9:30 am, NRHA will hold a landlord event at the WAMY office in Spruce Pine. This event will be facilitated by Ned Fowler, Executive Director of NRHA. There will be a presentation for landlords, informational material, and an opportunity to ask questions about becoming an HCV landlord. The Housing Coalition is offering free nationwide tenant background checks for new landlords who participate in the HCV program. There is no obligation from those who attend this session, and refreshments will be provided.

The Housing Choice Voucher subsidy program is the largest housing support system for low-income families, nationwide. "There are many benefits to becoming an HCV landlord and I think that many local landlords are unaware of the advantages to this program, such as federally backed and on-time monthly rental payments, a continual stream of available renters, and short unit turn-over time when there is a vacancy. While renters in the private market will likely rent a property as a temporary option, HCV tenants are more likely to rent long-term and are very motivated to remain in a good rental unit for as long as they can. Additionally, if an HCV tenant has an interruption in income, such as through loss of a job, the landlord does not lose money because HUD continues to back that tenant. We are excited to partner with NRHA and hope that offering free national tenant background checks creates something positive for new HCV landlords" states April Beck, Community Housing Coordinator for the AMY Housing Coalition.

Ned Fowler, Executive Director of NRHW states, "Northwestern Regional Housing Authority, considers its participating landlords to be valued partners in its mission to make decent housing more available and more affordable to our less fortunate neighbors. Qualified HCV households are most often single parents with young dependent children or families which include seniors and/or persons with disabilities on a fixed income. Landlords can rely on NRHA to pay reasonable and timely government portion of rents on behalf of eligible households." Leases and contracts are for twelve (12) months and are renewable.

If you have modest but decent rental units which you might consider for HCV participation, we would welcome the opportunity to discuss these matters with you in detail. Please join this landlord event on Tuesday, July 27th, at 9:30 am, at 496-A Balsam Avenue, Spruce Pine, 28777. April Beck can be reached directly for questions at (828) 406-4705.

*April Beck, is the Community Housing Coordinator with the AMY Housing Coalition lives in Yancey County.*



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“Something To Think About” -  
What Can We Do When Foundations Fall?  
Psalm 11:3

By Dennis Love  
McDowell County

David asked a very penetrating and probing question 3,000 years ago. He asked; “If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?” I read where a news reporter once asked someone the following question, “What are the two greatest problems facing America?” The man replied, “I really don’t know and I really don’t care!” Whether the man realized it or not, he answered the reporter’s question. The two greatest problems facing our nation are (1) Ignorance---“I don’t know” and (2) Apathy---“I don’t care.” No two single factors are working harder to destroy the very foundations of our nation than Ignorance---“I don’t know” and Apathy---“I don’t care.” We are right now living in a time when many of our moral and ethical values that formed our great nation are crumbling right before our very eyes. What are the foundations that have made America great under God and are right now being destroyed right before our very eyes? First of all, there is:

The Foundation of Dignity—Human dignity and the value of human life is what made this a great nation under God. But sadly, this foundation is collapsing right before our very eyes. It began to fall when the courts in our land ruled that innocent, defenseless, unborn children have no right to life. Don’t talk to me about Black Lives Matter and Blue Lives Matter until we get back to understanding that life in the womb matters.

The Foundation of Devotion—The things that have made our nation great down through the years is our devotion to God, our devotion to the home, and our devotion to our country. Sadly, these devotions are being destroyed right before our very eyes.

The Foundation of Duty—The thing that has set our nation apart through the years has been our work ethic. Hard-working people are what has made our country great. However, we are right now living in an age of entitlements. Duty is crumbling right before our very eyes and people feel entitled to live off of some type of federal financial assistance.

The Foundation of Decency—Common decency and basic morality has been the foundation that has made America great under God. But today, common decency and basic morality are being radically reformed. Today, lifestyles that not very long ago were hidden in dark alleys and closets are now paraded proudly down Main Street in almost every American city across our land. So, what can the righteous do when the foundations that made us great are being destroyed? The answer is three words. WE CAN PRAY. Let’s pray that these great four spiritual foundations might be restored before we witness the complete and final collapse of a great nation spiritually. WE CAN PRAY AND WE MUST PRAY. To me, this is something for us all to think about!

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



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No Regrets Family -  
A look at the Family that Fears the Lord

By Dean Honeycutt  
Mitchell County



Joshua the successor of Moses was given a task to go over to Jordan and conquer seven wicked nations and live in the Promised Land. God promised Joshua that he would fight for Israel as the Captain of the Lord’s army, would conquer and win battle after battle in Israel. God told Joshua to be strong and courageous as he fought the Lord’s battles. Joshua defeated all his enemies, and the Lord gave rest to Israel.

To be successful Joshua and the children of Israel had to be faithful. Being faithful means adhering to and obeying all that the Lord commands and trusting in the Lord. If you could just picture little children and young boys and girls in Israel at the time of conquest observing their dads as they went off to fight in battle. I would imagine that they, like Joshua, would tell their family "I am going to be ok today because God is going to fight for us, and we are going to win this battle." Israel only lost one battle under Joshua’s command and that was because of the disobedience of one soldier and his family.

These children and teenagers would personally experience the faithfulness of God. Dad would come back from war and tell his family, we won today. God helped us defeat our enemies. And the family would praise God. This would be a regular occurrence in the life of Israel. Joshua and the Army of Israel would defeat thirty-one kings, representing seven nations on the west side of the Jordan River. A military conquest by a smaller Israeli army is amazing. With God all things are possible.

We face struggles and battles today. We are not physically fighting in hand-to-hand combat, but we are fighting battles nonetheless. God has not changed, and He will not change. What He desires for Joshua and his family is the same for Christian families today. Joshua said, *“as for me and my house we will serve the Lord.”*

Our children need to see us win some battles. This is the way a family experiences God. The reason we are weak is that the world has more of us than the Holy Spirit. The Bible says be filled with the Spirit of God. When we walk in the Spirit, we will not desire the world. We cannot and should not have one foot in the world, or world ways and one foot in the church. This is not pleasing to God and does not promote faithfulness. The Bible says, *“to be in the world but not of the world.”* We have no power with God because we dabble in the world and then expect God to fight for us. This happened to Israel when a man named Achan disobeyed God. Achan sinned when he took some things that he was not supposed to take, he stole from God. His sin led to the single defeat of Israel to Ai and the destruction of Achan’s family. The Bible says the *“wages of sin is death.”*

When we are faithful to God, we can see how God works in our lives to bring about His glory. Our children will see our faithfulness to God and God’s word. A child’s faith can be strengthened when they see mom and dad living by faith. If I were on the outside looking in at a faithful family, what would I see? I would see a dad and mom devoted to God. I would see them reading God’s word daily. I would see them praying. I would see them in a church and involved in the ministry of that church. I would see a husband love his wife and put her needs above his own. And I would see a wife respect and submit to her husband. I would see them sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I would also see a separation from the world, but not legalism. I would see them loving their neighbor and loving God. During difficult times of life, I would see them drawing their strength from God to overcome the battle pains of this world. And then I would see them with their eyes fixed on their heavenly home because we are pilgrims passing thru this world to Paradise.

I trust we would all be strengthened in faith and courage to overcome just as Joshua and the Lord’s faithful soldiers. God bless you and your family as you serve the Lord. Training children to follow the Lord is tough and God blessed you with them because he knew you could do it.

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.



By Phillip Greene  
Avery County

Have you ever stopped to think of the lies you tell when you “worship”?

Worship is meant to be a lifestyle, and yet the lies we tell under the guise of worship — it’s heartbreaking to come to the realization, honestly.

We say, “I surrender all,” while holding on to all our worldly ways and lusts because we want to have control.

We say, “All to Jesus I surrender,” while denying our sin because of what our neighbor might think.

We say, “Lord, have your way,” while we fight Him tooth and nail to keep control of our way because it’s comfortable.

We “Stand up for Jesus” while denying Him in our lives because we refuse to repent of our sins because they’re more “fun and fulfilling”.

Have you ever stopped to think of the lies you tell under the guise of “worship”?

We talk of His “amazing grace” that saved us from our wretchedness while continuing to live in that sin that makes us wretched.

We cry, “How great Thou art,” yet allow fear to keep us from believing He is great or capable of handling our problems.

We are filled with lip service to our King while our actions speak volumes. We strive to hold on to a lifestyle that is destroying us, our families, our friendships, and our churches.

We are like Lot in our churches today. We find ourselves seated at the gates of Sodom, thinking we are doing a service for the Lord by warning His messengers of the danger in the city. A city, mind you, that He had moved into and made home. A city that had caused Lot to compromise any belief he had (Genesis 19).

We are seated on a fence, between two masters, trying to serve both and never realizing that we are falling for the wrong one while growing to hate the other (Revelation 3:16; Matthew 6:24).

Have you ever thought of the lies you tell under the guise of worship?

While we cry and claim to be His we deny Him in how we love others and in our selfish behavior. While we say we trust in His way, we fight for our way to be the way things go. We throw temper tantrums when we think things should be different, but I ask, “What if this is His way?”

Think of the ways we lie when we worship. Think of the sin that remains at the door. What is it about “turn from your wicked ways” we have so much trouble with?

Today, get over yourself. Humble yourself. Deny yourself. Stop claiming you have it all figured out. Stop denying Him while claiming to know Him. Repent and turn from your wicked ways.

And...

I’ll strive to do the same. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, let’s seek Him together.

Have we ever stopped to think of the lies we tell under the guise of worship?

Maybe we should.

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



Founding Fathers and How They Served Our Country—John Jay

By David Streater, PhD  
Burke County, NC



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

John Jay was born on December 12, 1745, in New York City, and raised a short distance away in Rye, New York. He graduated from King’s College, now Columbia University. John then studied law and was admitted to the New York bar in 1768.

During his career, Jay made many contributions to America. The first was writing the Address to the People of Great Britain as a delegate to the First Continental Congress. Next, John pledged his support for the Declaration of Independence as a contributor to the Provisional Congress.

In 1782, Jay, Benjamin Franklin, and John Adams negotiated the Treaty of Paris. This officially ended the Revolutionary War (September 3, 1783) and procured most of the land east of the Mississippi River.

During the late 1780s, Jay, Hamilton, and Madison using the pseudonym “Publius” wrote the Federalist Papers to support ratification of the United States Constitution.

In 1789 the Federal Judiciary Act created the courts including the Supreme Court with John Jay the Chief Justice. The suit of Chisholm v. Georgia is considered the most significant presented before Chief Justice Jay.

Due to continued conflicts after the Revolutionary War, President Washington ordered Jay to resolve the issues with Great Britain. Washington supported Jay’s Treaty, but not the American people because most thought it was too lenient towards Britain. John’s reputation suffered as his effigy was burned in many places. “Jay joked that he could travel at night from Boston to Philadelphia by the light of his burning effigies”. Even though his agreement damaged his political career, he did what he thought was best for America. His attempts to run for president in 1796 and 1800 were unsuccessful.

John Jay resigned from the Supreme Court to be the governor of New York until 1801. During this time, he outlawed slavery. He retired to his farm and died in 1829. As an homage, the John Jay College of Criminal Justice of the City University of New York is his namesake.

Please visit your Charters of Freedom setting in most western North Carolina counties. A Charters of Freedom setting consists of the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. They are on permanent display analogous to the Charters of Freedom in the National Archives, Washington, DC. Please visit our website (ChartersofFreedom.com) to learn more about our existing settings.

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

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# Regional Spotlight

## Neighbors Feeding Neighbors Food Ministry Celebrates Bountiful Accomplishments and Anticipates Continued Need and Productiveness

By Tim Gardner

The Neighbors Feeding Neighbors Food Ministry has achieved milestones of remarkable proportions in the past three years. And this organization, which serves Mitchell, Avery, and Yancey counties, is on a path for another record-breaking year in 2021 and even more future growth in upcoming years.

Founded in 2018 by Amy and Allen Hoilman, residents of the mountain hamlet of Buladean in Northwest Mitchell County, the Neighbors Feeding Neighbors Food Ministry, Inc. is a non-profit Christian-based organization currently based in the Altapass Community of Mitchell County. It is dedicated to eliminating hunger by any means possible including monetary donations, volunteerism and/or food donations. The Neighbors Feeding Neighbors Food Ministry is operated totally by volunteers and all of its food programs are offered free of charge.

Allen said he felt in his heart that the Lord wanted him and Amy to start this ministry to help local people in need. But he didn’t believe then that he and Amy were capable of starting it. He and Amy kept the idea in mind and most importantly, in their hearts for two years. Then God showed them an unmistakable sign and as Allen said we “let go and let God!”

Amy added: “We knew then it was the right time for us to start our ministry. God gave us the means and it’s grown by leaps and bounds since. What started as helping three families in late February 2018, has grown to more than several thousand families we help in the three-county region each year.”

Neighbors Feeding Neighbors partners with the MANNA FoodBank, a private, not-for-profit service organization that links the food industry with over 200 partner agencies in 16 Western North Carolina counties to get food to families’ tables. MANNA stands for Mountain Area Nutritional Needs Alliance. Both Neighbors Feeding Neighbors and MAA Food Bank helps individuals and families who are struggling with food insecurity.

Statistics of the number of people fed and lives touched the past three-and-a-half years by the Neighbors Feeding Neighbors Ministry includes:

- 2018
- Families Served-372
- Individuals Served-807
- Community Meals Delivered to Shut-Ins-1
- 2019
- Families Served-3,855
- Individuals Served-9,020
- Pounds of Food Distributed-192,113
- Community Meals Served-21
- 2020
- Families Served 16,185
- Individuals Served-33,648
- MANNAPACKS Provided for Children-5,356
- Pounds of Food Distributed-735,798
- Community Meals Delivered to Shut-Ins-11
- 2021 (As of May 21)

- Families Served- 4,913
- Individuals Served-9,460
- MANNAPACKS Provided for Children-1,164 (These include personal care items such as toothbrushes, toothpaste, mouthwash, and toiletries).
- Pounds of Food Distributed-275,020
- Community Meals Delivered toShut-Ins-1,156
- Food Boxes Distributed-56
- Community Meals Delivered to Shut-Ins-11

31.5 percent of all families in Mitchell County were served by the Neighbors Feeding Neighbors Food Ministry between July 1, 2019, and June 1, 2020.

Allen also added 2,300 miles have been driven so far this year by the Neighbors Feeding Neighbors staff and volunteers to help the needy.

“We reach out with love and respect to help families struggling to put food on their tables,” Allen noted. “We don't judge the individuals or families we serve and we love them as ourselves. This ministry has touched many lives, many of which have decided to give back and volunteer their time to help others who are in need through our Neighbors Feeding Neighbors.”

While the Neighbors Feeding Neighbors Food Ministry requires a total team

effort from its volunteers, but according to those who know them best, the Hoilmans are the two most instrumental in the success of the organization.

Still, the Hoilmans deflect credit they get for Neighbors Feeding Neighbors' success and are excited about its future. “It’s all because of God; not us,” Allen stated.

“God is just using us Amy, myself, and all our volunteers and others who have helped us in any manner to perform this ministry. Neighbors Feeding Neighbors is a whole team of wonderful volunteers, of whom besides Amy and I, consist of approximately 12-15 year-round.”

Allen considers the Neighbors Feeding Neighbors Food Ministry as a mission “as close to his heart as any,” adding: “One of my main objectives when we started, was that we wanted to witness it grow and evolve. Amy and I are proud that we have witnessed all of those goals become reality.”

When asked about the future of Neighbors Feeding Neighbors, Allen noted: “I believe that feeding of the hungry is scripturally based and the need in the Tri-Counties will keep growing as its population ages. When God opens a door for you to do a particular ministry, He expects you to go through that door and to carry out whatever role he has for you. And that’s what Amy and I are doing.”

Various Mitchell, Avery, and Yancey leaders and other citizens in those counties are in awe of the work the Neighbors Feeding Neighbors Food Ministry does. One such citizen is Mitchell County (and former Avery County) Manager Tim Greene.

“It's very satisfying that our county has such wonderful volunteer service organizations like the Neighbors Feeding Neighbors Food Ministry,” said Greene. “Amy and Allen Hoilman and their staff and volunteers do such a great job for the citizens of the Tri-Counties and others who need food help that it defies description. Neighbors Feeding Neighbors provides much-needed assistance to those who need it most and we're most grateful for this ministry.”

The Holman's added that the ultimate hope of the Neighbors Feeding Neighbors Ministry is that there is no longer a need for their work.

“We would like to work ourselves out of this job in the sense that our work is no longer needed,” Allen declared. “But I doubt that will ever happen. There are always people who are hungry in almost every place on a map and that's true in Mitchell, Avery, and Yancey counties. We enjoy our work and it is extremely rewarding. But it's always our goal for our work in feeding others to not be needed. But if that ever happened, I don’t think it would last long. There’s likely going to always be people in our area in this life who needs food.”

Neighbors Feeding Neighbors has various other programs at its headquarters on Jacksontown Road in the Altapass for all who wish to attend. Those include yard sales (from 10:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m.) and a devotional service (starting at 10:00 a.m.) each day, Monday through Friday.

Neighbors Feeding Neighbors hosted a revival in the barn on its premises from June 14 through 18, beginning at 7:00 p.m. each evening. It featured local minister, Reverend Jim Shoupe. Additionally, the Neighbors Feeding Neighbors Food Ministry will host a special Independence Day Festival at its headquarters all day and evening on July 4 (10:00 a.m. until late into the evening).

For further information about the Neighbors Feeding Neighbors Food Ministry, call (828) 592-4089; write via U.S. Mail: Neighbors Feeding Neighbors Food Ministry, 14 Jacksontown Road, Spruce Pine, NC 28777; or log onto the organization’s Internet website at: nfnfoodminsitry.org. Its office hours are from 10:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. Mondays through Fridays.

*Tim Gardner is a journalist and a life-long resident of the North Carolina Mountains. His feature stories, columns, and news and sports articles have appeared in various national, regional, local, and specialty publications. Tim has worked as a publicist for Martin Cook and the Inspirations Quartet as well as Associate Features Editor for Singing News magazine. He also served as the project assistant, wrote the foreword to, and named the What A Wonderful Time book, a history of the Inspirations. Additionally, Tim co-wrote the Legend and Legacy book, a history of the Weatherford Quartet.*





I Am  
By Tracy Jessup

*“It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to your name, O Most High; to declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by night, to the music of the lute and the harp, to the melody of the lyre. For you, O Lord, have made me glad by your work; at the works of your hands I sing for joy.”*  
(Psalm 92:1-2, 4)



According to a June 1, 2021, Newsweek story, “Anything can be a work of art, even nothing.” The article proceeds to report that “Italian artist Salvatore Garau recently auctioned an invisible sculpture for 15,000 euros (\$18,300). According to as.com, the sculpture’s initial price was set between 6,000 and 9,000 euros; however, the price was raised after several bids were placed.

Titled ‘Io Sono’ (Italian for ‘I am’), the 67-year-old artist’s sculpture is ‘im-material,’ meaning that the sculpture does not actually exist. Though he’s received much critique for the sale, Garau argues that his work of art isn’t ‘nothing,’ but is instead a ‘vacuum.’

Italy 24 News reported that per Garau’s instructions, the sculpture must be displayed in a private home free from any obstruction, in an area that is about 5 ft. long by 5 ft. wide. Because the piece does not exist, there are no special lighting or climate requirements. Multiple outlets report that the only tangible item the buyer will receive is a certificate of authentication that is both signed and stamped by Garau” (Sara Santora, “Italian Artist Sells Invisible Sculpture for More Than \$18,000,” newsweek.com, 6/1/21).

In today’s passage, the Psalmist gives thanks to the Lord and sings for joy for things both tangible and intangible – seen and unseen. He is inspired by God’s creative activity. Reminiscent of Psalm 8:3 and Psalm 104:24, the Psalmist looks at the heavens - the moon and the stars that God has established - and then marvels at the vastness of God’s creation.

However, there are times in which God’s ways are incomprehensible. The prophet Isaiah reminds us that God’s thoughts are not our thoughts, nor are God’s ways, our ways (55:8). We cannot fully grasp the activity of God, but we can trust two important attributes of God’s character – his steadfast love and faithfulness. And as we delight in God’s creative activity and divine nature, we, too, will come to realize that it is good to give thanks to the Lord and to sing praises to God’s name. To paraphrase Michael Wilcock in The Message of Psalms 73-150, we can sing for joy at what we know of the deeds and works and thoughts of God, aware of the acts of God in history and in our own experience (pp. 81-82).

You can be the judge as to whether or not Garau’s “I am” expresses something as a work of art, but there can be no question that our God, whose name is “I AM,” is worthy of worship and praise.

Prayer: Lord, reflecting on who you are and what you have done brings joy and gladness to our hearts, and we worship you.

*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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Grant - \$ 525,000 Grant Kate B. Reynolds  
By Jim Smith  
McDowell County



Freedom Life Receives a \$525,000 Grant from Kate B. Reynolds To Address Substance Misuse Needs within the McDowell Community Marion, NC – Freedom Life is pleased to announce that it has received a \$525,000 grant from the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. The purpose of this grant is to give Freedom Life, as a backbone organization for the McDowell Substance Use Coalition, the funding that will exclusively go to helping the Coalition grow exponentially and effectively in its capacity to address the many complex factors concerning substance misuse and addiction within McDowell County. The grant will specifically focus on addressing and reducing rates of substance misuse and overdose deaths among the Medicaid and uninsured populations.

The mission of the McDowell Substance Use Coalition, formerly known as the McDowell Substance Use Workgroup, is to be a diverse collaborative of community leadership, individuals, agencies, and organizations working together to ensure McDowell County is a place where substance misuse prevention, treatment, and sustainable recovery are possible. Grant funding will allow Freedom Life and the McDowell Substance Use Coalition to continue working with the North Carolina Institute for Public Health for the next three years in providing research, data collecting and processing, strategic plan formulation, organizational capacity development, and community engagement programming. Part of creating a greater capacity in data gathering and processing will include the formulation and implementation of a Dash Board organizational, programming, and community impact measurement system.

An additional and very significant benefit of grant funding will be the capacity to hire, for the first time in the history of McDowell County, a full-time Substance Use Program Coordinator that will serve in leadership with the Coalition and in connection with the community in coordinating, developing and implementing programs and initiatives directly related to addressing substance misuse needs. “I am so excited that we will have a very qualified individual who is being paid full time to help the Coalition and the County address the many complex substance misuse needs within our community,” says Danny Hampton, Executive Director of Freedom Life. “The Substance Use Program Coordinator will serve initially as an employee of Freedom Life. However, the goal is that by the end of the three-year grant term the McDowell Substance Use Coalition will have become a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization and will move forward independent of, yet still partnered with Freedom Life. The Coordinator will then become the Executive Director of the Coalition.”

As a 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation itself, Freedom Life seeks to provide comprehensive pre-and post-release need-based services to justice-involved individuals. The goal is to reduce recidivism in McDowell County by preparing, resourcing, and providing long-term holistic support for men and women who have faced incarceration in such a way as to make possible successful reintegration upon release and long-term positive life sustainability beyond release. 80% of the clients served by Freedom Life struggle with some form of substance misuse or other addictions. Support for and partnership with the McDowell Substance Use Coalition is critical to serving the needs of Freedom Life clients.

The Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust was established in 1947 and is now one of the largest private trust in North Carolina. Our mission is to improve the health and quality of life of financially disadvantaged residents in North Carolina. The Health Improvement in North Carolina program area supports community-wide health solutions across the state. The Local Impact in Forsyth County program area fosters equitable and sustainable solutions to improve the quality of life in Forsyth County. Wells Fargo Bank, N. A. serves as the sole trustee.

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

*If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. John 8:36*



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Walking in the Spirit

By Dr. Tom Walker  
McDowell County



There are two basic Scriptures we are going to use to lay a foundation for our study in this article. Galatians 5:16 tells us, *“This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”* In addition, Galatians 5:25 says, *“If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”*

The walk of the believer is very important for several reasons. One reason it is important is that God expects the right kind of walk from His children. An earthly parent who cares about his boy or girl is very concerned about how that child conducts his or her life. Christian parents want the Spirit of God to control the lives of their children, not the world, the flesh, and the Devil.

Another reason it is important is that someone is watching our lives. People who critique Christian people look at God’s children very critically and carefully. As a born-again child of God, we do not want to turn people away from Him, but rather we want to so live our lives that others will see Jesus in us. If people see Christ in us, they will see the difference God makes in the Spirit-directed life. Then, some of them will want what we have in our lives.

A third reason I suggest is that it is the only way to be successful in our Christian lives. If the world system, the flesh, and Satan rule our lives, then you can be sure your living will be a failure. The Lord knows your future, even when you have no idea what tomorrow will hold for you. If you follow Him carefully day by day, He is preparing you for your tomorrow, that is, if God allows you to live another day. Each day, when one's life is directed by God’s Spirit, prepares us for the next day. He knows how to lead and guide you through the Holy Ghost because God knows what is in your tomorrow.

- A fourth reason to walk in God’s Spirit is that it is a command in the Word of God. In Galatians 5:16 several important things are worthy to note concerning the word “walk”.
- 1- The word “walk” reveals first that it is in the imperative mode in the Greek New Testament. That simply means it is not an option for us but that the walk in the Spirit is a matter of command and necessity.
  - 2- It is also a present tense word, signifying that walking in God’s Spirit is to be a continual, constant way of life for those who have spiritually been born from above.
  - 3- It is also a plural verb suggesting it is not for just one person; it is not just for the preacher, a deacon, or a Sunday School teacher, but that it is for many more than one. It should be for all of God’s saints.

When we look at “walk” in Galatians 5:26, we discover it is a word that speaks of marching in military rank, keeping step, and not falling behind. It is in the first person suggesting that instead of being overly concerned about how others are walking, you need to look at your own personal walk with the Holy Ghost. The other Greek word for “walk” in Galatians 5:1 is the present tense, informing us that walking in God’s Spirit is to be a constant, continual way of life. Living a God-directed life is not to be a spasmodic matter, like a muscle twitch.

What Is Walking in the Spirit

What does it mean to walk in the Holy Ghost? It means that we yield to the Lord’s control and allow Him to exert His influence over us and through us, as we conduct our daily lives. Too many times we want to direct our own lives rather than seeking the direction of God.

To walk in the Spirit is to be controlled by Him. When one is filled with Him, we follow God’s Spirit and allow Him to lead us in the way we should walk.

Since we still have the flesh (the old Adamic nature), it is so important that we allow the influence of the Lord in daily life. Commentator Adam Clark puts this into perspective by writing the following: “If ye receive again the Gospel and the grace of Christ, and permit yourselves to be influenced by the Holy Spirit whom you are now grieving, ye are not under the law—ye will not feel those evil propensities which now disgrace and torment you, but they must prevail while you are not under the influence of the grace and Spirit of Christ.”

Sin grieves the Spirit of God. We cannot grieve the Holy Ghost and at the same time walk in the Spirit. If we are to be under the Spirit’s control, then we cannot please Him and grieve Him at the same time. We must surrender to one or the other.

How Do I Walk in the Spirit

In the first place, one must be a Christian. An unsaved person does not possess any nature but the one that is fallen. In fact, the lost person does not possess the Holy Ghost. The person who does not have God’s Spirit within to lead and guide simply cannot be governed by God’s Spirit.

In addition, we must refuse the control of the flesh. Satan works through our fallen, Adamic natures of the flesh. Normally when we think of the flesh, we think of our mortal bodies. Many times the Bible simply points to the flesh as our old nature. God did not try to save our fallen natures, but He did counteract it by creating within us a new nature. The flesh is in direct conflict with the Spirit of God. Consider what happens when your flesh is in control of your life. Galatians 5:19-21 declares: *“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”*

Keep a constant watch on your life. Make such you do not get so busy examining the lives of others that you ignore the sin in your own life. Sin will hinder the Spirit’s control in your life and bring defeat to the believer who ignores it.

We should make sure that we have crucified the flesh. Galatians 5:24 says,

*“And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.”*

**Benefits of Walking in the Spirit**

When we do walk under the control of the Holy Ghost, what are some of the benefits that we enjoy? I am going to take a little space to remind you what some of those benefits are.

All we have to do to locate those benefits is to look in Galatians 5:22-23. These are products of the control of the Holy One over our lives. This is the fruit of the Lord’s presence in our lives. Here is what the Scripture says: *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”*

- Love is in our hearts as a result of walking in the Spirit. We can love the unlovely through God’s love within our hearts.
- Joy is present also. Joy is something that does not depend upon desirable circumstances to be our portion. It is present in the worst of times.
- Peace for the Spirit-filled person is a present portion. It gives us calm when waves of trouble roll upon our souls. It is calm, quiet, and orderly.
- Longsuffering is dealing positively with the weaknesses and provocations of others. In doing so we know things that happen to us are a part of God’s providence.

Gentleness characterizes our behavior. It is to be kind and good, useful and helpful, gentle and sweet, being considerate and gracious in all circumstances.

Goodness is being full of virtue and excellence in our attitudes and conduct toward others.

- Faith means to be faithful and trustworthy, loyal and steadfast in devotion and allegiance. This kind of person denies himself and trusts the Lord.
  - Meekness is power under control. It has the strength to control and discipline, doing so at just the right time.
  - Temperance means to master and control the body or the flesh with all its lusts. It is the control of our appetites and sinful passions. Galatians 5:16 says, *“Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”*
- It pays off in the here and now if we walk in the Spirit instead of following the world, the flesh, and the Devil.

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

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Prayer Opens Hearts

By Rev. John B. Sorensen



Do you pray strategically for changed lives? Whether we realize it or not, prayer is one of the most effective tools we have in the battle to win people for Jesus Christ. The problem is, we often don’t engage in strategic prayer. Our prayers are centered around ourselves instead of others. We may ask that God gives us the strength to be a witness for Him—and that is good—but we fail to pray in a way that God can use to open people’s hearts.

Prayer opens hearts.

The first thing we must realize is that the Holy Spirit draws people to salvation, not us. He speaks to hearts and woos them to Himself. He is the One who convicts us of sin and leads us to repentance. Jesus told us in John 16:13, “*But when He, the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth*” (NIV).

Do you know someone who doesn’t know Jesus? Pray. Are you burdened for people around you who are lost and without hope? Pray. Spend time every day praying for the hearts of those who don’t yet know Jesus. Mention them by name to God. Ask the Holy Spirit to soften their hearts towards Him. Intercede on their behalf; then pray for opportunities to share God’s love with them.

Prayer changes us.

As we begin to pray daily for the hearts of those around us, our hearts begin to change. The Holy Spirit works in us and deepens our compassion for the lost. He breaks our hearts for the people we are lifting in prayer; then He compels us to act.

When our hearts are broken for the lost, we cannot sit silently and watch the people we love die without the hope of knowing Jesus Christ. Ask God to open doors and allow us to share His love with the people we are praying for. God desires that we spread His Word. He commanded us, as believers, to share it (Matthew 28:19-20). So we can be confident that He will provide those opportunities. We just need to open our eyes and watch for them.

Prayer gives us boldness.

“*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be My witnesses...*” (Acts 1:8, NIV). Opportunities to share our faith are everywhere around us. But when we start praying for them, we begin to see them clearly.

Don’t stop praying. Invite the Holy Spirit to join the conversation. He will give you the words to say. He will continue to work on the heart of the person who is hearing about God’s love. Pray that He will intervene in that person’s life and change it for eternity!

Prayer cannot be separated from witnessing. It is the essence of sharing our faith. We cannot reach someone’s heart without the Holy Spirit, and we reach the Holy Spirit through the power of prayer. So, I invite you to begin praying strategically for those around you. Rely on the Holy Spirit to open doors and guide you into conversations.

Then share the Gospel with boldness!

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.

Sudoku

Solution on page 14

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

Afterglow

By Ken and Jan Merop  
Avery County



What comes to mind as Fourth of July approaches each year?

The first thing I think of is the fireworks! I can’t wait for the evening and ever-darkening sky. Then a hush comes over the crowd as the first one is lit and lights up the sky.

One after another creates a staccato in my chest. Boom! Boom! Boom!

I don’t want it to end. The surprising beauty illuminating the inky sky is like the palette of an artist exploding onto a canvas.

And when the finale takes my breath away, I’m left with an afterglow of silent remembrance and appreciation for the meaning behind this celebration.

From the beginning of our national independence, we have been encouraged to celebrate...and to do so loudly with fireworks, patriotic music, parades, and festivals; along with backyard barbecues.

Red, White, and Blue are displayed everywhere and worn by most. And we bask in the afterglow of all the festivities from one generation to another...as our Founding Fathers hoped we would.

However, too quickly the day passes, weeks go by and the afterglow fades along with our passion and fervor.

Let’s get it back and keep it visibly contagious.

If you’ve ever had a family member serve in the military, you know the cost better than anyone. Truly freedom is not free and is paid for at a very high price... some securing our freedom with the ultimate sacrifice.

And, yet, how easily we can fall into the complaining, antagonistic attitudes that political divisions create. When it is the unity that should be our goal.

Let’s have respect for one another putting the other first and listening...really listening...to his or her point of view. Let’s reach a place of mutual agreement based on a strong, time-tested foundation of truth and justice.

The Founding Fathers knew that to build this nation on anything less than the truth and reliability of Scripture would have been futile.

Let’s not destroy the foundations our history embraces. Let’s open our eyes and ears and hear Jesus Christ’s prayer just before he went to the cross as seen in John 17: 20, 21, 23.

*“I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one – as you are in me, Father, and I am in you....that the world will know...”*

This nation has its roots in God’s Word and his purposes for all mankind. Let’s not let the afterglow fade. Selah

BLOOMING SPARKLERS

There’s nothing like Fourth of July celebrations to get our hearts pounding.

The chorus of ‘ooh’s and ah’s’ is like an unrehearsed choir naturally blending.

But, it doesn’t have to happen once a year.

Let your garden colorfully explode with blooms that nurture that same delight...yet without a sound. Let your heart explode in the wonder of God’s creation.

Let the ‘ooh’s and ah’s’ begin!

*“In the beginning God created...and God saw that it was good.”*

Genesis 1: 1 and 12b, NKJV



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.

*For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. Galatians 5:13*



# Roan Mountain Baptist Church

## A Bruised Reed

By Russell McKinney  
Mitchell County

*"A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out..."*  
(Isaiah 42:3; Matthew 12:20, N.I.V.)



The words of our text are first found in the Old Testament book of Isaiah and then later referenced in the New Testament book of Matthew. In each instance, the "he" being spoken of is Jesus. The Isaiah verse is part of a passage that describes the Messiah who was to come to Israel. The Matthew verse is part of one that evidences that Jesus was that Messiah. The stalk of a reed is basically just a hollow shaft. If that shaft is damaged, the reed cannot stand strong and erect. Therefore, the picture of a "bruised reed" is one in which damage has caused the shaft to become bent or bowed to some degree.

Imagine a patch of reeds growing undisturbed by a riverbank. The reeds are healthy, vibrant, and standing tall. Now imagine a fisherman wearing heavy boots who invades the scene and tromps through the reeds to make his way to the water. A path of trampled stalks is left to show his swath of destruction.

Are those trampled stalks totally annihilated? No. But they are now damaged. Those reeds didn't do anything to deserve that damage, either. They were just standing there by the water's edge, doing what they were supposed to be doing when trouble found them.

In terms of people, a bruised reed depicts an individual who has been damaged through no fault of his own. Outside influences (either unfortunate events or things done by other individuals) have tromped into the person's life and inflicted considerable injury. This injury can be emotional, psychological, mental, spiritual, physical, or some combination of any of these. In all cases, though, the result is that the person is now lowly, somewhat pitiable, and hindered from operating at a high level.

According to our text, Jesus handles such people with delicate care. Instead of breaking off the bruised stalk and thereby finalizing the damage, Jesus works to repair and restore the stalk to help it stand tall again. This shows His tender compassion toward those who have been wronged, treated unjustly, or have simply gotten caught up in a bad turn of events they didn't cause.

As for the illustration of the smoldering wick, in Bible times people commonly doused a piece of cloth in olive oil or animal fat to use it as a lamp's wick. That wick would keep the lamp lit as long as the oil or fat remained, but when the fuel source ran out the wick would begin to smolder and smoke rather than produce a true flame. Like the illustration of the bruised reed, the illustration of the smoldering wick is one of an object that is in a weakened state and isn't functioning properly.


So, what type of person does the smoldering wick represent? It represents one whose energy and resources have become depleted through the performance of his duty. Such a person is spent, exhausted, and incapable of self-replenishment. He has given his all in doing what he was supposed to do, so much so that he can no longer do it effectively. Where there was once a flame there is now only smoke. The situation is akin to the modern term "burned out."

Does Jesus throw such a person away and find somebody new to do the work? Definitely not. Instead of snuffing out what is left of the person's flame, Jesus provides him with a fresh supply of fuel and gets that flame burning brightly again. This shows Christ's tender compassion toward those who have run themselves into the ground trying to do good and consequently have nothing left to give. Jesus appreciates such peoples' effort and won't leave them in their exhausted, drained condition.

I don't know where these two graphic illustrations from Jesus find you right now, but I guess that somebody out there is currently feeling like a bruised reed, a smoldering wick, or both. If that's you then you should take encouragement from the fact that Jesus has no desire to finish you off completely. On the contrary, He wants to strengthen you, shore you up, revitalize you, and refuel you.

No matter what the circumstances were that brought you to your present condition, the main thing now is your future. Today can be the first day of that future if you will allow Jesus to begin the process of restoring you back to a healthy state. My advice to you is to spend time with Him in prayer, telling Him all about your current situation and how you got there. Then let Him begin His marvelous work of restoring you and reviving you. He does want you standing straight and burning with a bright flame, and He can get you there if you will give Him your damaged or depleted self completely.

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





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



By Dave Ramsey

Put your education first

Dear Dave,

I'm 19, and I'm about to finish up my first year of community college. I have enough money through scholarships and help from my family to get a bachelor's degree. After that, I plan on going to law school and cash flowing that part of my education. I've already started a Roth IRA with the money I've made working, but I'm wondering if I should continue contributing to retirement when I will have to pay for law school out-of-pocket.

-Jonathan

Dear Jonathan,

No, I wouldn't recommend that. You should stop saving for retirement for now and put all that money aside to pay for your education.

An education that's usable in the marketplace to increase your income is more valuable to you right now than a mutual fund. A degree in left-handed puppetry or underwater bubble-blowing definitely is not. Believe it or not, people spend years, and tens of thousands of dollars—sometimes hundreds of thousands of dollars—getting degrees in silly things that have no real value whatsoever. But, if you're going to get a law degree, and use that degree to create value to society and an incredible income for yourself, that is going to give you a better mathematical return on your investment at this point in your life.

You have plenty of time ahead to invest for retirement. I don't want you to put it off forever, but a debt-free education is a right investment for you right now. Just keep piling up cash, and let's pay for this law degree out of pocket. And hey, if you end up with a bunch of money left over when you've graduated and are ready to become a lawyer, that's not the worst thing in the world, is it?

Good luck, Jonathan. Keep up the hard work!-Dave

Keep the homeowner's insurance

Dear Dave,

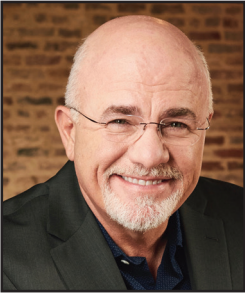
Recently, I claimed my homeowner's insurance for hail damage. It was my first claim ever. Since I'm retired and completely debt-free—including my home—and have over \$1 million in the bank, is homeowner's insurance still a good idea? The house is insured for \$250,000, with a \$5,000 deductible, and the insurance is about \$1,200 a year.-Mary

Dear Mary,

You're obviously in good financial shape, but I'd still recommend you have an up-to-date homeowner's insurance policy. If something happened to my home or one of my rental properties, I could write a check and replace any of them. But I still have homeowner's insurance on every single one.

It's just good risk management to transfer the chances of a fire, tornado, or other catastrophic events to homeowner's insurance. If something disastrous happened, you could write a check to cover the deductible with no problem. But writing a check for \$250,000? You'd feel that one. Keep the policy, Mary!-Dave

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



A Covenant of Grace

By Caron Cline  
Burke County

The USA celebrates its freedom from British oppression each year on the fourth of July with great fanfare. Our founding fathers signed the Declaration of Independence on August 2nd of 1776 for the purpose of justifying their decision to separate from Great Britain. This important document declares that we are 'endowed by our Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness'. In September of 1787, the Constitution was constructed and later ratified as a more detailed description of the balance of power between the branches of government as well as adequate representation according to the population of the states. This document also promised specific rights to the citizens of the nation: freedom of speech; freedom of religion; freedom of the press; the right to assemble; and the right to petition the government without fear of retaliation. For over two hundred years, the privileges and opportunities guaranteed to Americans have resulted in citizens with a strong work ethic, strong moral values, and a strong sense of duty. However, the twenty-first century has brought a mysterious and unsettling cloud of oppression upon our land. Homicides increased in some cities by as much as 75% from 2019 to 2020. Statistics state that at least 21 million Americans have at least one addiction. Drug overdoses have tripled since 1990. USA Today reported that the suicide rate of individuals between the ages of 10 and 24 increased nearly 60% between 2007-2018. More recently, since the Covid 19 pandemic, officials state that mental or behavioral health symptoms have increased significantly. Are we really free?

John Adams once made this statement: "Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other".

Neither the Declaration of Independence nor the Constitution has the power to ensure lasting freedom. While it is an amazing honor to live in 'the land of the free and the home of the brave', this life is a vapor; here today and gone tomorrow. Every living soul enters this world as a sinner under a sentence of eternal condemnation, completely enslaved to the world, the flesh, and the devil. Apart from a relationship with the God of the Universe, through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ, freedom is nonexistent. Rather than setting our hope on the US Constitution, we should pursue the God-ordained Covenant of Grace which provides freedom from sin and death. Romans 8:1-2 promises that "*Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death*".

Blood was shed to free the colonies from British tyranny and the blood of many more has continued to be shed to maintain this freedom. However, the blood of one Man, Jesus Christ, was sufficient to provide freedom for the entire world. The offer of a life free from sin and death still stands. Simply believe and confess that you are a sinner and that Jesus took your sins upon Himself and died on your behalf. Ask for His forgiveness. Believe and confess that He rose from the grave on the third day. Then surrender your life to the Lord, committing to follow Jesus Christ all the days of your life. The moment anyone sincerely follows these steps, all charges are dropped, eternal release from sin is declared and all past offenses are covered forever. This Covenant of Grace, sealed by the blood of Jesus guarantees freedom from death, hell, and the grave. Now that's a freedom worth celebrating!!

*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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Captives In Egypt

By Patricia Jackson  
McDowell County

In Genesis 15:13, God tells Abram, “*Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs and shall serve them, and they shall afflict them four hundred years.*” In Genesis 22, God saw Abram was willing to offer his only son, Isaac, as a sacrifice. So God promised Abraham that his seed would “*multiply as the stars of the heaven and the sand which is upon the seashore and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies.*”

In Genesis 46:1-4, God tells Jacob to “*fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation, and will surely bring thee up again.*” In Exodus Ch. 1, we learn of Israel’s bondage and growth in Egypt. The new King of Egypt did not know Joseph and became concerned the children of Israel are more and mightier than them. He set taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens, building cities. The more they were afflicted, the more they multiplied and grew. God heard the groaning and remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and had respect unto them. God sent Moses several times to Pharoah to let his people go, but Pharoah refused.

Ten plagues came upon Egypt, all devastating to the Egyptians. Each of the ten plagues was a judgment against the false Egyptian gods. Their gods were powerless to duplicate the plagues or stop them. Exodus 9:14” *For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth.*”

The plagues were ten disasters sent by God upon Egypt to convince Pharoah to free the Israelite slaves from the four-hundred-year bondage and oppression they had endured. It was also a clear picture of God’s power, God’s protection, and God’s plan for his chosen people. Thus, the Egyptians and other ancient people of the region knew of the powerful God of the children of Israel. We still serve that same powerful God today!

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.



By Nancy Malik  
Avery County

The height of summer has arrived with July in the Blue Ridge Mountains. Animal young are maturing and the local ground hog’s little ones have grown quickly in the warmth of the summer sun. Watching a chipmunk grab a seed and leave a trail through grass and weeds of movement was fascinating. So many poignant moments happen in Avery County amid its beauty and surprises around every corner. Many like to go to the beach. I prefer the mountains.

COVID prayerfully has almost run its course. Life changes have been strong and much prayer lifted for students to catch up with many hours lost in school time. But summer is the time to take a breath and get outdoors! It is a time of freedom to go to the park, hike, swim, picnic, have sleepovers, and camp. The Town of Newlands children’s parks has new equipment. Thank you Newland for the perfect timing. What a thrill to see deer again. The fawns are growing quickly!

Frodo and Samwise had to work hard to find food in the final days of their journey to throw the ring (sin) into the fire just as Christ did His work on the cross. Pray for Avery County’s Body of Christ to experience renewal, revival, and anticipation for the future after many churches open up again after being closed for a year.

Please pray for the Body of Christ of Avery County to come out of their buildings and come together as the Body of Christ. (Said by Tommy Burleson at the Singing on the Mountain in 2018). As a believer use your gifts given to those who have received the Holy Spirit to reach out to others to help share the Good News.

Life is a gift, it is precious, and at any moment we can be in the presence of Jesus. While we are still here, let’s run toward the mark and not waiver, using the gifts God gave us to reach out to others. Have a wonderful July!



Nancy Malik has lived 3 years in Avery County. She is a member of Heaton Christian Church. She has taught creations science to children for many years. She has a radio program, entitled Adventures in Creation M – F, 8:10 am, and 12:50 pm on Glory 1130 am radio.



And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. John 8:32



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# Your Government Page

## NC Senate District 47



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

In 2019, Governor Roy Cooper vetoed a bill passed by the General Assembly to require sheriffs across North Carolina to comply with immigration deportation detainers issued by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Those detainers would have deported offenders ICE suspected were in the country illegally. As a result, many of our sheriffs in the largest metro areas across North Carolina refuse to cooperate with ICE to deport illegal immigrants caught breaking the law – operating a de facto catch and release program. Since then, the Biden administration has reined in the agency at a dangerously unprecedented rate, and when the President was heckled at an event in April to shouts of “Abolish ICE,” he responded by saying “I agree with you, I’m working on it, man” – Gov. Cooper’s silence here speaks volumes.

In fact, The Washington Post reported in May that the Biden administration was restricting immigration enforcement by ICE so severely that they carried out fewer than 3,000 deportations in April, the lowest level on record. The Post went on to report that President Biden had “placed ICE deportation officers on a leash so tight that some say their work is being functionally abolished.”

This is being noticed by those attempting to cross our border. The reality is that in April, 178,622 people tried to cross the border illegally according to data obtained by The Washington Examiner – the highest in more than two decades. And 1,500 illegal immigrants escape into the United States daily according to a May article from CNN. There is no way of knowing who these people are until they are caught by local law enforcement for breaking other laws, sometimes months later. This is dangerous for our communities.

In September, WCNC in Charlotte reported that ICE arrested twelve illegal immigrants in Mecklenburg County. Six of those had prior criminal records and had been released back into the community by local law enforcement not working with ICE. Henry Lucero, the Executive Director of ICE, said the “fact is local policies prohibiting agencies from working with ICE put you in danger and waste police resources. The public should hold its leaders accountable and demand to know what type of criminals are being released from local custody instead of turning [them] over to ICE.”

Senate Republicans saw this coming, which is why in March we again passed legislation aimed at forcing sheriffs across the state to work with federal immigration agents and deport defendants they believe are in the country illegally. That bill is currently awaiting action in the House. The question is: If that bill comes to Gov. Cooper’s desk, will he uphold our laws, or is he with President Biden ... “working on it, man”?

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

## NC Senate District 46



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

Happy Independence Day! My family and I are looking forward to returning to the usual schedule of attending parades, cookouts, and celebrations in our district this year. Since its founding, America has been and continues to be, a beacon of hope for people

across the world who yearn for freedom. Sadly, 2020 was a year in which many of the freedoms we take for granted--freedom to worship, work, travel, attend school, and more--were challenged by our elected leaders through executive orders and other mandates. I hope that in 2021 and beyond our citizens will realize the risks that these orders posed to our freedoms and resolve not to allow further erosions of liberty.

Here are a few legislative highlights from June:

On June 10th, the NC Senate passed House Bill 453 - Human Life Nondiscrimination Act/No Eugenics. Life has intrinsic value. It's dangerous when we let the emotions and prejudices of our society put a value on it. HB 453 expands an existing law that prohibits abortions based on the baby’s gender, by broadening the law to include abortions based solely on race or Down syndrome. The Senate voted 27-20 to send House Bill 453 to Gov. Roy Cooper’s desk. Republicans unanimously supported the bill, and all Democrats present voted against it. It’s a sad day when Democrats, who claim to be the party of minorities, continue to support eugenics through abortion.

On the election law front, Senate Republicans introduced three measures that will strengthen North Carolinian's trust in the election process. Senate Bill 326 would make Election Day the election deadline for receiving mail-in absentee ballots. This is consistent with the deadlines of 32 other states, including President Joe Biden’s home state of Delaware. Current law allows absentee ballots to be received by the Board of Elections up to three days after Election Day, but as you recall, our Attorney General, Josh Stein, and the Democrat-controlled State Board of Elections usurped the power of the legislature and changed the law to allow ballots to be received up to nine days after the election. Senate Bill 326 would bring NC in conformity with the vast majority of states. Senate Bill 725 (nicknamed the “Zuck Bucks” Bill) would prohibit the private funding of elections administration. Private interests paying for vote collection and counting raises natural suspicions about election integrity. The bill has gone to the House for further deliberation.

Senate Bill 724 would authorize mobile units to go to voters’ homes to create free voter identification cards, for those who don’t have an ID and are disabled or shut-in or otherwise unable to go to their local board of elections. Democrats have long argued that it is too burdensome for people to leave their homes to obtain a free ID card. This measure ameliorates that concern. The bill also permanently authorizes online voter registration and provides visually impaired voters with greater ballot access. Ironically, every Democrat in the NC Senate voted against this commonsense measure that eliminates their most frequently used complaint about why we shouldn’t have a Voter ID law.

Finally, the Senate passed its version of the 2021-2023 budget on June 25th, and it has been sent to the House. I expect the final budget to be passed by the end of July and hope to be able to provide all the details next month.

## NC House District 11



Rep. Madison Cawthorn  
828-808-2148

### From Washington:

I wanted to provide a little more insight into what I've been up to during my time in D.C.

I recently introduced the ROBUST Act which is set to deliver high-speed internet, a necessary resource, to our rural communities. This bill would gauge where internet spectrum is being underutilized and sheds light on a robust secondary leasing market structure that will take advantage of where internet spectrum is being underutilized. All of NC-11 deserves full access to quality, high-speed internet without Biden’s \$4 trillion dollar price tag.

As I stated when we first released the news of this bill, tapping into the ingenuity, resourcefulness, and work ethic of people in Western North Carolina through rural broadband will benefit not just NC-11 but our state and nation. I adamantly believe that America’s greatest resource is its people. The ROBUST Act will help ensure we’re being good stewards of that resource and leaving no one behind.

I also joined my colleagues led by Rep. Kevin Brady, in a bipartisan letter to Secretary Antony Blinken advocating for the resumption of the inter-country child adoption process between the US and China. We asked that this decades-old tradition between our two countries be resumed and renewed.

Additionally, I joined in writing to Secretary Marty Walsh regarding his comments declaring that “gig workers should be declassified as employees”. Eliminating the ability to work as an independent contractor will not improve worker conditions, and I will always stand for all the hard-working men and women of NC-11.

Each passing day reveals more about the origins of COVID-19, I have tasked my staff with monitoring new developments, and am working closely with leaders in NC-11 and Washington to deliver answers to the American people. My communications team has spent time highlighting local initiatives and stories such as in-person graduations, school reopening, expansion of broadband, and other local topics.

My communications team has also focused attention on a plethora of topics including the #BidenBorderCrisis, Fauci’s lies, Issues of Big-Tech censorship, local NC-11 constituent casework, commemorative days in history, or days of national attention, HR 1, the economy, the ROBUST Act, Biden’s radical spending, and more!



# Landis Presbyterian Church

By Corey Paige  
McDowell County

Hello! My name is Corey Paige and I am the pastoral intern at Landis Presbyterian Church (OPC). My wife and I recently moved to Marion after spending three years in Taylors, SC. In this article, I will give some background on who I am and what I am doing at Landis Presbyterian Church.



I am from a small town in eastern Kentucky (Hi-Hat) that has a population of 1,000+ people. My wife, who is also from Kentucky, grew up in London (8,000+). We got married in 2014 and are very thankful to the Lord for how He continues to bless our marriage. We do not have any children but we pray that will change.

Although we are four hours from my hometown, Marion reminds me of home. The place where I'm from has mountains, creeks and rivers, fishing holes, and hollers. It is a place where everybody knows everybody and is full of people willing to help each other out. The town closest to mine (which was 3 minutes away) is even called McDowell and was where I attended church from my youth.

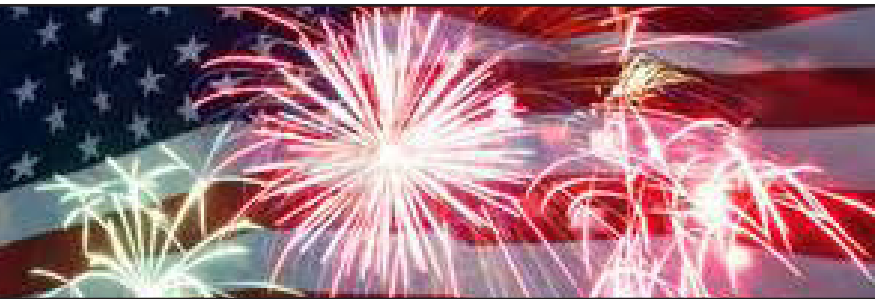
At the age of seventeen, I had a sense that the Lord was raising me for gospel ministry. I began to have an increased desire to read the Bible, serve others in my church, and share the gospel with others. I was growing in my understanding of the Scriptures which led to greater convictions about who God is and what He commands. When I went off to college the Lord placed two important men in my life: Richard Bowers and M Jay Bennett. It was through Mr. Bowers and M Jay that I became more familiar with the depth of God's grace and the mission of Christ's church.

During my college years, I would meet my wife, get married, and join Neon Reformed Presbyterian Church (OPC) in Neon, Ky where M Jay is the pastor. M Jay would introduce me to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church as well as to Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Taylors, SC. Their goal is to train men to be faithful preachers, pastors, and presbyters. I am about to finish my studies at GPTS with the hopes of becoming an ordained minister. For the sake of time, I have left out many people and circumstances that have shaped me into who I am. The path that I have traveled has not always been easy, but I am eternally grateful to the Lord for what He has brought me through. Growing up I never thought I would be a preacher, but here I stand with a Bible in my hand calling men and women to find rest in the only Mediator between God and man, the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 2:5, 6).

So, why did my wife and I move from Kentucky to South Carolina and then to Marion, North Carolina? The answer is simple: I want to be a faithful servant of Christ to the people of McDowell County. As a pastoral intern at Landis Presbyterian Church, I am currently preaching every Sunday and leading our Sunday School classes. I desire to serve Landis Presbyterian Church as their minister after my internship.

I hope you will consider joining us in worship. For directions and service times please visit our church website at [landisopc.org](http://landisopc.org). The site provides more info about the church as well as access to our sermon archive. If I am allowed to write more articles for this paper I want to share with you wonderful things from God's word (Ps. 119:18). On behalf of Landis Presbyterian Church, we would love to hear from you and tell you more about our church and our mighty Savior.

*As a pastoral intern at Landis Presbyterian Church I am currently preaching every Sunday and leading our Sunday School classes.*



# Burke County Public Schools

## Dr. Mike Swan Named Superintendent of Burke County Public Schools

By Cheryl Shuffler  
Burke County



The Burke County Board of Education has selected Dr. Mike Swan to serve as Superintendent of Burke County Public Schools beginning July 1, 2021. Dr. Swan was chosen from a competitive field of 13 applicants.

Dr. Swan's philosophy of education stems from his desire for students and staff to feel supported and valued for success and growth to occur. Ultimately, his focus is to keep students and staff safe and healthy while maintaining an environment for students to succeed academically and prepare for a career and college.

Dr. Swan said, "I would like to thank the Burke County Board of Education for giving me this opportunity to serve as Superintendent of Burke County Public Schools. I have a passion to see every student in our district succeed, and I am looking forward to continuing the momentum we have gained as a district over the past decade. We have caring and compassionate educators in Burke County Public Schools who share my vision of student success as we prepare the next generation for a productive life after high school graduation. The students, teachers, staff, and community are what make Burke County Public Schools a top-ranked school system, and I am ready for the challenge of leading us post-pandemic and taking us to the next level."

Burke County Board of Education Chair Buddy Armour said, "Dr. Swan has the ability to solve problems and do it with the equity that is needed to be fair to all. He has a passion for Burke County and brings leadership experience to the role while at the same time having an overall genteel personality that people respond to. His longevity in Burke County Public Schools brings us stability. We all have been through a lot in the last 15 to 16 months and stability is important. Dr. Swan is the right person to continue to move this great school system forward."



Dr. Mike Swan

Dr. Swan is a 23-year veteran educator in Burke County Public Schools. He was recruited out of West Virginia University to become a fifth-grade teacher at Chesterfield Elementary School in 1998. He also taught at Ray Childers Elementary School and served as assistant principal at Liberty Middle School, Heritage Middle School, and Freedom High School before becoming principal at Heritage and later at Freedom. In 2016, he was named the district's first Director of Student Services. In December of 2020, he was named assistant superintendent and in April of 2021, he was named interim superintendent.

Dr. Swan's goals as superintendent for the district include high school graduation, workforce development, technology, developing school leaders, community partnerships and overall staying student-centered.

Dr. Swan's first job out of high school in West Virginia was working on barges on the Ohio River. While he remembers it being hard and dangerous work, he also said it was life-changing work. As a high school graduate in the early 1990s, he was unsure what he wanted to do with his career. The year off from school helped give him direction. He knew he wanted to impact the lives of others and eventually decided to do that by becoming an educator. A product of a community college in West Virginia, Swan went on to earn his Bachelor's of Arts degree in Elementary Education from West Virginia University. After moving to North Carolina, he obtained a Master's of Arts degree in School Administration from Gardner Webb University and completed his Doctorate in Educational Leadership from Western Carolina University in 2020. Dr. Swan's community volunteer work includes serving on the boards of the Juvenile Crime Prevention Committee, Burke County United Way, Burke Development Inc., and the Industrial Commons Steering Committee; he also is a member of Morganton Rotary.

Dr. Swan is married to Sara Swan, an instructional coach for Burke County Public Schools, and they have a son, Walt, who attends UNC-Chapel Hill, and a daughter, Hadley, who will be in first grade in the Global Immersion Program at Mountain View Elementary School. Dr. Swan enjoys spending time with his family, hunting, and being on the lake.

Dr. Swan's initial contract is for a four-year term.

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

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“Kid’s & Change”  
By Charles White

Of all our help for the children of divorce, we have found this one is often the most helpful with almost instant results. It is probably best not to try it for at least a month after the divorce.

Give the child a quarter and tell them they can keep it if they hold on so tight that you can't pry it out of their hand... then try to open the fingers of that little fist...but not too hard. After trying to pry their fingers open for a moment or two reach in your pocket and hold out a dollar. Tell the child he can have the dollar if he will give you the quarter. Then explain that God has good things for all of us...each day...if we will turn loose of what we are holding onto. Explain that to get God's best we have to give up our own idea of what would make us happy before we can get something better. Then ask if he is holding on to a dream of making your family the way it used to be. Gently suggest to the child that he is missing a lot of dollars...a lot of God's blessings... because he is holding on to the way he would like things to be.

If things are going well ask the child if he would like to do it again with another quarter but this time ask him to close his eyes. Tell your child (grandchild) he can have what you have in your hand if he will give you the quarter, but he can't see what you have in your hand until after he gives you the quarter. If he or she won't give you the quarter with his eyes still closed pat him on the head and say that's alright. (I have done this a lot and every single child I have tried it with has changed his mind within a minute or two...if your child doesn't wait for another day.

The point is FAITH. Opening our hand for God to fill it means believing that God is good...that even when we can't see the blessing it is there IF we will trust that God is good. Ask your child directly if he believes that God is good...if he believes that when he turns loose of his own dreams that God will give him something better. (Note for the abused child. If someone is hurting you or scaring you you should always tell an adult you trust.)

This game is something that you might try once a week for several weeks. After several repetitions, the child will remember the lesson that believing in God's goodness, trusting him is a choice. THEN when your child is having trouble living with the new family situation just remind him that if he keeps his heart open that God will bless him...but if he holds onto his own feelings and desires all he will have is a quarter.

The quarter the child is holding may not be a dream of how he would like things to be. It may be the memory of all the hurt that led to the divorce. The miracle is that God has such riches to give if we are willing to release whatever we are holding so tightly whether it is our own dream of how things should be or our anger.

Charles White is a retired preschool teacher and National Facilitator of The Christian Childcare Coalition. His 40-year collection of tips on Bible parenting can be viewed at [www.bibleparent.com](http://www.bibleparent.com).



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# Mt. Carmel Baptist Church

## The Call of Duty – Luke 14:25-27

By Toby Crowder  
Mitchell County

Twelve dollars... I can still remember seeing it written on the check in blue ink. Twelve dollars that I had earned by mowing the lawn at the office where my father worked. I had been asked to fulfill a duty, and I had decided to follow through. Even though that has been over 30 years ago, it is a memory that I still think about from time to time. The reason that it crossed my mind recently was when I saw a bumper sticker that read simply “Remember Who You Wanted to Be.” When I read that, my mind began to race with all the thoughts of childhood, and all the hopes and dreams that we have as children and young adults. As I reminisced about those things, I could not help but ponder that question in light of my life as a follower of Christ and the decision that I had made as a young boy.

As I write these words, I celebrate a milestone in my life as a Christian. On this day, thirty-eight years ago, I accepted Christ as my savior as an eight-year-old boy, and at that moment, became a new creature in Christ. The Bible declares this in 2 Corinthians 5:17 “*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*” And thus, my journey as a Christian and “disciple” of Christ began. I still remember the excitement of that new season of life and faith, and what I hoped to be as a child of God.

In Luke 14:25-27, we see Christ speaking to His disciples; those men who would follow Him and be the bedrock of the New Testament church. The Lord was not looking here for those who were simply curious... or noncommittal, so He began to sift out the ones who were serious by laying out the “call of duty” ... the job description for a disciple:

*“And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.”*

The Greek word used in v.26 & 27 is the word mathetes, which broadly means a learner, pupil, or disciple... more specifically, “one who follows one’s teaching.” In these verses, Jesus is giving the requirements for the “job” of being His disciple. Does Jesus mean that we are to hate our families for His sake? Not at all... what He is saying rather is this: He must have priority! He must come before family, friends, job, hobbies, or self. We must take up His cross and truly follow Him.

Now, more so than ever, our Lord needs disciples! Churches need disciples to serve. We need ones who will carry the name and the cross of Christ in today’s world and serve Him implicitly. What are some of the requirements of a disciple? First, there must be a DECISION. Notice that in v.26, Jesus says “if” any man come to me. There is a natural order that we see in Scripture of salvation, submission, and service. But we cannot confuse God’s order; there must be a decision to accept Him as Lord of our lives. After this DECISION, comes DEVOTION. Devotion is “The state of being dedicated, consecrated, or solemnly set apart for a particular purpose.” Notice that this devotion requires priority of some things up to and including our family. This ordering is difficult at times but necessary. Devotion to family is a wonderful thing, yet it must come second to devotion to Christ. Jesus must have our devotion... he must be first... anything that robs Him of this is wrong. Matt 6:33 exhorts us to “*Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness.*”

This passage shows us the DUTY of a disciple. Are we willing to take this assignment, and perform it to the fullest? Are we willing to accept this cross of Christ and in doing so, accept the call of duty and allow Him to be the leading force in our lives? Are we willing to give Him first place, and order everything else behind Him? Christian, do you remember who you wanted to be as a disciple of Christ?

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](http://MCfamily-forChrist.org) or [mtcarmelsprucepine@gmail.com](mailto:mtcarmelsprucepine@gmail.com)



# Morganton Baptist Church

## A Nation Adrift

By Dan Quorollo  
Burke County

Like a ship that is adrift, America has tragically drifted far from the principles on which our nation was founded. We are witnessing an increasing anti-God agenda being forced at an alarming rate. Crime rates are soaring to unprecedented levels, and police morale is at an all-time low in our nation’s history. My heart grieves when I consider the direction to which our nation is digressing.

Proverbs 14:34 reminds us, “*Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.*” For decades, our nation has turned its back on God, and we are witnessing the fruit of decisions made years ago. In 1962, the United States Supreme Court ruled that prayer was a violation of the First Amendment because it represented the establishment of religion. In 1963, corporate reading of the Bible was prohibited. These rulings forever altered the principles upon which our nation was founded, for the education of countless children would be impacted. Evolution has long been taught in public education as a fact. Evolution is more than an explanation of the origin of things; it is an attempt to eliminate God. When God is eliminated from any society, its citizens will soon begin acting as though there is no God, a reality that we are watching unfold before our very eyes.

Society has begun a downward spiral that will continue to lead to destructive conduct by redefining the nature of truth and portraying it as something relative and therefore constantly shifting. To the average person in society, moral absolutes do not exist. Sadly, this same attitude has crept into our churches. Individuals who adopt this system of belief reason that individuals should be permitted to do as they please. For many, that is the very essence of freedom as they seek to redefine freedom as the absence of restraint.

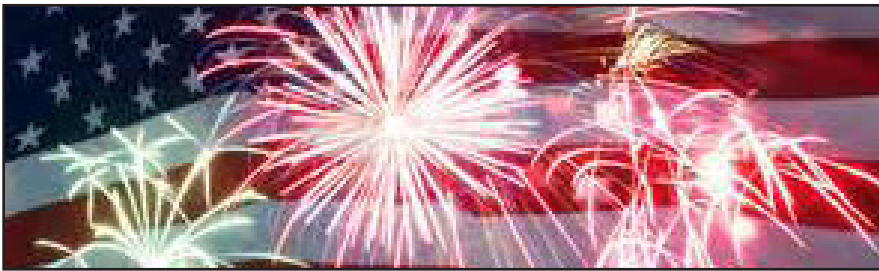
Those who advocate the elimination of moral absolutes are often inconsistent in their thinking. They will be in favor of this when there is a perceived advantage to them, regardless of whether it is. If there is something that is perceived as being advantageous, they are in favor of eliminating moral absolutes. However, they abandon their philosophy the moment that someone else’s actions are perceived as being detrimental to them. They might reason that it is acceptable for someone to steal if circumstances seem to warrant it; however, they will insist that stealing is wrong if they are the victims of stealing, perhaps even calling the police if their home is broken into. Many of those claiming there are no moral absolutes have security cameras and alarms to protect their private property and/or businesses. The idea that moral absolutes do not exist is, in most cases, not a deeply held belief; it is a philosophy that is inconsistently applied.

No society is capable of existing when its citizens abandon the concept of moral absolutes. How a person thinks determines how he acts. Those who believe their actions have no consequences will act as though their actions have no consequences. On the other hand, those who regard one’s actions as having consequences will likewise act accordingly.

We must realize the dangerous path our nation is seeking and the perhaps irreversible consequences such a direction will produce. For those who are believers, we must search prayerfully (Psalm 139:23-24), pray fervently (1 Thessalonians 5:17), witness faithfully (Matthew 5:16), and stand boldly (1 Peter 3:17), regardless of what we might face.



Pastor Dan Quorollo 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.





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July 2021 - Blue Ridge Christian News page 36



Make Choices That Don't Waste Your Time

By Joyce Meyer

God wants us to continually make good choices for our lives. So He's given us the Bible—His Word—as an instruction book to live by. The thing is, once we know what it says, we're responsible to do what it says. Because there's never a time when it's all right to do the wrong thing.

As we study God's Word, we discover the wisdom that applies to every area of our lives. And the best thing we can do is promptly obey God when He brings correction or direction to us. But there are times when we make bad choices anyway, and we experience the pain of our mistakes.

God is our Father, and just as earthly parents discipline their children to keep them from harm and help them see what is in their best interest, God sometimes requires us to face the consequences of our disobedience.

It's important to understand that when God corrects us, it's not because He's mad at us, but because He loves us. And if we follow His instructions, then we're going to have a life that's full of peace, joy, and emotional stability.

God cares about every area of our lives and He wants to be involved in everything we do. He wants to help us make good choices in how we dress, what we eat, who we hang out with, how we spend our money...about everything in our life.

Even if you have a lot of areas where you need to change and grow, you don't have to feel discouraged. As you become more deeply rooted in God's love, it gets easier to do what He asks because you know He has your best interests at heart.

The question is: Do you value His opinion? Will you allow Him to continually work in your life?

When you really love Jesus, you're committed to righteousness. You want to do the right thing because it's right...because you love Him, not just to try to earn God's love or a reward from Him.

The good news is we never have to worry about earning God's love. Romans 5:8 says, *"God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."* God loved us before we were born again and made the righteousness of God in Christ (see 2 Corinthians 5:17, 21). He'll always love us, and we don't have to wonder, Am I doing enough?

The truth is, you are not responsible for the results. God is responsible for that. Your responsibility is to keep doing the right thing all the time, no matter what.

It isn't always easy, but it's always worth it. There are going to be times when we'd rather do the wrong thing. But we'll just regret it later. We need to decide that no matter what our circumstances look like or how hard doing the right thing might be, we're going to hold on to our joy because our joy is in Jesus.

Here's a practical example of what I'm saying: Even if I lose my job and the car breaks down and my child comes home with a bad report from school and I've gained five pounds and nothing seems to be working out in my life...even then, I will "rejoice in the Lord always" (Philippians 4:4). Even then, I will do what is right before the Lord.

We don't have to settle for letting our circumstances determine the level of our joy and peace. We can decide today: I'm going to continue doing right whether it's easy or not, and I'm going to trust God to give me the grace to do it.

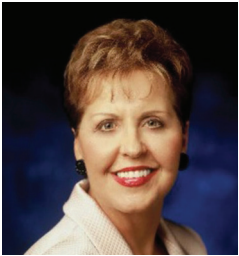
When you're in the middle of hard times and you really don't like your circumstances, the first place to run is God's Word because it has the power to calm you down. Find scriptures about the strength we have in Christ, and then just rest in God's presence and receive His strength. Whatever you need, just go to God's Word.

I've seen God do amazing things in me and through me because I've let Him continually work in my life—and you can have that kind of relationship, too.

I encourage you to pray like this: "God, today I'm giving You permission to keep working in my life until You are finished doing all that You need to do. So when I start begging You to back off, please don't. The truth is, I want to do whatever You are calling me to do."

Your relationship with God can be an amazing journey that brings you peace, joy, and contentment in every area of life if you will simply choose to follow Him.

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 Terry Cheek Th.D...  
McDowell County

When we read Hebrews 4:12 *"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."* Does it move your heart and soul?

For most of twentieth-century America, orthodox Christianity has been attacked by liberalism. I am speaking of liberalism much deeper than anything political. However, I will admit the devil's smokescreen of political liberalism has taken center stage. The liberalism that should concern us most is the quiet compromise of theological liberalism. Especially as it applies to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Historically speaking, Christianity has always honored Jesus Christ as its spiritual and theological foundation. No Apostle, Theologian, preacher, or Pastor has been more essential to Christianity's organization, history, and doctrine than the person and work of Christ. I approached this article with conviction and concern for the spiritual health of the world, our nation, and the church.

The history of theological thought has at least until the twentieth century been grounded in the biblical orthodoxy of Jesus Christ. Yes, there are struggles among sound Christians concerning doctrine. For example, the early church fathers struggled with understanding the Trinity and how God could be three and yet one. They were convinced that while God is One numerically, He subsists in three Persons, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, each are equal in eternity, power, and glory, each possesses all the divine attributes and yet have properties which distinguish them individually. They knew it, but they also struggled to understand it. Christians today are no different. Theological liberalism has been successful, to various degrees, in turning our minds and hearts away from orthodox Christianity.

So, what is the orthodox doctrine of Christ? What is the doctrine that liberalism has sought so diligently to rewrite? The attack begins with the incarnate Christ. Early church discussion concerning the relationship of the human and divine natures of Christ can be simplified by stating Christ is 100 percent man and 100 percent God without any complication of sinful flesh. From the Holy Trinity, our Church Fathers diligently studied Christ's work. Especially His atoning death on the cross. The objective fact that Christ died for our sins and by this act of redemption achieved reconciliation of man to God. These convictions form the mainstream of biblical orthodoxy. The doctrine of the incarnate birth, sinless life, sacrificial death, resurrection, and ultimate second coming cannot be questioned.

Yet all the above-mentioned and the depths of their study have been questioned as early as our third century. These challenges have been met and refuted by faithful Church Fathers throughout history. In various forms, the challenge of biblical orthodoxy continues today and has influenced much of genuine Theology and doctrine.

In the early twentieth century from Europe came a challenge to the way scripture was studied. Philosophers claimed that scripture should be studied for its spiritual influence rather than literal intent. This challenge led to what we know as modern liberalism which teaches the Bible cannot be taken seriously in its historical or factual content and considers scripture only as a means of gaining philosophical insights. Today modern liberalism has broadened its reach.

Today we find ourselves two decades into the twenty-first century living with liberalism that is so destructive our society celebrates the abortion of innocent life, the perversion of genders and human sexuality, and the social engineering of attitudes and perceptions against orthodox Christianity. Like the early Church fathers, we to find ourselves in a position requiring us to make a decision, we the body of Christ can individually and collectively face this liberalism with the same Faith that our church fathers had. Or we can sit by and watch liberalism continue its destructive path into the hearts of mankind. I hope you have read the end of the Bible. Christ and His bride overcome. As I close Theological liberalism brings to mind the words of the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 6:11 *"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil"*.

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](mailto:theinspiringword@gmail.com) Or by visiting [www.theinspiringword.org](http://www.theinspiringword.org)





# Crossword

ACROSS

1 I am sending you out like \_\_\_\_ among wolves (Luke 10:3)

6 no remedy for your \_\_\_\_, no healing for you (Jer 30:13)

10 Peter followed him \_\_\_\_ off unto the high priest's palace (Matt 26:58)

14 stood around \_\_\_\_ they had made to keep warm (1,4) (John 18:18)

15 if \_\_\_\_ go up, he shall even break down their (1,3) (Neh 4:3) KJV

16 Jesus replied. "Do this and you will \_\_\_\_." (Luke 10:28)

17 John tried to \_\_\_\_ him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you (Matt 3:14)

18 Like a woman in childbirth, I cry out, I \_\_\_\_ and pant (Isa 42:14)

19 Listen to my prayer, O God, do not ignore my \_\_\_\_ (Ps 55:1)

20 man's field may produce abundant food,but injustice \_\_\_\_ it away (Prov 13:23)

22 I am the good \_\_\_\_; I know my sheep and my sheep know me (John 10:14)

24 The \_\_\_\_ of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this (Isa 9:7)

25 he prepares his meal, he \_\_\_\_ his meat and eats his fill (Isa 44:16)

26 though I am \_\_\_\_ from you in body, I am present with you (Col 2:5)

29 coat of fine linen, and thou shalt make the \_\_\_\_ of fine linen (Exod 28:39) (KJV)

31 any kind of heron, the hoopoe and the \_\_\_\_ (Deut 14:18)

32 reptiles and creatures of the sea are being \_\_\_\_ (James 3:7)

34 O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and \_\_\_\_ (Ezek 39:1)

38 he entered the temple \_\_\_\_ and began driving out those who were (Luke 19:45)

40 tune is being played unless there is a distinction in the \_\_\_\_ (1 Cor 14:7)

42 Keep me \_\_\_\_, O God, for in you I take refuge (Ps 16:1)

43 Oh, the \_\_\_\_ of the riches of the wisdom (Rom 11:33)

45 an idol cast in the \_\_\_\_ of a calf (Exod 32:8)

47 The cow will feed with the bear, their young will \_\_\_\_ down together (Isa 11:7)

48 Honey from the comb is sweet to your \_\_\_\_ (Prov 24:13)

50 The LORD sends poverty and wealth; he humbles and he \_\_\_\_ (1 Sam 2:7)

52 a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a \_\_\_\_ (Rev 16:21)

55 If you, O LORD, \_\_\_\_ a

record of sins, O Lord, who could stand? (Ps 130:3)

56 So when he sees the wolf coming, he \_\_\_\_ the sheep and runs (John 10:12)

59 What the wicked \_\_\_\_ will overtake him (Prov 10:24)

63 The \_\_\_\_ is my rock, my fortress (Ps 18:2)

64 a man-made sanctuary that was only a \_\_\_\_ of the true one (Heb 9:24)

66 do good; let him seek peace, and \_\_\_\_ it (1 Pet 3:11) (KJV)

67 The fathers eat sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on \_\_\_\_ (Ezek 18:2)

68 that at the name of Jesus every \_\_\_\_ should bow (Phil 2:10)

69 But Jesus \_\_\_\_ made no reply, and Pilate was amazed (Mark 15:5)

70 Some people are like \_\_\_\_ along the path (Mark 4:15)

71 No one \_\_\_\_ a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment (Matt 9:16)

72 Who \_\_\_\_ separate us from the love of Christ? (Rom 8:35)

DOWN

1 The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the \_\_\_\_ (Gen 48:16) KJV

2 the cloud was over the tabernacle only \_\_\_\_ days (1,3) (Num 9:20)

3 till thou hast paid the very last \_\_\_\_ (Luke 12:59) KJV

4 they were but flesh, a passing \_\_\_\_ that does not return (Ps 78:39)

5 "You will not surely die," the \_\_\_\_ said to the woman (Gen 3:4-5)

6 If a man is lazy, the rafters \_\_\_\_ (Eccl 10:18)

7 do not let your good be spoken \_\_\_\_ evil (2,2) (Rom 14:16) NKJV

8 One of the sons of Benjamin (Gen 46:21)

9 One of them, an \_\_\_\_ in the law, tested him (Matt 22:35)

10 Matthew and Thomas, James the son of \_\_\_\_, and Simon (Luke 6:15) KJV

11 axe sharpening instruments (1 Sam 13:21) KJV

12 prevent (Jer 11:15)

13 Blessed is the one who \_\_\_\_ the words of this prophecy (Rev 1:3)

21 \_\_\_\_ himself masquerades as an angel of light (2 Cor 11:14)

23 to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that \_\_\_\_ (Jonah 1:3)

26 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and \_\_\_\_ tree cannot bear (1,3) (Matt 7:18)

27 Hagar \_\_\_\_ Abram a son (Gen 16:15)

28 Men stalked us at every \_\_\_\_, so we could not walk in our

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streets (Lam 4:18)

29 Open for \_\_\_\_ gates of righteousness; I will enter (2,3) (Ps 118:19)

30 The man who was healed had no \_\_\_\_ who it was (John 5:13)

33 My shield is God \_\_\_\_ High, who saves the upright in heart (Ps 7:10)

35 He will roll you up tightly like a \_\_\_\_ and throw you (Isa 22:18)

36 send him away by the hand of \_\_\_\_ man (1,3) (Lev 16:21) KJV

37 a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the \_\_\_\_ (Isaiah 25:6)

39 Then the devil left him, and angels came and \_\_\_\_ him (Matt 4:11)

41 the Lord will carry out his sentence on earth with \_\_\_\_ and finality (Rom 9:28)

44 Whatsoever thy \_\_\_\_ findeth to do, do it with thy might (Eccles 9:10) KJV

46 David sent a delegation to \_\_\_\_ his sympathy to Hanun (2 Sam 10:2)

49 any madman who acts like a

prophet into the \_\_\_\_ and neck-irons (Jer 29:26)

51 Abraham gave him \_\_\_\_ of everything (1,5) (Heb 7:2)

52 Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' \_\_\_\_ (1 Tim 4:7)

53 the princes of Moab \_\_\_\_ with Balaam (Num 22:8)

54 Jesus went out beside the lake. A \_\_\_\_ crowd came to him (Mark 2:13)

57 there is \_\_\_\_ that doeth good, no, not one (Rom 3:12) KJV

58 and make him \_\_\_\_ out what he has swallowed (Jer 51:44)

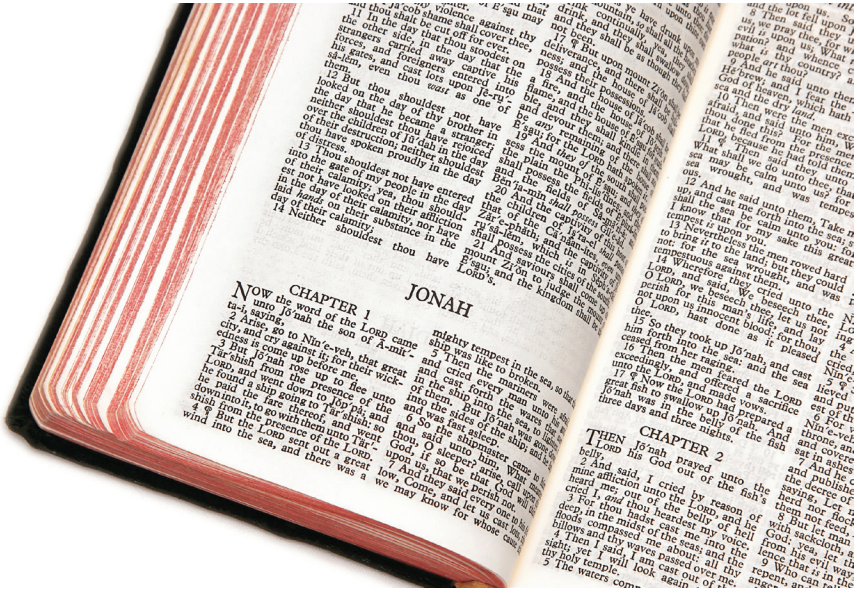
60 not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all \_\_\_\_ (Acts 19:26)

61 the ax is \_\_\_\_ and its edge unsharpened (Eccl 10:10)

62 Go, \_\_\_\_ everything you have and give to the poor (Mark 10:21)

65 "\_\_\_\_, Lord," she told him, "I believe that you are the Christ (John 11:27)

Solution on page 14





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