



BLUE RIDGE CHRISTIAN NEWS

GIVE THANKS



High Country Prison Ministry

Thanksgiving

By Jody Griffin
Avery and Mitchell Counties

“Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.” (Psalm 100:4, KJV)

There are times when the intersection of the language of Scripture and the language of modern life can cause some confusion for the reader of the Bible/seeker of understanding. But then there are also those occasions when that same intersection brings a message of utmost significance!

In the familiar words of King David found in this verse comes a clear and contemporary call for all people! *‘Enter his gates with thanksgiving and enter His courts with praise’*! For some readers, these words offer comfort and blessing. Place those same words into the context of the correctional facility and they suddenly have new meaning!

For example, in the experience of individuals affected by the reality of incarceration, the very suggestion of *‘entering the gates’* of prison with thanksgiving is rarely seen as appropriate...Who do you know that would express thanksgiving for being held within the ‘gates’ of a prison? And who would praise and rejoice at the opportunity to enter the ‘courts’ facing judgment for their actions? Yet one of the greatest blessings for a Chaplain is to witness the spiritual journey of those individuals who receive this Word for themselves and adjust their attitudes/actions accordingly.

A case in point: A young man I had the privilege to serve on his spiritual journey while incarcerated had grown frustrated by the reality of his circumstances. He had tried everything he could think of to find the answer to his ‘inner angst’ or to address the gnawing sense of personal failure which led him to feel shame and hopelessness. Imagine his reaction when it was suggested that he thank God for his being arrested, convicted, and incarcerated! The very thought that God would use this difficult time of life to protect him, to teach him, to lead him to a greater understanding of life and God and grace just seemed impossible. Still, he allowed that suggestion to remain in his heart and mind for some time. Then one day he approached with great enthusiasm.

“Chap! I was reading my Bible last night and BAM! There it was, right before my eyes! Never had it occurred to me that I should be thankful for the days inside the courtroom that led me to this place, or to be thankful for the gates that I’ve lived my life behind for so long now! But if that’s what it took to help me find the

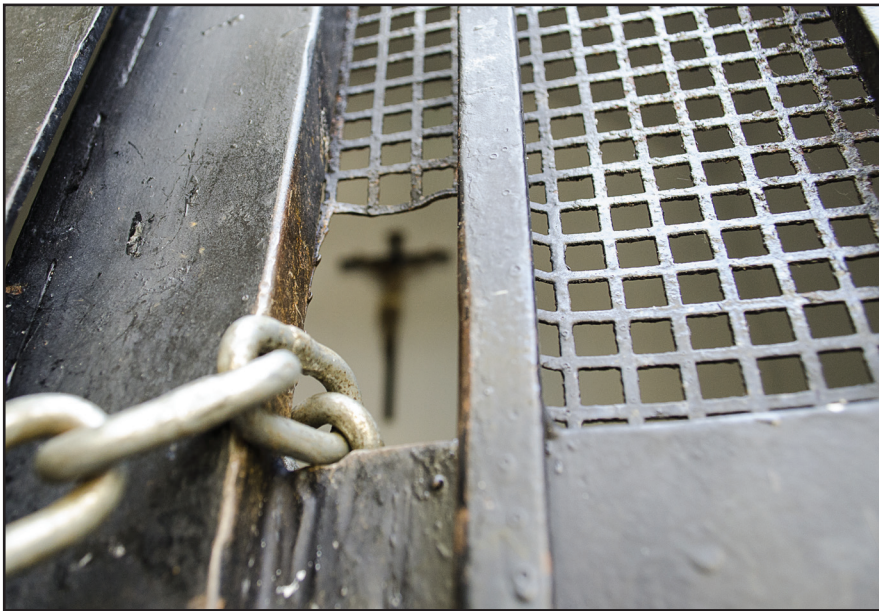


Truth of God’s Love for me, then let me just tell you, I am thankful because it was worth it to find this peace I have found!” From that day forward until the day of his release, he focused his energies on being a positive role model to his peers and a testimony to the power of God to provide a paradigm shift of epic proportions.

I remember thinking at the time that so many of us could benefit from such a revelation. If only we can learn to be thankful as the apostle Paul wrote to the believers in 1 Thessalonians 5:18 *“In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”*

Give thanks. Wherever you are whatever you are going through. Because doing so will Bless His Name!

Thanks, Be to God. Amen.



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





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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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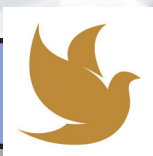
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“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace: that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation: that saith unto Zion. Thy God reigneth!”

Isaiah 52:7 KJV



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www.bearcreekbaptist.com

Reverend Bruce Cannon

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

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

Landis Orthodox Presbyterian Church

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

Elder Mike Cloy

opcmikecloy@gmail.com

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

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

Berry Chapel Baptist Church

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

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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www.trcmorganton.com

Pastor - Billy Chapman

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

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Grassy Creek Baptist Church

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

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

2187 Jamestown Road
Morganton, NC
828-584-8212

Pastor Steve Beitz

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

Altapass Baptist Church

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

Dr. Marcus R. Benfield

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

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Plumtree Presbyterian Church

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

Pastor Ryan Bridgeo

pastor@plumtreechurch.com

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

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

Pleasant Hill Baptist Church

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

Senior Pastor Dr. Jack Hodges

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

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

Newland Christian Church

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

Pastor - Phillip Greene

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

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Burkemont Baptist Church

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

Dr. Luke A. Lane

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

Mount Carmel Baptist Church

195 Gouges Creek Rd.
Spruce Pine NC 28777

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Sunday School - 10am
Sunday Worship - 11am and 6pm
Mid-week Service - Wednesdays
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125 Tappan Street
Spruce Pine, NC 28777
828-765-9411
www.sprucepinefbc.com
www.spfbc.blogspot.com

Dr. Rocky Branch Senior Pastor

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

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God, Submitting to God!*

Pine Branch Baptist Church

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

Reverend Bobby Joe Greene

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188 Ward Dr.
Marion, NC 28752
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Spruce Pine United Methodist Church

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

Pastor Richard Schilling

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

The mission of Spruce Pine United
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A Lighthouse in the Desert

By Edward Tooley

How in the world can a lighthouse be located in a desert-like place? Glad you asked. It all started when a sister in Christ named Cindy visited a village outside a major city that was very needy. She came to this area of the world not just for a visit, but to serve our Lord God with a ministry called Students International. One of the places she visited was the Ministry Center located in that small village. Cindy was taken to the site where children of the area came to receive help with their school work.

The site where the children arrived was hardly a place conducive to learning. It was comprised of four wooden posts, a large piece of tin for the roof, and a dirt floor. It was situated right behind a landfill. The center was also empty of furniture. If children wanted to sit in a chair to be tutored, they had to carry a chair from home. Cindy was overcome by the sparse facilities that the teacher in charge had to work with. But what overwhelmed her the most was the godly and selfless attitude of the teacher, Elianor. Even though the teaching conditions were extremely difficult, Elianor made the most of them.

When the Spirit of our Lord moves in His children, something profound happens. Cindy was moved with compassion and returned to her country with an immense desire to help. Cindy taught at a Christian school. A plan was created to raise funds to build an adequate structure for the children and teachers. After sharing the needs of the children and the people where she visited, the school community enthusiastically got on board. The student leaders came up with a plan to raise funds called BRICK BY BRICK. The goal was to raise ten thousand dollars to build a new Ministry Center.

This is where the story gets even better. Money started to come in little by little. A major school fundraiser had been scheduled for various school-related needs and activities. However, one segment held near the end of the fundraiser was arranged so people could give to this far-away Ministry Center. The announcer challenged the audience - ten thousand dollars could be raised in just minutes. This could happen if ten people who are moved by God each gave one thousand dollars. Guess what? THAT IS WHAT HAPPENED!!!! So the ten thousand dollars needed was raised in just minutes...

The school decided to keep raising funds so that the building could have bathrooms, a cement floor, and other amenities. ARE YOU READY FOR IT? Another twenty-five thousand dollars was raised! Can you sing this with me..... OUR GOD IS AN AWESOME GOD!!!!!!

There is more. After some time had passed, the school then wanted to raise funds to buy furniture for the Ministry Center. The students called this new endeavor CHAIR BY CHAIR. Various fundraising events were held and before you know it another ten thousand dollars was raised.

The Ministry Center was fully constructed and the time had come for the grand opening. Pictures of this event would bring tears to your eyes. About an hour before the program began, one could see families walking from all directions to the Center. I was honored to be at this occasion and was able to be an eyewitness to this most glorious and emotional sight.

A brief ceremony was held to celebrate this miraculous building. The Ministry Center was packed with families and was about to get a new name. One of the members of the Students International staff shared a brief history of how this edifice came into existence. He went on to say that the Ministry Center was now going to be called El Faro. In English, that translates into The Lighthouse. The speaker declared that this new center is going to be a bright light like a lighthouse in this area for Jesus. He also mentioned that because of the central location of El Faro, it would be able to serve two communities rather than just one. His words sure resonated with all in attendance.

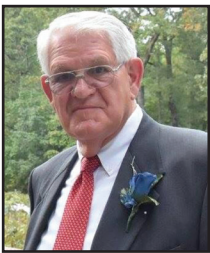
This wondrous incident occurred because a sister in Christ saw an opportunity to help in the name of our Savior. The opportunity was then communicated to others who wanted to assist and get involved. I hope you are now bursting with JOY about how our Lord works in the hearts of His people. I am hoping that you are also motivated to get involved with an area of ministry either close to your home or in a foreign land. Wouldn't you agree..... There is nothing better than serving others in name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Edward Tooley has had numerous articles published about education, adolescence, parenting, creation, and Christian Living. His work has also been featured in the Chicken Soup for the Soul series.



Dellinger's Christian Bookstore

By Doug Harrell
Mitchell County



This article is kinda like writing a eulogy for a funeral of a good friend, only this time it is for the closing of a business in Spruce Pine that has touched the lives of so many Christians in Mitchell County and many of the surrounding counties, Dellinger's Christian Book Store. This business has served the community, churches, and Christians throughout the area since 1974 when Jewel went in business with a person that was then their pastor. In 1978, Linda, her sister-in-law bought out that half of the business, and the two sisters-in-law went into what was to be a career that would last the remainder of their working lives. I personally worked closely with them and their business for the ten years that I owned and published Blue Ridge Christian News and was always blessed by the relationship.

The business originally started in the building across the corner from DT's at the corner of Crystal Street and Lower Street and moved to several different locations in Spruce Pine before purchasing and moving into their current location in May of 1986. Jewel made the comment that she told Linda when they moved there she was never going to move again, this was it and where they would stay the remainder of their years in business.

One of the most thankful things that both Linda and Jewel talked about during the time we were visiting and discussing this article was how thankful they both were for the kind of customers they had been blessed with over the years. The comment was made several times that the customers that came into their business were Christians and the vast majority, acted as such and had been such a blessing. The fact is that there was hardly ever anyone that came in with a chip on their shoulder, but they often had repeat customers that were summer residents that would come in and tell them that they could not wait to get back to get the warm smiles and hello's they were welcomed with when they walked in the door.

Another thing that had touched both of the ladies was the fact that they were able to help those in need of guidance, pray at times with those that were hurting and rejoice with those that were re-joining. They felt like their business was more than a business, that they also had a ministry that touched lives in many different ways.

When asked about being able to work together for such a long time and remain

close, the comment was made that communication had always been the key. That there were times that they saw things differently but that they had always been able to talk through the issues, whatever they were.

When they felt the time had come to sell out and close the store several different people were interested in the building. They commented to me that they felt as if God had inhabited the building for years and they wanted His presence to continue to be present for whatever the building was to be used for. They were very selective with the sale. No doubt they could have gotten more money by going another direction but decided upon what that they felt the Lord would be happy with.

We regret the closing of any business, but it is especially tough to see businesses that promoted and supported the entire Christian community in the way that Dellinger's has over the past forty-six years! We want to thank you for your faithfulness, smiles, prayers, and love that your business has provided for this little community over the years. May your days continue to be blessed and may the smiles and love for Christ continue to radiate from your faces in the coming years. Thank you, Jewel and Linda Dellinger, for your many years of service, from all of us that you have both meant so much to. May God bless you both in a mighty way.



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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Notes from the Shire

By Nancy Malik
Avery County



Leaving October on Holy Eve, we enter into All Saints Day. That is a day set apart for many centuries for the body of believers to gather together to remember believers of the past. As the reformation started by Martin Luther continued and Bibles were being printed; people wanted the freedom to worship His word. The Bibles and the need for freedom led to a ship full of 100 people crossing the Atlantic Ocean. They landed in Massachusetts. After 50 of the 100 people died their first winter, a Native American, who spoke English, taught them so much about this amazing country; food, plants, other tribes, and especially the freedom to worship God. This was the beginning of the gifts God had planned for this amazing land. He was giving to those who loved Him and were called by His name.

America was a country founded for freedom of worshiping God in wisdom and truth. People came from Europe and eventually from around the world to experience this freedom of religion, a chance to own land, and foremost to freely love God. This made American one of the most amazing countries in the world along with Israel.

Our country is on a rough path but based on documents of truth, justice, and God's way it has blessed millions from all over the world. November is a very special month for America. Most schools have not taught the truth of its heritage for decades, so many citizens do not have any idea of the precious privilege of living in such a place set apart by God. Thanksgiving is drawing near and after 401 years she still is strong. With the eagle as our symbol that reminds us of Isaiah 41: "We soar on wings like eagles, run and not grow weary, walk and not faint." Many of us have a hope in the Lord that renews our strength.

We are blessed in this nation by a history unlike any other, founded by God-seekers and the millions who have come to the land of the free. Some who came here and have not learned about the history of this land. Hearing the history might put a spark in their heart for God and His amazing Land of the Free!

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.

Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men! Psalms 31:19



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Roan Mountain Baptist Church

The Landing Is Important

By Russell McKinney
Mitchell County

A student pilot was doing an excellent job flying the plane during his lesson. Then came the moment when the flight instructor looked over at him and said, “Okay, let’s take it down and land.” The student said, “Sounds good, let’s do it.”

As the plane began to descend, the instructor couldn’t help but notice how calm the student remained. Whereas most trainees instinctively got a little nervous at the thought of bringing the plane in for a landing, this trainee’s facial expression and demeanor didn’t change one bit. The instructor thought to himself, “This guy is going to make a great pilot.”

Not too long afterward, though, the plane hit the runway hard, bounced 50 feet into the air, hit the runway hard again, bounced 25 feet into the air, hit the runway hard again, bounced 5 feet into the air, and finally came to a full stop. The instructor was horrified. Actually, he was just glad to be alive after that awful landing. He looked over at the student and said, “You did just fine flying the plane, but your landing was the worst one I’ve ever seen.” That’s when the student looked at him and said, “MY landing? I thought YOU were handling the landing!”

When you seek God’s will regarding a decision and then do that will, the landing for that decision becomes God’s responsibility. Conversely, when you do your own will regarding a decision, God isn’t responsible for the landing. Unfortunately for God, His reputation has taken many a hit simply because He got blamed for a landing in which He had no part.

So many times we go our own way, do our own thing, and then somewhere in the middle of it all say, “Lord, please bless my efforts as I do Your work.” God must think to Himself, “MY work? Do you really think you are doing MY work here?” The term “rubber stamp a decision” is a metaphor that means that the person who is technically in charge of an operation robotically approves what his underlings think should be done. This approval is evidenced by the person opening his desk drawer, pulling out the custom-made rubber stamp that has his signature embossed on it, and pressing that stamp down onto the official document that sanctions the project. Needless to say, God doesn’t “rubber stamp” anything that isn’t His will.

Right now, whatever decision you are facing, seek God’s will concerning that decision. Even more than just seek it, do it. Then take your hands off the controls and let God bring the decision in for a landing. Speaking from personal experience, I can tell you that even God’s landings can sometimes get a little rough. Oh, and did I mention that He might not land you where you thought you were going to land? Still, though, the great benefit from doing God’s will and letting Him handle the landing is that when you are finally at “all stop,” you will have the deep-settled inner peace that only comes from doing God’s will. And that, of course, is really the only way to fly.



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

Celebrating Recovery

Harvest

By Christy Young
Mitchell County

Patience is a virtue so I have been told. Sometimes patience is not one of my strong attributes. I am the type of person that wants everything scheduled and on time, no waiting, no excuses. Otherwise, it exceeds my comfort zone.

Unfortunately, life does not always work that way! Growing seasons can often be long. My husband loves to plant and harvest corn, but the growth period is long. He tends to get anxious the last few weeks of the growth cycle anticipating the first taste of freshly grown sweet corn. Oftentimes, his crop may be damaged by weather or the unwelcomed visits of deer, raccoons, and bears. The same is true in our living before the Lord. Occasionally we have seasons of rapid growth in our faith and sometimes the harvest seems so far away. We have many obstacles and challenges that seem to trip us up and detour our path. Anger and pride divide us from God and stunt our growth. Psalms 85:12 says, “*The Lord will indeed give what is good, and our land will yield its harvest.*” When the harvest seems so far away, we need to cling close to our Heavenly Father for nourishment and growth. We must deal with the sin in our lives, repent and strive to live better daily. Otherwise, we will not continue to grow in our spiritual faith. Jesus paid the price for our sin completely (what a wonderful gift)! In Him, a harvest is guaranteed if we desire it. The psalmist said the Lord would indeed give what is good. To understand and accept what is truly good and fulfilling we must water our faith each day. We also need the Light of Jesus shining within us. It takes a lot of work to have a bumper crop. You must till the ground, fertilize, and water. The same is true with our faith. We must repent daily. Remove anything that hinders our walk with God and have a relationship with Him. Prayer is essential. Reading the Word of God is essential. Assembling with other believers is essential and adds strength and accountability. A fulfilling life by my definition is overflowing with the presence of God and witnessing the blessings of His handiwork. Nothing is more precious than seeing the seed of salvation sown and watching how it grows until someone accepts the Lord as their personal Savior. Times are tough, but God is good! Time is drawing near for the return of the Lord and we desperately need a harvest of souls. Please join with me in prayer that we as Christians can grow in our faith and work until Jesus comes. As sweet as freshly picked corn tastes, the gift of salvation is so much sweeter! Spread the Word, sow the seed, and pray that souls will be harvested. God has given us each an opportunity to spread His holy word. The time is now, let us work together and in due time, our lives will yield a harvest in Christ Jesus.




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




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New Writer

By Joe Sturz
Shenandoah, Virginia



Here is a favorite song I sang when a young boy in Sunday School:

"I may never march in the infantry,
Ride in the cavalry,
Shoot the artillery.
I may never fly o'er the enemy,
But I'm in the Lord's army!
Yes Sir!
I'm in the Lord's army!
Yes sir!
I'm in the Lord's army!
Yes sir!
I may never march in the infantry,
Ride in the cavalry,
Shoot the artillery.
I may never fly o'er the enemy,
But I'm in the Lord's army!
Yes sir!
I'm in the Lord's army!
Yes sir!
I'm in the Lord's army!
Yes sir!" (Copied)

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*"10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.
11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.
12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.
13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.
14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;
15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;
16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.
17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:
18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; " (Eph. 6:10-18).*

Brother Joe "I'm in the Lord's army" Sturz Sunday, October 17, 2021, www.sturzchristiancounseling.com Facebook Group YouTube Sharing what the Lord has taught me through His Word, 42 years of marriage, my mistakes, failures, and successes including 50+ years as a Biblical Counselor. See my short, daily Bible messages on my Facebook Timeline. Seeking to apply all of the Bible to all of life Or if you would like to receive them by email then send a request to joe@sturzchristiancounseling.com

I became a Christian when as a little boy I repented of my sins (I John 1:9) and trusted personally in Jesus Christ's suffering and dying on the cross in my place to take God's punishment for my sin (I Corinthians 15:1-4). And now I follow Him (John 8:31-32) in praying, reading, and obeying the Bible every day, belonging to a Bible-believing church, and sharing my faith with others (Acts 2:46-47).

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

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Wooly Worm

By Doug Harrell
Mitchell County

I look around today, watch some of the news headlines, listen to what people say are their most pressing concerns, and wonder what in the heck is going on! It seems as if the number one concern of our current governmental concerns is global warming and right after that is trying to determine how to eliminate gender identity! Really!

I don't claim to be any great scientist or to have all the answers to all that is happening around us, and in our world, but don't you think we can find issues that are more critical to our everyday lives than this mess. I took a picture of a solid black wooly worm a couple of days ago and was reminded of the folklore of our forefathers that stated that if the wooly worms were solid black we were in for a long hard winter, I put about as much faith in that as I do some of the science that the global warming crowd is pushing, maybe even more.

Something that I think you will find interesting is that in 1910 in Mitchell County, NC, which is where I live, over 12,000 peach trees were being grown according to the census figures, with 1225 bushels of peaches sold. In 1930 that number was 11,240 peach trees with 639 people growing peaches. The weather was warm enough for the peach trees to survive here in the mountains. By 1940 the temperature was changing and the number of growers had fallen to 280 and by 1950 there were none reported because cold weather had wiped them out. Now I tell you this to point out the fact that over the centuries our temperatures have fluctuated, from the ice age on down. Now don't get me wrong here, I am a firm believer in conservation and have been all my life. I currently am on several boards here in Mitchell County that have a high priority on maintaining and improving our natural resources. Having said that, let me say that maybe the solid black wooly worms will foretell a winter that is cold enough to freeze the gonads off some of the politicians in Washington, then maybe they will put the wellbeing of the citizens of the country on a higher plane of a priority than climate. In my lowly opinion, God has much more control of that than we do.

The next issue is this so-called political correctness that thinks we should not call a male a boy or a female a girl. Heaven help us! This weekend we were blessed to have a grandson and his wife with us along with a couple that were friends with them, and one of our great-grandsons. The wife works at Duke in the maternity ward and she was telling us that they were being asked to not call breast milk breast milk but chest milk. They were not to call the female that was having the baby a mother but a birthing parent! Have we lost all sense of reality in this world! We currently have school boards in surrounding counties that are having, and in some places already have introduced new gender pronouns that the teacher are supposed to use. I know I wrote not long ago about the absurdity of this CRT training that is supposedly taking place that goes right along with the same degree of absurdity as this gender teaching. Now as many of you may know, I raise cattle and if I want milk I don't try to milk a bull, I have never seen a cow with balls and I have never seen a bull give birth to a calf! Now that may sound a little crass to some of you but if it does, my recommendation to you is to get a life! Grow up and get a lesson in reality. We are created male and female and that has never changed and will never change. Just because I decide to call a heifer a bull does not mean that she will ever produce semen, period!

I decided to not use Bible verses today because even if I did, some folks would argue with the word of God as well, and maybe you will just understand some good old country reality instead. I ask that each of you pray earnestly that our governing officials, local, state, and national, get the fortitude (I really would like to use another word here) to stand up for common sense on these issues and focus on housing cost, food cost, fuel cost, medical cost, educational issues and things that matter to each of us regardless of our color, race or supposed gender. Many things are what they are, and we will never legislate them to be different, focus on those things that we can change and leave the rest up to God and we will all be better off. Have a truly blessed day!

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

In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. 1 Thessalonians 5:18

Galatians in Context

By Jim Huskins
McDowell County

Regrettably, few Christians consider the Bible “absolute truth.” Among those who do, many dismiss the books of Genesis through Malachi as allegorical or irrelevant. They are viewed as a source for children’s stories, comforting poetry, and a few treasured prophecies. Few believers apply the term “literal” to the first two-thirds of the Bible. Doing so would impact the way they live.

A certain method of meeting active resistance from Christians is to point out clear Bible teachings: God’s Sabbath is the Seventh Day of the week, eating unclean meat is an abomination, the observance of pagan holidays and worship rituals is a slap in God’s face, the observance of God’s feast days and celebrations is not optional. “We are not under all that ‘law stuff,’” they insist. At this point, the book of Galatians is invoked.

Paul wrote this letter to a group of believers living in what is now Central Turkey. Their ancestors were Celts who emigrated from Western Europe around 278 BC at the invitation of King Nicomedes I of Bythnia. Celtic culture was steeped in Druidism, a popular variant of Babylonian, sun-god worship. When Paul chides them for returning to former worship practices, he is not faulting them for anything found in the teachings of Moses. Hebrew worship was not part of their history. The “weak and worthless principles” and the “days and months and seasons and years” he condemns in chapter four were relics from their pagan past.

Many view this epistle as Paul’s proclamation that God’s instructions for living—Torah in Hebrew, Nomos in Greek, The Law in English—are no longer valid. How could this be true? The core issue of the Biblical narrative is that a Loving God created humans for fellowship, but we made that fellowship impossible by choosing sin rather than obedience. Sin is so horrible that God has no option but to impose the death penalty. Sin is so horrible that only a perfect sacrifice could save us and restore our relationship with our Creator. Sin is so horrible that the Holy Son of God had to die in my place.

But what is this horrible thing? 1 John 3:4 defines sin as breaking The Law. Paul teaches in Romans 7:7-13 that The Law is holy and that by viewing our actions in light of The Law, we learn to recognize sin. Sin is violating the instructions for living given by God in the first five books of the Bible.

In order to believe that The Law is no longer in force, one must conclude that Unchanging God changed His mind, that sin is no longer horrible, and that Jesus died so that all of us can sin without consequence. How does that perspective mesh with God claiming that Torah will be in force forever (Deuteronomy 11:1), with Jesus insisting that The Law and The Prophets will be undiminished for as long as heaven and earth remain (Matthew 5:17-19) or the fact that Paul continued to live and teach The Law until the end of his days (Acts 28:23)?

Many Christians reach the same false conclusion which corrupted First-Century Jews. Jesus lambasted the Pharisees and Sadducees for viewing Torah as a means for justifying themselves. Religious leaders of His day taught that by keeping Torah—especially their made-up interpretations of Torah—they could force God to accept them. Jesus, Paul, and the other New Testament writers state that we can't earn salvation through righteous living.

Modern Christians, however, take that teaching to the opposite extreme. Since we cannot earn salvation through righteousness, many conclude that we have no obligation to be righteous. This is absurd. Ephesians 2:8-9 says that we are saved by grace through faith. Hallelujah! But then verse 10 makes it clear that we are saved for a purpose. That purpose is to perform “good works.” Good works mean righteousness or keeping The Law. We are saved by grace so that by grace we may live righteous lives amid a perverse world.

Paul states this point emphatically in the Book of Galatians. He uses the entire fifth chapter to explain our “freedom in Christ.” Through faith, we have freedom from sin’s penalty, but we are never given the freedom to sin. Remember that sin is breaking The Law. The “yoke of slavery” he references in 5:1 is not The Law. Slavery comes from sin—violating The Law—not from keeping The Law. We who are justified by faith have work to do (Ephesians 2:10). That work is keeping The Law.

Paul hammers this fact in 5:19-21. He lists specific sins which he calls “works of the flesh. People who practice sexual immorality, impurity, indecency, idolatry, witchcraft, hostility, strife, jealousy, rage, selfish ambition, dissension, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and similar actions will not inherit God’s kingdom. Each of these actions is a violation of commands found in The Law. If Paul is teaching earlier in the book that The Law is abolished, it would be impossible for him to now claim that violating The Law will keep us from inheriting God’s kingdom.

In fact, Paul never teaches that The Law is abolished. This widespread misunderstanding is due in part to the difficulty of translating ancient Hebrew and Greek texts into modern English. It is due in part to the fact that a lie oft repeated appears to take on the ring of truth. It is due mostly to the fact that few believers are willing to study and understand the first two-thirds of God’s Word. Until we do so, we will never be able to “rightly divide” the Word of Truth.

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.

The Fruits of the Spirit

By Tim Tron
Burke County



“Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.” – Mt. 7:16-19

As Thanksgiving approaches, we should reflect on the many things we should be thankful for in our lives. This story is meant to do just that. Hopefully, it will allow you to step back and think of life through another lens.

Our story begins at the weekly Bible study known as the Men’s Connection. As brother Richard recently spoke at our morning Bible study, he spoke of what it was to sacrifice, to serve without expectation of receiving. His dear, beloved Ann had passed earlier in the year, and he was leading us in a study of death and how we should face it. But more than the discussion of terminal illness, his message invoked the feeling of how we should not be more than we ought to think of ourselves – to be humble, with all gentleness in our servitude. On this last day of his series, he brought to light the importance of Spiritual Gifts and the Fruit of the Spirit. Again and again, those who were moved by his message.

As Richard spoke, my mind began to drift to other moments reinforced by his words.

It was the middle of the summer, July 18th, to be exact. My journal recorded the event because of the profound nature of the encounter. It was an unseasonably warm day for Boone, which made me yearn for a cup of ice cream. Sometime in the middle of the afternoon, I took a break and made my way up to King Street to one of my favorite snack shops. Walking out of the establishment into the bright, sunshine a thought occurred to me, “How are you going to reach others when you came alone?” Usually, I try to find a student or faculty to walk and talk with, but there wasn’t anyone around that could go on this day, so I was alone. Feeling a bit guilty in my singular pleasure, another thought arose, “Why not head over to the shady spots on the hill?”

So, with these thoughts in play, my feet began walking toward the old, refurbished gathering place in the middle of Boone, The Jones House. It is a natural oasis in the middle of all the hustle of downtown. There sitting on a hill, girded by massive Oaks and Ashe trees, overlooking the comings-and-goings of the small town below, sits an old home with a wide front porch littered with rocking chairs that invite you in with welcoming arms. Usually, it is the headquarters for the Junior Appalachian Musician program, along with other Old-Time music and various music events in the community. But on that particular day, it was merely the quick stop for visitors looking for a public restroom or just a quiet place to sit and rest.

As I found my way up the steep steps from King St., it was there that the realization of my hopes to sit alone on the porch to savor my sweet treat was not going to happen. For there, in one of the rocking chairs was another person, seemingly well planted, for his belongings were comfortably resting next to him, and his phone was plugged into the outlet by the window charging. Beside him was an empty rocking chair that beckoned. The words came back to me as I approached the porch, “How are you going to reach others when you came alone?” Walking up the front steps of the porch, I asked the young man if the other chair was taken, to which he replied, “No.”

Thankful to find the shade of the large porch, I eased back into the weathered wood, that like a glove, embraced my weary soul. Looking out at the town below, through the whispering breeze that blew the leaves on the trees, we two strangers sat. For what seemed an eternity, we said nothing but continued to watch the world go by. Eventually, the calm overtook me, and I had to speak, so I asked, “Beautiful day isn’t it?”

“Yes, it is,” he replied, nodding as he spoke. His dreadlocks were a bungled flurry of contradiction. He was not of traditional college age. His eyes were hidden behind dark sunglasses, so to fully grasp his demeanor was even more difficult. Trying to think of how to approach one such as himself, I surmised his situation. He appeared homeless and was using the porch as a temporary abode, but one shouldn’t judge oth-

ers too quickly. “I’m sorry, but I didn’t introduce myself. My name’s Tim.” “I’m Adrian.” “Are you from around here,” I probed, not trying to be too personal. “Yes and no.” He then bent over from his sitting position, reached into his backpack, and pulled out a cheese stick. As he unwrapped it and began to chew on its sustenance, it became evident to me that my inability to share with him had manifested itself into his own realization of hunger. Curious to understand what “Yes and no meant,” my questioning continued, as the seasoning on the meal before you begin to eat. “Have you served in the military?” “Yes, in the Navy.”

“I was in the Air Force,” I responded, and he shook his head in confirmation. From there, it was as if a door had been opened. Adrian shared with me, in broken terminologies, of what the world around him had become. His life was dark and lonely. When I asked what he did in the service, he said he couldn’t tell me. Acknowledging that I understood, he continued. He said that in his dreams, the “Eaters” are revealed to him. When I asked for clarification, he pointed to the food we were just finishing. It was still unclear what he meant, for his mind seemed to drift in and out of consciousness. It seemed as if the soul in this man was battling demons that no one could see but him.

Thinking of a way to bring faith into the conversation, I asked a pretty bold question, “Do you read the Bible?” “Do you,” he replied, almost in self-defense. Granted, I deserved his response, but it made me take a step back about my own attitude. How self-righteous of me to imply that he should read a book of my faith when in fact, he may belong to another religion entirely.

“Everyday,” was my answer, but now I was feeling almost guilty for putting him on the spot. Thankfully, he continued. “I couldn’t go to church for ten years while I was in the Navy,” he answered. “Now they won’t even let me into their temples because I smell so bad.”

This was the confirmation that I had suspected of Adrian being homeless. It was then that I realized he hadn’t asked for anything, no food, no money. He simply needed rest and time to be himself. It was as if he had allowed me to join him in his home for that brief moment in time.

“You don’t have to go to a church to worship the Lord.” At this, he looked at me over his sunglasses with a curious glance, then I continued. “Jesus spoke of the temple of his body, and that after the great temple was destroyed, the new temple is now our own bodies, in which God can dwell if we let him.”

Before I left him, I asked if he had any prayer requests. He lifted with an outstretched arm, palm down, to the yard before us, as if he were calming the seas. I didn’t understand the gesture entirely, except to mean that he wanted to pray for everything and everyone beyond where we existed. Nevertheless, it touched me in a way that I hadn’t expected.

There, on a sunny afternoon, in what seemed like a wasted break from work, my world met someone of the world of those that fall through the cracks of our society. Their lives are a cloud of confusion and darkness. Most cannot find adequate help or refuse it for fear of being institutionalized. Instead, they live off the support of charities and the kindness of strangers. Me with my cup of self-righteousness, eating in front of a man that probably only got one meal every other day if he is lucky, was like those Pharisees who touted their own religiosity. In retrospect, it was very humbling.

From what brother Richard taught us when we are blessed with gifts of the Spirit, we should learn to use them to help those in the world around us. If we do, we find that the fruits of the Spirit begin to manifest themselves. Without using those gifts, those fruits, those trees become barren. It is up to us to recognize those gifts and not let them lie dormant and waste away.

So, it was on that July day, there on the front porch, two strangers met. A world in chaos met another seeking to help those out of chaos – each wanting to find a way to the other.

Before I left, I asked Adrian if I could pray for him. He nodded yes. When we finished praying, God indeed was listening, for something quite unexpected, at least on my part, happened.

Adrian said, “Thank you,” As we said our goodbyes, the feeling that God had just done something despite myself seemed to echo my departing footsteps.

C.S. Lewis said, “A world of nice people, content in their own niceness, looking no further, turned away from God, would be just as desperately in need of salvation as a miserable world—and might even be more difficult to save.”

As we go through our days, let us not miss an opportunity to reach out to someone in need. It isn’t always the material or the sustenance of organic goods that are needed, but simply the comfort and compassion of a loving heart are all that is required.

As the time of Thanksgiving approaches, once more, let us reflect on our many blessings. At the same time, seek those who are less fortunate in this world, those who need comfort, or those who just need someone to talk to. Share those gifts and give someone the fruits of your spirit.

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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

The Inspiring Word

By Terry Cheek Th.D.
McDowell County

This month I prayerfully begin a verse-by-verse exposition of the fiftieth Psalm. Whether written by Asaph or written to him is not of concern here. It is the word of God. It transcends centuries and continues to accomplish God's purpose. Join me as we investigate verses one through six this month.

From Psalm 50:1-6 we hear the Lord summoning His creation to hear His declaration. Psalms 50:1-6 A Psalm of Asaph. *"The mighty God, even the LORD, hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof. (2) Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined. (3) Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. (4) He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people. (5) Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice. (6) And the heavens shall declare his righteousness: for God is judge himself. Selah."* Verse one, *"The mighty God, even the Lord."* Both Elohim and Jehovah, are names of God, they are used here to glorify him. To make the address more impressive, the names Elohim and Jehovah are mentioned, just as in all royal decrees, the names and dignities of monarchs are placed in the forefront. Here the true God is described as Almighty, as the only and perfect object of adoration, also as the self-existent One. *"Hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun until the going down thereof."* The dominion of God extends over the entire earth, and to all mankind is His decree directed. The east and the west are called to hear the God who makes His sun rise on every quarter of the globe. An item worth mentioning, there is no beginning or end to the east or west. When we begin traveling east or west, we continue that route, limited only by geography or transportation. Will we dare provoke him to anger by slighting his call? Verse two, *"Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined."* The Lord is seen not only speaking to the earth but revealing the glory of His presence to an assembled universe. Instead of God only dwelling in Zion among his chosen people, here the glory of His splendor is described as shining forth upon all nations. The sun was mentioned in the first verse, but here we see a far brighter light. The majesty of God is most evident among His elect but is not confined to them; the church is not a lantern unlit, but one shining the light of the glorious gospel. God's glory shines not only in Zion but out of her encompassing the world. Zion is picture-perfect in beauty by His indwelling, and this beauty is seen by all observers when the Lord shines from her. Notice how with a trumpeting voice the infinite Jehovah summons the heavens and the earth to attention for His word. Verse three, *"Our God shall come."* The psalmist speaks of himself and his brethren as standing in immediate anticipation of the appearing of the Lord upon the scene. *"He comes,"* they say, they can hear His distant voice and discern the splendor of His imminent appearing. We should do likewise, watch and wait for the long-promised appearance of the Lord from heaven? *"And shall not keep silence."* He comes to speak and plead with his people, He comes to convict and judge the ungodly. He has remained silent and patient, but soon God will speak with power. What a moment of awe when the Omnipotent reveals Himself! Imagine if you can the reverent joy and humility when the scene of this Psalm becomes an actual reality! *"A fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him."* This sentence is a word picture of God's divine appearance. Verse four, *"He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth."* Here we hear God calling to Angels and men, the upper and the lower worlds, are called to witness this solemn scene. All creation will stand at attention to testify of the earnestness and truth of God's divine declaration. Both heaven and earth will con-



demn sin; the guilty will have no appeal. Both angels and men have seen the guilt of mankind and the goodness of the Lord, they shall therefore confess the justice of God, and say *"Amen"* to his sentence. A question to those who deny God! What will you do and where will you flee? Christian, we should remember that judgment begins at the house of God. He will separate those who play church from his true church. Charles Spurgeon had this to say, *"My soul, when this actually takes place, how will it fare with thee? Canst thou endure the day of his coming?"* Verse five, *"Gather my saints together unto me."* The Lord cries, to His messengers, to separate and gather the elect of the Lord from the world. Gather those long scattered, but elect people, known by my grace to be my sanctified ones, and assemble them in my presence. All are not saints who claim to be—a separation must be made; God knows every heart. *"Those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice;"* A covenant is ratified by blood, the cutting and dividing of offerings; this the righteous have done by accepting by grace and through faith the great propitiatory sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, yet those who play church have claimed sainthood in an outward form. We will be gathered before the throne for trial and testing, and as many as having really ratified the covenant by grace and through faith in the Lord Jesus shall be attested before all as the objects of grace, while the rest will learn that outward Christianity is in vain. Verse six, *"And the heavens shall declare his righteousness."* Nothing remains to be done before God begins judgment. *"For God is judge himself."* This judgment is not given to anyone, Elohim, Jehovah himself assumes his rightful place to judge the hearts of mankind. *"Selah."* Accepted as the Hebrew word indicating a pause. Therefore, we may well pause in reverent prostration, searching our heart, in humble prayer, and awe-struck expectation.

Until we meet again, in person or print, may God keep you firmly in His grip!
Bibliography:
The treasury of David; Charles Spurgeon
Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament

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

Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. Philippians 4:6

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Heartbreak Hill

By Tracy Jessup



“If I go forward, he is not there; or backward, I cannot perceive him; on the left he hides, and I cannot behold him; I turn to the right, but I cannot see him. But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I shall come out like gold.” (Job 23:8-10)

Heartbreak Hill is the name given to a stretch of the Boston Marathon course where races have been won and lost. It comes about 20 miles into the race from Hopkinton to Boston when runners are challenged with forcing their already fatigued legs and bodies up the half-mile slope. Heartbreak Hill is an iconic landmark in the sport of marathoning and an article for Boston.com, Dialynn Dwyer recounts how Heartbreak Hill got its name.

“For more than 80 years, the hill has been known by a name that reflects what runners may face on its pitch. It stems from a particular moment of heartbreak for a marathoner pushing for the lead in 1936. On that Monday, runner Ellison ‘Tarzan’ Brown from Rhode Island set a ‘blistering pace,’ The Boston Globe reported. The newspaper’s sports reporter Jerry Nason wrote that Brown set ‘every course record for the 23 of the 26-plus miles crashing to oblivion.’ Brown’s pace ‘literally caused him to race himself as well as the remainder of the field dizzy’... He was more than three minutes above the record pace - until the ‘mocking hills’ in Newton. It was there, on the last of the hills, that Johnny Kelley of Arlington, who won the marathon the previous year, ‘wiped out a half-mile deficit’ to catch Brown.

Kelley patted Brown on the shoulder as he went to pass the race leader. And in response, Brown surged ahead, going on to win the marathon in 2:33:40, becoming the second Native American to win the Boston race. ‘Nason referred to the incident as breaking Johnny’s heart,’ Fleming said. ‘So that really was thought to be the way that the term Heartbreak Hill became coined.’ Kelley came in fifth and had to be ‘carted away’ from the finish line. He was ‘worn, battered to bits,’ by the chase over the hills...” (“How Heartbreak Hill Got Its Name,” 4/3/19).

In today’s passage, Job confronts one of the most difficult questions of Christian theology. How do we explain all the suffering that occurs in a world created and sustained by a loving and gracious God? Job’s friend Eliphaz gives an answer that is partially correct when he says the answer lies in human sinfulness. Still, all of us are aware of numerous instances in which no human sinfulness lies behind our suffering. Job finds himself amid such a dilemma and honestly, gives expression to his inability to see, feel, or hear God.

Heartbreak Hill. All of us have been there. So, what do we do? James New-some writes, “Job points to a dilemma whose solution he “cannot see” (v. 9b), but one for which Christian men and women find resolution in Jesus Christ (although Christians would also confess very imperfect knowledge in the matter). In Jesus Christ, God joined humankind in its suffering, both deserved and undeserved. The cross of Jesus Christ is that point in time and space where, more than any other, God identified with human suffering and experienced it to its fullest extent. Thus Job performs the enormous service of raising questions which he cannot answer and of pointing beyond himself to One who can” (Texts for Preaching, p. 544). Prayer: Lord, thank you that even in the midst of our heartbreak, you know the way that we take and whisper your grace and peace into our lives.

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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Plumtree Church

Water for Life

By Ryan Bridgeo
Avery County

On my most recent trip to Uganda, I was praying for a young boy, probably about ten years old, at a church one day. His belly was swollen in a way that I had only seen on television commercials; except he wasn't starving, he had plenty of food. This young boy's stomach was enlarged because he had been drinking unclean water. At that moment, I realized how much I had taken for granted the clean water that I have access to every day. It is all that I've known. Every day of my life, I have been able to turn the water on with a twist of my wrist and be able to take a shower, wash my clothes, or get a nice cold drink. But for this young boy, his experience was quite different. He had to walk a mile or two to fetch his family's water. Once he arrived, he would fill up his 5-gallon jerrycan with the same water he was standing in and then carry it back home. This jerrycan once filled, would weigh over 40 pounds. This is what this boy did every day. This was all that he knew. Little did his family realize, that the chore they were sending their son to do every day, was the cause of their son now being sick. As I prayed for this little boy to be healed, I felt challenged to do something to help.

Approximately 21 million people in Uganda are living without safe drinking water. That's nearly 50% of the population. 8 million of those people are drinking from sources like streams, ponds, and unprotected hand-dug wells. 13 million must walk 1-2 miles because they don't have access or because of overcrowding. 64 % of the population don't have access to a sanitary toilet. 47 % of the population have no handwashing facility. And another 32% have a handwashing facility but no reliable source for soap and water.

As I read these statistics, I became upset, and I wondered how this was possible? How is it possible that in 2021, people in Uganda do not have access to clean drinking water? In America, we have seen all kinds of advancements in technology and science and yet these people do not have good water. People in America have wedding ceremonies for their dogs and build multi-million-dollar barns for their horses, yet this boy and many other people like him could die because they don't have access to clean water. This is a tragedy. This should not be.

I believe that we can, and we should do something about this. We don't overcome evil with evil. We don't overcome evil by complaining about our circumstances or situations. We overcome evil with good. And it is good for us to help those when it is in our power to do so.

In Matthew 25, Jesus said, "I was hungry, and you gave Me food; I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and you took Me in; I was naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me." Then He said, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me." When we help people that can never return the favor, we are doing good, we are acting like our Father, God, who gives rain to the just and the unjust.

I would like to ask you to partner with us to help bring clean water to the people of Uganda. Each well costs \$8200. Whether you desire to help as an individual, a family, a business, or a church, we all can do something. So far, by the grace of God, we have been able to dig 5 wells. In the village where we drilled the first well, they had one well for 5250 people. Now they have two. Praise the Lord.

You can see that the need is great, but together we can make a difference. Together we can be the change that we desire to see.

If you would like to give towards this ministry, or you would like more information, please contact Pastor Ryan Bridgeo at pastor@plumtreechurch.com or 828-765-6919.

Ryan Bridgeo can be reached at 828-765-6919. For more information you can visit the church website at www.plumtreechurch.com or email pastor@plumtreechurch.com



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First Baptist of Marshall

Humor

By Buddy Freeman
Madison County

“Have you heard of World War II?” my husband asked our six-year-old grandson. “Well, I’ve heard of it,” Bronson said tentatively. “But I can’t remember what game it is.”

The military loves its acronyms. Here are some that have flown under the official radar: ARMY: Aren’t Ready to be Marines Yet. LOST: Looking Over Strange Terrain. MARINES: Muscles Are Required Intelligence Not Essential. MRE: Meals Rejected by the Enemy. NAVY: Never Again Volunteer Yourself.

An old geezer says to his buddy, “I hear you’re getting married.” “Yes, I am.” “Have I met her?” “Nope!” “Is she good-looking?” “Not especially.” “Can she cook?” “Not really.” “Is she loaded?” “Poor as a church mouse.” “Well, then, why do you want to marry her?” “She still drives!”

My doctor told me to cut down on my sodium. But I always take her advice with a grain of salt.

Patient: Doctor, I think I need glasses. Teller: You certainly do! This is a bank.



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

Crossword Solution

F	L	O	W		W	O	R	L	D	S		S	E	E
R	E	M	I	T		P	A	I	R		T	H	A	N
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Sudoku Solution

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

Snow Hill Baptist Church

Jachin And Boaz. What Does That Mean?

By Dean Honeycutt
Mitchell County



Solomons Temple is one of the Ancient Wonders of the World. This Temple or House of the Lord was the most sacred place Jews worshipped the Lord. Its building and furnishings are described in First Kings chapters seven and eight. The Lord was so pleased with the heart of God’s people to follow Him, that at the dedication of the Temple, the Glory of the Lord filled the House of the Lord in a thick cloud. The presence of the Lord was evidenced by a thick cloud or dense fog that filled the Temple. Wow, could you imagine you and your family being in the presence of God like this?

The Temple was built on Mt. Moriah in Jerusalem. This site has a very significant role in the Bible. It is the location of Abraham’s test to offer his son Isaac, where God stopped Abraham and provided a ram for the sacrifice instead of his son. A picture of the grace of Jesus Christ. It is also the threshing floor that King David purchased from Araunah the Jebusite. King David made an altar here and sacrificed to the Lord in repentance of sin to stay the hand of God and a pestilence God had sent on Israel.

In 1 Kings 7:21, King Solomon had two pillars constructed out of brass. These two pillars adorned the front porch of the Temple. These two pillars were twenty-five feet high, three inches thick, and seventeen feet in circumference. They were massive and beautifully adorned artwork. One pillar was named Jachin and the other Boaz. And the two names together mean the “Lord God establish you in strength”. This was very important to King Solomon and to all the people who worshipped the Lord. So, if you can just imagine for a moment walking up to this beautiful Temple and seeing these two pillars that reminded you of God’s grace and mercy.

The truth of God’s position and strength in the life of a believer is best understood in Psalm 46.

Psalm 46
To the chief Musician for the sons of Korah, A Song upon Alamoth.
“I God is our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.
2 Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed,
And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;
3 Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled,
Though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.
4 There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God,
The holy place of the tabernacles of the most High.
5 God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved:
God shall help her, and that right early.
6 The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved:
He uttered his voice, the earth melted.
7 The LORD of hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.
8 Come, behold the works of the LORD,
What desolations he hath made in the earth.
9 He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth;
He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder;
He burneth the chariot in the fire.
10 Be still, and know that I am God:
I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.
11 The LORD of hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.”

In First Kings 8:25 at the dedication of the Temple when King Solomon brought up the Ark of the Covenant to be placed in the Temple, he stood before the altar and prayed to the Lord God of Israel. He charged God’s people to conduct their life in a way pleasing to God. (1 Kings 8:22-27). God’s people celebrated the goodness of God. The Bible says they were “joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness the Lord had done for His people.”

Dad and Mom, we need these two symbolic pillars in our family to “establish us in strength”. Just as families would approach the Temple during Solomon’s time and see these two massive pillars, Jachin and Boaz, it would remind them of the foundation and strength they have in God. We live in a difficult world. It is getting further and further away from God. The Critical Race Theory, sexual perversion, political unrest, and affluence are creating a Godless society.

My prayer for the Christian family is for God to establish us in His strength. We are strong when we pray, read God’s word, and attend a God-fearing church. We can not dabble in sin and please God. We can not shake hands with the world and go with God. There is no such thing as a 50/50 Christian. We are either all in or we are all out. There is no such thing as a backsliding Christian. How far do you think you can backslide? According to the Bible not far.

Like two mighty pillars in the presence of God, May God establish and strengthen your family for His glory. And when people view your family, they see God’s glorious work.

Live life with “no Regrets”.

Happy Thanksgiving from my family to yours.

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.

Berry Chapel Baptist Church

Blessing We So Easily Forget

By Steve Williams
Mitchell County

Why is it that we so easily forget the blessing that we have received from God? Could it be because of the uncertainty of the day we are living in? Since 2020 we have been living in some uncertain and interesting times, to say the least. So I guess one word that could be used to describe the day that we are living in is Uncertain. We're UNCERTAIN about the COVID Virus still. We're UNCERTAIN about this Circus of a Government that is running the country. We're UNCERTAIN about the Economy and Jobs playing out in the future. We're UNCERTAIN about the Collapse of the Stock Market and 401K's. We're UNCERTAIN that a Health Care Plan is what they say it will be. We're UNCERTAIN of our Protection In America, our Police, and our Military. We're UNCERTAIN about Making Ends Meet. We're UNCERTAIN about ever Seeing America and Better Days. Maybe what we need to do is shift our focus from Uncertainty to Blessings. The reason we are so uncertain is that we have focused our eyes on ourselves so many times when we need to be focused on God. And I know when I fail to focus on God, it's hard to remember all the things I have to be thankful for in my life.

I heard a funny story about a husband who thought he had conquered the problem of trying to remember his wife's birthday, Valentine's Day, and their anniversary. He opened an account with a florist, provided them with dates and instructions to send flowers along with an appropriate note signed, "Your loving husband." His wife was thrilled by this new display of attention. All went well until one day, many bouquets later, when he came home, kissed his wife, and said offhandedly, "Nice flowers, honey. Where'd you get them?" Do folks just imagine how the Lord must feel when we forget all that He has done for us? All too often we take what the Lord has done for us for granted, including me. When we get our eyes off God, it's not long till we will find ourselves being Life Wrecked instead of Ship Wrecked and wondering why. But dear Christian there are some things you and I seem to forget about in our Christian Walk with God in UNCERTAIN Days. So many times you and I both fail to focus on what God did for us when He saved our lost and doomed souls. Let's look at Psalm 103:1-10 and we will see this: *"Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. 2 Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: 3 Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; 4 Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; 5 Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's. 6 The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed. 7 He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel. 8 The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. 9 He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger forever. 10 He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities."*

Here in Psalms 103, David reminds us of some very important things that we so easily forget.
We forget: Who Has Forgiveness All Thine Iniquities: V 3
We forget: Who Redeemeth Thy Life From Destruction. V 4
We forget: That He Has Crowned Us With Loving Kindness And Tender Mercies V 4b
We forget: Who Satisfieth Thy Mouth with Good things: V 5
We forget: The Lord Executeth Righteousness & Judgement for all the Oppressed V 6
We forget: The Lord is Merciful and that's Right Now. V8
We forget: The Lord is Gracious and that's Right Now. V8
We forget: The Lord is Slow to Anger and that's Right Now. V8
We forget: The Lord is Plenteous in Mercy and that's Right Now. V8
We forget: The Lord does not on Chide or Keep His Anger Forever. And folks that's Right Now. V9
But I Like This One. Nor has He Rewarded us According to our Iniquities. And that's Right Now V10

Words of Wisdom:

- The hardest arithmetic to master is that which enables us to count our blessings from God. N/A
- Good health and good sense are two of life's greatest blessings from God. N/A
- Envy is the art of counting the other fellow's blessings instead of your own. N/A
- Each day we live God drops blessings into our lap without us lifting a finger. N/A

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



Hey y'all, we are Steven and Jennifer Painter. We started out as some of those folks who saw a sad story on the news about a child who had been neglected or abused and said, "why did this have to happen? We would have gladly taken that child and loved him/her!" Yet we didn't make a move to actually BECOME that family because "it was never the right time" or "we don't know where to start". But really, when IS it the right time? Answer: now. How do we get started? Answer: just make the call! There are children NOW who need someone to bridge that gap. Contact McDowell DSS at 828-652-3355.



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A Church Named Providence

By Steve Bietz
Burke County



It happened in Swan Quarter, North Carolina. Swan Quarter is out on our North Carolina coast in the Pamlico Sound area of the Outer Banks, just south of Nags Head. It is a small community, named after Samuel Swan who was a wealthy plantation owner in that area in the 1700s. The population today stands at around 400 people.

In the 1870s, a small group of Methodists wanted to build their own church and began the search for property in Swan Quarter, North Carolina. As I just noted, it was a small group so they did not have a large amount of money with which to buy any expensive property. There was a piece of land situated on Main Street that seemed to be the perfect spot for a church and the small Methodist Church family felt impressed by God to ask the owner of the land if he would sell them the property so that they could build their church. The owner of the land was a man named Sam Sadler. After spending time in prayer, the Methodist Church Pastor and another leader in the church went to ask Sam Sadler if he would sell. Sam was understanding of their desire to build a church but stated that he already had other plans for the property that they wished to purchase and so he would not sell it to them.

Because they did not have a lot of money, the Methodist Church ended up purchasing land that was not ideal. It was described as low land and swampy and prone to flooding if enough rain fell in a short time period. But putting their trust in God and deciding that they would build their white-framed church on brick pilings, they proceeded. What a fantastic day it was when they finished building their church and had the dedication on September 16th, 1876.

Three days after the dedication, a Hurricane-like storm hit Swan Quarter and the surrounding coast of North Carolina. The storm did not pack a punch with major winds, but rather the destructive power was the heavy rains. The small town of Swan Quarter was flooded. The water level rose to the point that it lifted the brand new Methodist Church right off the brick pilings that it had been built on. The church floated out onto Oyster Creek Rd and then made a turn onto Main Street. It proceeded to float down Main Street until it stopped even though the water was rushing down the street. But instead of floating with the flow of water, the church made a mysterious turn and stopped on a vacant piece of land.

As the water level dropped after the storm passed, the town folk came out to see the damage. Many had seen the church float by and wondered where it went. The citizens were stunned to see that the Methodist Church had landed on Sam Sadler's land, yes the very same piece of property that the small Methodist Church family had felt impressed by God to ask Sam to sell it to them so that they could build their church. Well, when Sam saw the white-framed Methodist Church sitting on his property, he was astonished. He said this must be the Providence of God. Sam Sadler was so impressed by the event, that he donated the land to the Methodist Church of Swan Quarter. Everyone felt that God's providence had indeed been the reason that their church had to change its address. So it was decided. From that day forward, the little white-framed church was called the Church of Providence.

I wonder, do we see God's providence in our church and our lives? Many today would have us believe that an indescribable fate determines the course of history. Many suggest that destiny is left to mere chance. They claim that history and the future are just a series of unrelated circumstances. I believe that these kinds of conclusions are false. I believe that God's providence, which is to say God's Hand of guidance, has and will continue to guide in the affairs of our planet, and in particular those who accept the Lord as their Creator and Redeemer.

There is perhaps a no greater example of God's providence in history over centuries but to have the world ready for the incarnation of Jesus. Paul wrote in Galatians 4:4 "*the fullness of the time had come.*" I hope that you and I are anticipating the soon second coming of our Lord and Saviour. The Bible conveys that Christ's soon return is a guarantee.

I would call His plans to come and get us, the providence of a loving God. He has it all planned. All He needs is us to make it complete. May we this Thanksgiving, thank God for His wonderful providence in our lives.

Steve Bietz, Pastor, Morganton Seventh day Adventist Church.



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“Something To Think About”
Our Unchanging God In A Changing World

By Dennis Love
McDowell County



The Bible says in Malachi 3:6; “*For I am the LORD, I change not!*” We don’t know everything Adam said to Eve as they left the garden, but one thing he must have said was, “My dear, the world is changing.” And it has been changing ever since! More information has been produced in the last thirty years than in the previous 5,000 years combined. Ninety percent of all the items in the supermarket did not exist ten years ago. It is estimated that fifty percent of college graduates are going into jobs that did not exist when they were born. And, it is estimated that ninety percent of the businesses in the United States were started in the last 25 years. One man put it this way: “My great-grandfather rode a horse, but was afraid of a train. My grandfather rode a train but was afraid of a car. My father rode in a car but was afraid of an airplane. I ride in an airplane, but I’m afraid of a horse.” That’s what you call making a full cycle. With all of our advances today, it is possible to have breakfast in New York City, lunch in Dallas, and dinner in Los Angeles. . . . and have your bags wind up in Mexico City. The rate of change is so great today that we can hardly acclimate ourselves to the constant upheavals it causes. The result is we are suffering from a vision of constant cultural shock. I know one thing----we need either a tranquilizer or a stabilizer! Amid all these changes it is GOOD to know that there is one thing that does not change, and that is the LORD. He is constant and abiding! In this ever-changing world, He is the anchor for our soul! He is a fixed point of reference for our moral decisions! And He is the axis around which our lives can revolve! Malachi spoke these words in a time of great change. Worship had become flip-pant and casual as people gave their second-best to God. The moral Law of God was being disregarded, especially concerning marriage. Divorce was rampant. And the Lord’s command to tithe was being ignored to the economic detriment of the nation. And neither priest nor people took seriously the threat of approaching judgment. In that kind of world, the Lord reminded his people that He had not changed. And in our constantly changing world, it is good for us to be reminded that our God has not changed and He will not change. Matter-of-fact we are told in Hebrews 13:8; “*Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever.*” This serves as a warning and a comfort for us that we serve a changeless God in this changing world! Now, this is something to think about and to praise God 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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By Bruce Cannon
Mitchell County

Can You Believe It? November Already! Time For Thanks, Thanksgiving, And Turkey! One of my favorite songs has these lines in it: “Give thanks with a grateful heart Give thanks to the Holy One. Give thanks because He's given Jesus Christ, His Son.”

We have so much to be thankful for! One of my favorite services of the year is our Thanksgiving Service at Bear Creek. We usually have it on the Tuesday night before Thanksgiving and it is a time of sharing testimonies of how good the Lord has been to us. Tears are shed, hearts overflow, and the Lord is honored! What a sweet time of fellowship and worship!

The Apostle Paul is one of my favorite Bible characters and his epistles are some of my favorite Scripture. I especially love the book of Philippians! He is in prison in Rome awaiting execution and he knows it is coming very shortly. Yet, he is filled with joy. As I understand the timeline, Philippians is the next to last book Paul writes; Second Timothy is his last.

The truths Paul knew and lived by as he was facing execution are some that we definitely need to know and live by ourselves! While we are not facing execution, we are facing very troublesome and turbulent times in a nation where there is so much pain and evil present. Check out a few of the verses Paul shares in Philippians:

1:6) “*Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:*” (God is never going to leave us, forsake us, or give up on us! This verse sounds as if Paul is having no problems whatsoever. What a declaration of faith!)

4:6,7) “*Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*” (Don’t worry; give all your cares to the Lord and trust Him. He will never let you down. Receive His peace and show Him your thankfulness for it. Again, another tremendous declaration of faith!)

4:4 “*Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, rejoice.*” (His mind is on Christ. He remembers how the Lord has blessed him and taken care of him. And he realizes that if God did it in the past, He will do it in the present and in the future!)

4:11) “*Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.*” (I, and you, can trust my circumstances to Him. He will always watch over me and take care of me!)

While these are very troublesome times.... times filled with uncertainty, pressures, and stresses, Paul knew the Lord would never forsake Him, never fail Him, would always watch over him, and take him home to Heaven at the end of his life on earth. He stated in 1:21, “*For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*” How could he lose, why should he worry?

The lyrics to one of my favorite songs are:
“His Eye is On The Sparrow Why should I feel discouraged, why should the shadows come,
Why should my heart be lonely, and long for heaven and home,
When Jesus is my portion? My constant friend is He:
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me;
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.”
“His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me!” How can we not have a very happy Thanksgiving with what we know of God’s love for us! Happy Thanksgiving everyone!

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.



By Dave Ramsey

Dear Dave,

I am on Baby Step 2, and I started a YouTube channel earlier this year that led to a new opportunity to make additional income. I try on and review clothing, and I’m paid \$30 for each clip that’s anywhere from 30 seconds to two minutes long. Right now, I have about 1,000 viewers. This requires me to buy items from several brands. I usually return the items when I’m through filming, but I’m currently funding this with a credit card I only use for this project. I only pay the minimum each month until I get the refund, so at any given time there can be up to \$4,000 on the card in rotation. I make about \$86,000 at my normal job, so is this an okay way to fund my project and chalk it up as a business expense? Amber

Dear Amber,

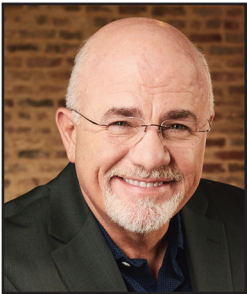
You’re taking a risk here, from a business perspective, by playing around with \$4,000 in debt to make \$30 a pop. That’s inordinate. And you shouldn’t be paying for the clothes in the first place. These brands should be giving you clothes to review—that you keep—for the marketing exposure, but I’m not sure you’ve got enough eyeballs on you yet to justify them giving you the clothes for free.


Basically, it sounds like you’re trying to put yourself in a position to be an influencer. And the way influencers get paid is by monetizing eyeballs. Obviously, YouTube and other platforms will pay you if you can get the eyeballs. But 1,000 viewers really aren’t a lot these days. You’re getting there, though, and I’m glad you’re working at it and trying to make things happen.

You make good money, Amber. I want you to set aside \$2,000 or \$3,000 for this business, maybe out of the business income, and prime the pump one time. By that, I mean open a separate checking account that’s for your clothing exchange process only. Here’s the thing, let’s say you bought \$1,000 worth of stuff from one of these companies, and they suddenly decide they’re not taking it back. You just ate that \$1,000. And guess what else? Now, you really have credit card debt.

There are three things you can always be sure of in business. One, it’s going to cost twice as much as you think it will. Two, it’s going to take twice as long as you think it will. And three, you are not the exception to these things. While we’re at it, add this to the list of stuff you can always be sure of—you’ll never find me advising or endorsing credit card debt! — Dave

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





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Did You Forget Your Password?

By Caron Cline
Burke County



In this age of technology, one of the most difficult tasks is remembering multiple passwords. Unless we commit them to memory or record them for future reference, we delay our progress in a variety of ways. It has been said that THANKSGIVING is the password that allows Christians access to the presence of God. The temptation to grumble, complain and argue rears its ugly head in our lives daily. The more we yield, the more building material we provide for the devil to build a stronghold in our minds. Within a short time, we find ourselves replacing gratitude with bitterness, an attitude that poisons, defiles, and replaces any desire for fellowship with the Lord. However, when we choose to count our blessings, things begin to change. Psalm 100:4 says, *'Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His Name'*. THANKSGIVING is the most often forgotten password yet it opens the door to the manifest presence of God. Our personal time alone with our Lord will transform our lives through spiritual intimacy, nourishment, and intercession.

First of all, during times of intimacy in the presence of the Lord, He exposes the rough edges that need sanding. He opens our eyes to those issues that are displeasing to Him. But rather than condemnation, His loving presence produces humility and a desire to forsake all unrighteousness. When we repent, He quiets us with His love and rejoices over us with joyful singing. (Zephaniah 3:17) Nothing compares to His Voice in the ear of His beloved child as He quietly whispers, *'I am the One who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake, and I will remember your sins no more.'* (Isaiah 43:25)

Secondly, nourishment is provided in the presence of the Lord. He feeds us there with His Word, Jesus, Who is the bread of life. In John 6:57-58 Jesus stated that *"As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so He who eats Me, he also will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever"*. Reading and meditating on the word of God provides strength and stability in troubled times and the assurance of a future inheritance in the heavenly. Only the word of God can satisfy the hungry soul, heal the broken heart, and quiet the anxious mind.

Thirdly, intercession becomes a priority in the presence of the Lord. Fervent and persevering prayer on behalf of others is a privilege granted to believers by which we can affect their destiny. 1 Timothy 2:1 reminds us that *'entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority ...'*. Jesus used a parable in Luke 18:1-8 to challenge His disciples to pray and never lose heart for the Father always hears and brings justice in due time. Whenever we pray in the Spirit according to the will of God, we can be confident that our Lord will hear and answer.

In light of the mercies of our heavenly Father, there is no excuse for forgetting our password into His presence. THANKSGIVING should be continually on our lips. The throne room of God beckons us as we enter its gate with thanksgiving and its court with praise.

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

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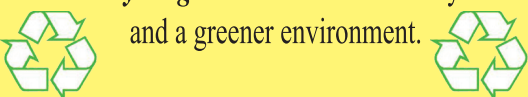


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Enjoying Everyday Life

Imagine Your Life Free from Fear

By Joyce Meyer

Do you ever wonder what your life would look like if fear didn't exist? For example, what if you had the confidence to pursue every passion God gave you? Just imagine for a moment what that would look like. Well, God gives us a special gift called faith so we can do amazing things for Him. And I want to encourage you to step out of your comfort zone and exercise that gift full time.

Faith gives us so much potential because it motivates us to move forward in the plans God has for us. But fear is a feeling Satan uses to keep our focus inward. It makes us feel anxious, causes us to dread the future, and it can keep us from saying and doing things that would reveal more of God's love to the world.

We need to learn to interrupt fear at its onset—before it begins to settle in our spirit. The choice is to either let Satan stop us in our tracks or to go forward in faith, believing God is in control.

The good news is, when we're struggling with fear, we can turn to God's Word for an inspiring, encouraging reality check. Romans 8:31 (NIV) says, *"If God is for us, who can be against us?"* And Psalm 27:1 says, *"The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?"*

These scriptures are basically saying that if we believe God's Word, then we have already won the battle we're facing.

Jesus tells us in Mark 11:22 (AMPC), *"Have faith in God [constantly]."* God doesn't want you to be fearful at any time. He wants you to be bold, confident, courageous, and full of faith every day of your life—not just until you have a problem or until someone mistreats you. There's no until. And no one can stop God from answering a prayer that lines up with His Word and His will for our life.

Keeping the Faith While You're Waiting

Throughout the course of a lifetime, we spend a lot of time waiting. And that is often the case with prayer. We can spend years praying for something to happen. And during that time, Satan will do everything he can to discourage us. He will try to convince us that God doesn't love us, that God's promises are for more worthy people, or that we didn't really hear from God in the first place. But if we will choose to trust God continually, we can keep moving forward in His plans for us.

The truth is, even if you don't see the fulfillment of every dream or desire of your heart here on earth, God will be pleased as you continue to believe in His perfect plan. And in the meantime, your faith will fill you with hope, joy, and peace (see Romans 15:13).

Now if you knew me years ago, you would know that I wasn't always filled with hope. In fact, I was miserable whenever God made me wait for anything, so I would try to make things happen on my own. And it eventually wore me out! I remember lying on the floor, crying, saying, "God, I've tried everything, and nothing's working. I just give up!" At that moment, the Holy Spirit spoke to my heart and said: Really, Joyce? You mean, you're going to let Me take it from here?

You see, when we're ready to let go, God is right there to fight our battles. We just need to learn to trust Him...and that comes through experience, as we take each new step of faith.

Overcoming Opposition with Consistency

Today, instead of trying to pray my problems away, I've learned to pray for things like strength and courage, and for the power to endure whatever comes with a good temper. With God's help, I can choose faith every time I'm confronted with feelings of fear or intimidation.

Philippians 1:28 says not to be *"frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God."*

With God's help, we can remain stable in the face of fear, putting one foot in front of the other...walking by faith full time.

Imagine again what it would be like to pursue your God-given passions in life. Don't let fear stop you! Keep seeking God. Stir yourself up with scriptures on faith. And boldly say, "God is bigger. He's is working on my behalf, and I trust Him constantly."

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



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You are You, and I am Me

By Christy Lowman
Burke County

This month I thought I would get up close and personal, and talk about something I learned young in life.

I grew up in the 80s and 90s. I was the prime subject to get picked on in school. I had red hair, pale skin with freckles, wore glasses, and had to have braces.

Needless to say, I wasn’t happy with my appearance.

As I got older, I was able to change my appearance or at least hide some of the things I didn’t like about myself. In high school, I went to the tanning bed faithfully every day and after many painful burns got a tan. I wore contacts to hide the fact that I needed glasses and got the braces off. Over time I was able to accept having red hair and freckles but I wanted so much to have long curly hair. That was what was in style. Big, tall, but with long curly hair. I went to great lengths to have it. My parents paid for me to have a spiral perm.

Getting the perm was pure torment. It took my breath and set my scalp, ears, and anywhere the solution touched on fire. But I wanted curly hair so bad I sat through it. Afterward, I had sores on my head and only part of my hair curled. Around my face and one side stayed straight. It was so disappointing. My hair-stylist couldn’t believe it, she had never seen such a thing! So, I had it redone before I should have and left it in even longer. Again, I endured the pain while it took my breath. To me having curly hair was worth it. When my hairdresser took the rollers out, again my hair in those same parts was still straight. Again, I was very disappointed. I asked God why. He sent peace over me and I understood. I finally accepted who I was and how God had made me.

I told myself, “If God wanted me to have curly hair, He would give it to me.” And that was the end of it. I accepted that God made me with straight hair for a reason and I would be happy with it. That was the last time I got a perm and I never considered changing my hair color because red was what He had blessed me with.

Do you want to know the funniest part? Now that I’ve got older, I have curly hair. Is that not funny or what? God blessed me with getting to experience the best of both worlds!

Did you know that God has made each one of us unique and in His own image? Each one of us has our very own set of fingerprints. No one else’s is the same. Did you know that God thinks everything through when He makes us? From our eyes and hair color to how tall we will be, to our own God-given purpose and talents. He cares so much about us that He even knows how many hairs are on our heads and could give you a number at any time! How cool is that! Most importantly, He wants us to be happy with our appearance because that is how He made us, in His own image!

Dear God, thank You for making us unique and in Your own image, from our fingertips to our toes. Thank You for making me the way You made me! Help each one of us accept and like the way we are made because that is how You made us! In Jesus’s name, I pray, Amen.

“So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” Genesis 1:27 NIV

“I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.” Psalms 139: 14

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

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Colossians 3:15



Getting Back Our Thankfulness

By Chris Rathbone
Mitchell County

Everywhere you go these days and strike up a conversation, it almost always tends to turn to all that is going on in this world. The political landscape is an embarrassment, to say the least, the mainstream media is a joke, the economy is suffering from a lack of employees, there have been shortages of goods and the prediction is there are more shortages to come, inflation is continuing to rise seems like sometimes daily, our nation is divided morally, politically, racially, etc, etc, etc. Of course, we have to mention the ongoing “pandemic” that is constantly covered in the news, complete with daily numbers of infections, deaths, and now even those who have been in contact to further incite the fear that a lot of folks are already constantly struggling to keep under control. The government and media fear factory has even divided people to the point where they are now arguing over the vaccinated and the unvaccinated. Many churches have struggled for the last couple of years. It took a while to get things in place, but most are now broadcasting services online or radio because of so many members that are still not attending in-person services. There is a lot of discouragement among pastors who see their members everywhere else but the church, and I’m one of those pastors!!! All of this we are bombarded with daily and that does not even include all the situations that we face personally and in our own families and communities. Whew! Quite a bit to take in all at once isn’t it?

All of this has caused many to lose their focus. When we allow ourselves to be overwhelmed daily by all that is happening we tend to let all this steal our joy and thankfulness! All that is going on in this world has always happened, it’s nothing new. However, in the day that you and I live in, media technology has advanced to the point where we have access to all the bad news on a phone that we carry in our pocket. The news (propaganda channels) is broadcasting 24/7. Just watching the local news broadcast you will find them covering pretty much bad news from start to finish apart from weather and sports coverage, and even that is bad news sometimes!

So, what are we to do Christians? We need to get our focus and our thankfulness back!

While it is prudent for us to be informed, we must not allow satan (I don’t even want to capitalize his name) and this old world to cause us to forget all that Jesus has done for us. The struggles and ungodliness that we meet daily will often capture our attention to the point where we are consumed with it all. When we do that, it causes us to miss out on knowing Jesus more intimately daily and making Him known to those around us. After all, that is our purpose and mission, to know Him and make Him known to others!

Read these verses that Paul wrote to the believers at Philippi: “*Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally my brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.*” Philippians 4:4-9

Let me recap quickly the steps to gain back our focus:


- #1. Rejoice in the Lord. Vs 4.
- #2. Let our gentle spirit from Christ shine to others. Vs 5.
- #3. Don’t worry, pray with thankfulness. Vs 6.
- #4. Receive God’s peace to keep our hearts and minds. Vs. 7
- #5. Focus on the Godly things. Vs. 8.
- #6. Don’t forget what God has done, follow and obey Him. Vs. 9

Children of God, it’s time to stop letting the devil and this ungodly world convince us there is no hope. It’s time to take back what has been stolen over these last few years and realize who we are in Jesus and get back our thankfulness!




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

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Life’s Journey With A Purpose
Honesty With God

By Glenda Ward
McDowell County

“For the froward is abomination to the Lord: but His secret is with the righteous.”
“The Curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked: but He blesseth the habitation of the just.” Proverbs 3:32-33
“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”
Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you.” James 4:7-8

God desires our complete honesty. We are as close to God as we choose to be. If you desire to develop a closer relationship with God it will take time and energy. It does not happen by accident, nor does it happen overnight. To gain a deeper, more intimate connection with God we must learn to honestly share our feelings with Him, trust Him, and learn to care more about what He cares about in our life, and desire this kind of relationship with Him more than anything else. We must choose complete honesty with God about our faults and feelings. In Jesus’ generation; no matter what He said or did, the people took the opposite view. Jesus condemned their attitude because they were cynical and skeptical because He challenged their comfortable, secure, and self-centered lives. Too often people justify their inconsistencies because listening to God may require a change to their way of life.

Friends of God in Bible times were honest about their feelings, often complaining, second-guessing, accusing, and having differences of opinion with God. However, God doesn’t seem to mind this frankness. God allowed Abraham to question and challenge Him over the destruction of the city of Sodom and what it would take to spare the city. Abraham was negotiating God down from fifty righteous people to only ten. (Reference Genesis 22-33). Job was allowed to vent his bitterness during his ordeal, but in the end, God made it clear that Job’s friends were wrong. Job was tested, yet refused to give up on God even though he did not understand why these things were happening to him. Job is restored in Job 42:1-17. In response to God’s speech, Job humbles himself and God rebukes the three friends for adding to Job’s suffering by their false assumptions and critical attitudes. “And it was so, that after the Lord had spoken these words unto Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath” (Job 42:7). God tells them they haven’t been honest, either with Him or about Him – not the way Job was.... He also told them that Job would pray for them and God said He would accept Job’s prayer. True faith begins in such humility. Those who persist in trusting God will be rewarded.

In another example, God honestly expressed His total disgust with Israel’s disobedience. He told Moses He would keep His promise to give the Israelites the Promised Land, but He wasn’t going any farther with them in their journey! God was fed up, and He let Moses know exactly how He felt. (Reference Exodus 32:1-8). “And the Lord said to Moses, I have seen this people, and behold, it is stiff-necked people. Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation” (Exodus 32: 9-10). And Moses, speaking as a “friend” to God responds beginning in Exodus 32:11-14. Read this passage to find out how Moses pleaded for mercy, and God spared them. In this event, God even repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people. God changed His behavior to remain consistent with His nature. When God first wanted to destroy the people, He was acting consistently with His justice. When Moses interceded for the people, God “changed” to act consistently with His mercy. This is just one example of God’s mercy. Although we deserve His anger, He is willing to forgive and restore us to Himself.

Bitterness is the greatest barrier to friendship with God! People often blame God for hurts caused by others. This creates a hidden rift with God. Revealing our true feelings to God is the first step to healing. Tell God exactly how you feel. God gave us a worship manual to instruct us in candid honesty with Him. Every possible human emotion can be found in the Book of Psalms. When we read the emotional confessions of David and others, we can realize how God wants us to worship Him – holding back nothing of what we feel. We can pray like David. We can choose to obey God in faith and trust in His wisdom. When we do this, we



deepen our friendship with God. Jesus makes it clear that obedience is a condition of an intimate friendship with God. (Reference John 15:1-13). “Ye are my friends, If ye do whatsoever I command you” (John 15:14). As we are friends with our God, we are not His equal. He is our loving leader, and we follow Him. We want to follow Him out of gratitude for all He has done for us. When we nourish and deepen our friendship with God; we are abiding in Christ which means 1- believing He is God’s Son (1 John 4:15), 2- receiving Him as our Savior and Lord (John 1:12), 3- doing what God says (1 John 3:24), 4- continuing in faith (1 John 2:24), 5- relating in love to the community of believers, Christ’s body (John 15:12). Jesus says the only way to live a truly good life is to stay close to Him, like a branch attached to the vine. Apart from Him, our efforts are unfruitful. We receive the nourishment and life offered by Christ, the vine. When a vine bears “much fruit,” God is glorified, for daily, He has nurtured each tiny plant or vessel – as we are – and prepared it to blossom. What a moment of glory when our harvest is mature and ready for use! God is glorified when people come into a right relationship with Him and begin to “bear much fruit” in their lives.

Jesus’ relationship with His Father is the model for our friendship with Him. God treasures simple acts of obedience. Small opportunities surround us every day. When we do small things for Him out of loving obedience, which may go unnoticed by others, God notices them and considers their acts of worship. (Reference 1 Samuel 15:22).

Jesus began His public ministry at age thirty by being baptized by John. At that event, God spoke from heaven. (Reference Matthew 3:16-17). What had Jesus been doing those thirty years that gave God so much pleasure? The Bible says nothing about these hidden years except for a single phrase in Luke 2:51-52: “And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but His mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.” Jesus lived in Nazareth with Mary and Joseph; and as He lived and grew, He increased in wisdom with God. Thirty years of pleasing God can be summed up in these few words: He lived obediently in God’s favor. All is worthless compared to knowing Christ; “and being found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death” (Philippians 3:9-10). When we are united with Christ by trusting in Him, we experience the power that raised Him from the dead. That same mighty power helps us live morally renewed and regenerated lives. But before we can walk in the newness of life, we must also die to sin (“be made conformable unto His death”). Just as the resurrection gives us His power to live for Him, His crucifixion marks the death of our old sinful nature.

Just as after Christ’s resurrection Christ was exalted; one day we too will share God’s glory. What practical choices will you make this week in order to grow closer to God?

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

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Howdy Partner!
By Renee Adkins

What does it mean to partner with NCBAM’s Call Center?

It all begins with a phone call to the Call Center from an aging adult needing assistance with a safety concern--such as a wheelchair ramp for a loved one to be able to get in and out of their home safely. Call Center Specialists begin to reach out to churches in the individual’s community.

We have been very blessed to partner with Baptist Associations and hundreds of churches and volunteers across North Carolina that are eager and willing to help those in need.

Volunteers donate their time and skillset to build wheelchair ramps. One of the main obstacles is the funding of ramp materials. Many times, older adults are on fixed incomes and have no means to contribute toward materials. Sometimes, churches can contribute both volunteers and funding.

What happens when funding is not available? We seek other community agencies and share a service opportunity. Some Senior Resource Centers receive grant money that can be used to purchase materials. Other times, we may contact local civic groups or Boy Scout troops that may be looking for a service project.

Hearing the hardships of aging adults can certainly pull on one’s heartstrings. However, once a ramp has been built, individuals call us to say how appreciative they are for the assistance. The joy in their heart comes through in their voice as they share with us how much of a blessing the ramp is for them. Volunteers also share their gratitude for the opportunity to minister to others and share God’s love through their service. Thank you, partners, for your labors of love!

If you, or your group or agency, would like to partner with NCBAM to help aging adults in your community, contact us at 877.506.2226. We’ll contact you when there is a need in your community. (There is no commitment; we’ll understand if the time is not right.)

Renee Adkins serves as a Call Center Specialist with NCBAM. Contact Renee at radkins@bchfamily.org.



Joining Together for the Long Haul
By Rev. John B. Sorensen

As Christians, we are encouraged to befriend and spend time with other believers. Many call this “fellowship.” But true Christian fellowship involves so much more than simply hanging out and talking about the news, sports, and weather. True Christian fellowship is purposeful in helping us grow in faith. It’s one of the tools God uses to grow us deeper in Christ.

How does He do that? Well, in essence, fellowship is a partnership based on our shared relationship with Christ that strives to encourage, edify, and serve one another. Let’s explore that further.

Shared Relationship.

We meet like-minded people every day – in our workplaces, churches, the gym, community groups, and even online. Some of these connections become friendships because we share a passion, a goal, or an interest. But when we meet someone who shares our faith, that connection is richer. We share a relationship with our Lord and Savior!

Christian fellowship goes deeper than any friendship. As believers, we don’t just share a common faith. We share life together – the joys and the hardships. *“They devoted themselves to the apostle’s teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer”* (Acts 2:42, NIV). Sharing testimonies of what Christ is doing in and through us is the foundation for true fellowship.

Source of Encouragement.

Fellowship with other believers helps us grow in our faith. We can hold each other accountable in spending time reading the Bible. When we are struggling, our Christian brothers and sisters can come around us and pray. We are not on this journey alone. They are walking beside us and remind us of the power and provision of our Heavenly Father.

Like all relationships, fellowship is a two-way street. It encourages us and builds our faith as we encourage, edify, and serve each other. Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians 5 that the Gospel of salvation is Good News and that we should continue to *“encourage one another and build each other up”* (v. 11). This is part of our ministry.

Partnership in the Gospel.

Ultimately, fellowship pushes us to advance the Gospel. We have the opportunity to not just encourage each other to grow in our faith, but to encourage each other to share that faith as well. *“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another – all the more as you see the Day approaching”* (Hebrews 10:24-25, NIV).

When we partner together to take the Gospel around the world, God uses us to change lives for eternity. Isn’t that amazing? And that can have an eternal impact.

So here’s the question: Do your relationships help you grow in your faith? Do they change the lives of people around you? God calls us into true Christian fellowship with other believers around us, but not just so we won’t be lonely. He wants us to join together to share His love with the world.

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





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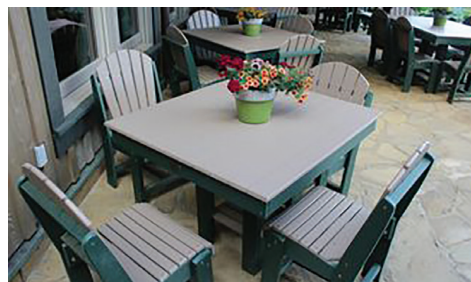
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Mitchell County Development Foundation and Mitchell County Chamber Partner for local small businesses.....
Receives \$ 25,000 Duke Energy Hometown Revitalization Grant
Mitchell County

The Duke Energy Foundation today distributed \$750,000 in grants to help local businesses across North Carolina – from restaurants to retailers – adapt to the unprecedented challenges caused by the pandemic. Mitchell County is the recipient of a \$25,000 grant to support local small businesses.

"Since the Spring of 2020, our local businesses have been doing everything they can to survive the effects of the pandemic and have shown amazing resilience. The Duke Energy Hometown Revitalization Grant program will allow us to support and assist our small businesses in their continued efforts to come back from the previous 18 months and grow in this new business environment," said Patti Jensen, Executive Director, Mitchell County Chamber and Mitchell County Development Foundation.

The Mitchell County Chamber and Development Foundation partnered on the grant application to Duke Energy to request funding to support local Mitchell County small businesses. A grant committee will be established to review grant applications. Local small businesses should watch the news for announcements of the grant application process.

The total of the Hometown Revitalization Grants represents a 50% increase over the \$500,000 in funding announced in April due to the breadth and quality of the funding applications. As a result, the Hometown Revitalization grant program will now support 30 communities throughout the state rather than the original 20 planned at the program's inception.

"After our success in supporting the Downtown Raleigh Alliance, which was the model for this program, we knew that a series of targeted grants could do wonders to help North Carolina businesses and storefronts recover," said Stephen De May, Duke Energy's North Carolina president. "We were astounded by the number and quality of the applications, so we decided to increase the foundation's commitment and help even more downtown communities bounce back."

The Hometown Revitalization grants were awarded to the following 30 community organizations – quotes from each on the impact of the grants can be found here:

Organization	County
• Alexander County Economic Development Corp.	Johnston
• Clayton Chamber Foundation	Mecklenburg
• Coalicion Latinoamericana	Davie
• Davie Community Foundation	Beaufort
• Downtown Washington on the Waterfront	Wilkes
• Downtown North Wilkesboro Partnership	Brunswick
• Downtown Southport	Rockingham
• Eden Downtown Development	Henderson
• Elevents	Wake
• Fuquay-Varina Downtown Association	Guilford
• Gibsonville Garden Railroad	Graham
• Graham Revitalization Economic Action Team (Great)	Jones
• Jones County Committee of 100	Scotland
• Laurinburg Downtown Advisory Committee	Lincoln
• Lincoln Economic Development Association	Mitchell
• Mitchell County Development Foundation	Cherokee
• Nantahala Health Foundation	Polk
• Polk County Chamber Foundation	Lenoir
• Pride of Kinston	Rockingham
• Reidsville Downtown Corp.	Durham
• Renaissance Downtown Durham	Rutherford
• Rutherford Town Revitalization	Rowan
• Salisbury Community Development Corp.	Lee
• Sanford-Lee County Partnership for Prosperity Foundation	Surry
• Surry County Economic Development Foundation	Richmond
• United Way of Richmond County	Person
• Uptown Roxboro Group	Duplin
• Wallace Revitalization Association	New Hanover
• Wilmington Downtown Alexander	

Each community was awarded \$25,000 through a partnership with these local 501(c)(3)-administering nonprofits. The administering entity will establish a small-business support microgrant program to deploy the funding within their local community. Microgrants may range from \$500 to \$2,500 per individual business.

The Hometown Revitalization grant program was inspired by a successful collaboration between the Downtown Raleigh Alliance and Duke Energy that provided nearly 100 grants to downtown Raleigh storefronts. The grants allowed the establishments the opportunity to create outdoor seating and serving opportunities, develop e-commerce websites, repair window fronts, and upgrade health and safety elements.

Nicole Thompson, president, and CEO of Downtown Durham anticipates a similar impact in her community. "Downtown Durham small businesses have weathered an extremely challenging few years, from an explosion that damaged multiple businesses in the Brightleaf District to the economic devastation brought on by the pandemic," she said. "The Duke Energy Hometown Revitalization Grant program will provide vital support and help to strengthen these small businesses as they recover, rebound, and reinvent to succeed in this new economy."

In Charlotte, the strongest application was put forth by the Latin American Coalition.

"Here in Charlotte, many Latino small businesses were started by immigrants or the children of immigrants," said Jose Hernandez-Paris, executive director of the Coalition. "They are hard-working folks who need help recovering from the effect of the pandemic. The Hometown Revitalization Grant from Duke Energy will provide small-business owners a lifeline to stabilizing their business as we continue to recover. We are grateful for the support from Duke Energy and their commitment to our community, our families, and to our small businesses."

Small businesses interested in learning about how the program will be rolled out in their communities should inquire with the local nonprofit administering the microgrants.



Jason Walls, Duke Energy Director West Region, NC Government Affairs & External Relations presents Hometown Revitalization Grant to Mitchell County Chamber and Development Foundation Director Patti Jensen

Getting Through Suffering

By Christopher L. Scott
Moses Lake, Washington



One of the godliest women I know has endured more suffering than anyone I know. Her first husband was a pastor who died of a sudden asthma attack. She was left to care for their three young children alone. Years later she remarried, but the man decided he was "done" being married and left her with no explanation. She is a nice, godly, kind, tenderhearted woman. It saddens me to think of all the hardship she's endured.

I find myself asking: Why did she have to go through these things? Why are there evil people in the world who enjoy so many good things in life while my friend has had to endure pain, loss, and betrayal?

I guess that you, too, have experienced suffering in your life. Thankfully, the Bible tells us how to get through suffering.

First, remember that to be Christian means we suffer. Nowhere in the Bible does it say "become a Christian and you will not suffer." In fact, the Bible teaches the opposite. When some of the apostles were flogged and beaten because of their faith they were "rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer" (Acts 5:41, NASB). Peter tells us we "share the sufferings of Christ" (1 Peter 4:13, NASB). While in prison Paul said, "I rejoice in my sufferings" (Colossians 1:24, NASB). Church history also tells us that all of Jesus' disciples were killed because of their faith except for the disciple John. To be Christian is to suffer.

Second, remember that God is still good, even when we suffer. In his book, Who Am I? Warren Wiersbe writes about suffering, "As His sheep, we may not always understand what the Shepherd is doing, but we know we can trust Him. Whether in the pastures, beside the pools, or on the paths, He is caring for us and meeting our every need" (page 28). When we have questions about why he allows us to suffer, we must study Scripture and what it says about God. "All he does is just and good" (Psalm 119:7, NLT) and "God is love" (1 John 4:8, NLT).

Third, remember that God gives us his word to help us in our suffering. "My troubles turned out for the best—they forced me to learn from God's textbook" (Psalm 119:71, The Message). We know that troubles will come and we will suffer as Christians. Let us hold those Bibles tight, remember that God is still good and that suffering is part of our Christian life.

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



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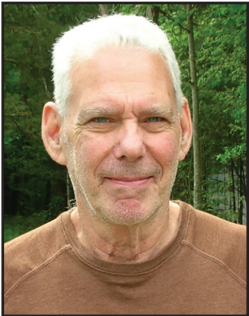
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Burned At The Stake

By Robert Garner
Rutherford County



A little math in our year of 2021 puts us more than 500 years past the Protestant Reformation days of Martin Luther. Judgment and salvation are clearly on display over these past 500 years of time which spiritually represents the number five in the Bible; or multiple 100’s of #5, i.e., 5 wise and 5 foolish virgins, five loaves, five hundred reeds, five thousand men. The year 1517 marks the start of the Protestant Reformation (a Christian crusade against the Roman Catholic Church) brought about by Martin Luther rejecting the doctrines and various dictates of the Catholic Church.

The focus of the reformation was the failure of the RC Church in England to allow Bible translation from Latin into the common man’s language or dialect. The Vulgate (Greek, Biblical texts translated into Latin) was the official Latin Bible of the Catholic Church. A particularly grievous doctrine was that of indulgences; (a theology reducing your time in purgatory, a place of sin cleansing) by paying \$\$ to the Church for sin forgiveness prior to death; the doctrine of Purgatory is not found in the Bible.

The corruption uncovered in the RC Latin Vulgate Bible translation was massive as various scholars such as Erasmus, who assisted Tyndale, proved the Latin’s deception when translated into Greek. The Vulgates' trustworthiness soon began to crumble and was considered doomed by the evil doctrine contained within it. Pope Leo X’s declaration that “the fable of Christ was very profitable to him” enraged the people of God. Luther declared his intolerance with the church corruption on Halloween, 1517, by nailing 95 Theses of Contention to the Wittenberg Church Door.

The invention of the printing press allowed for the spread of the Greek and Hebrew knowledge of the Scripture. John Wiclif (old English) or Wycliffe (Wiclif Bible_1380) gave an English translation in the script from the Latin Vulgate. William Tyndale (Tyndale Bible_1534) was the first to publish in print the New Testament and parts of the Old Testament in English from the original Greek and Hebrew.

Tortures and torment on account of The Word of God were horrific and many. A prohibition on possessing any part of the Bible’s Scripture in English was religiously enforced. Any English translation of the Scriptures was considered to be poison. Anyone found with English Scripture in their possession was considered to be a heretic (Rejecting RC Church Doctrine) and was subject to a burning death. William Tindale was reported to be at the age of sixty when he was tied to a stake, strangled, and burned. His only crime was printing Bibles in the English language! His dying prayer was written in old English script, “Lord, open the King of England’s eyes”. Surely the hand of the LORD was upon these men, and many others, for their awe-inspired devotion to bringing the Word of God to the multitudes of mankind.

In the city of Coventry, England, seven persons were burned for having taught their children and families the Lord’s Prayer and the Ten Commandments from an English translation found in their possession.

“And when he had open the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God; and for the testimony which they held; And I John saw these things, and heard them” ____ Revelation 6:9, Rev.22: 7,8,9.

Five major English Bible translations stand out in history which steered the Reformation of Christianity to the final translation of the King James Bible. Wiclif-1380, Tyndale-1534, Cranmer-1539, Geneva-1557, Reims-1582, and finally The King James-1611. The King James Bible is revered as God’s Book, The Lamb’s Book of Life. 2 Peter 1:21 “holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” Proverbs 30:5; “Every Word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in Him.”

The King James Bible translators numbered about fifty men. They were divided into six companies, each company being responsible for a certain section of the Scriptures. Among the translators were Lancelot Andrews (1555-1626), Dean of Westminster, Edward Lively (1545-1605) Regius Professor of Hebrew at Cambridge, and John Harding, Regius Professor of Hebrew at Oxford (1591-8 and 1604-10). The results of their labor were subject to mutual criticism and then underwent nine months of final revision by the King’s committee sitting in London.

2 Timothy 2:15; “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

The King James Bible was printed in England under the King’s copyright. During the American Revolution, the Congress of the United States would usurp the King’s copyright and authorize the first English printing in the “New World”. That event set the stage for America to bring the Light of the World, The King James Bible, to the masses by means of the great Bible Societies like the American Bible Society formed in 1816. John 8:12 “Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”

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Anyone can schedule an amazing Bible Study for your group or organization, see the email below. Five major reproductions of the original English Bible translations containing the New Testament will be brought to the study for everyone’s inspection. Compare your favorite Bible verses in the New Testament dating back to the year 1380. Check out the Anglo-Saxons, Old English, as you compare scripture progression into modern English. Why were the Bible scholars under the venauncis of God Almighty, (old English for vengeance and plagues) as they translated the Hebrew and Greek languages into English? Hold in your hand an

original “Bible Leaf”, laminated between plastic, from the first edition of the King James Bible printed before the year 1650. A Bible Leaf is a recovered page of an old Bible that has had its binding deteriorate over time. Finally, take part as a modern-day English Bible scribe translator; everyone will be shocked with what the group will learn from this exercise of comparing scripture with scripture. This study is guaranteed to be absolutely amazing because it’s all about God’s Word, the Bible.

Mathew 10:8,” *freely you have received, freely give. John 5:39, search the scriptures; John 5:47, but if you believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my word?*”

Scheduling for Bible Study, contact email; valleygravel@outlook.com. Your comments are always appreciated.

Historical Credit Reference and Copy: The Bible Museum, Goodyear, AZ. An Original Leaf From The First Edition Of The 1611 King James Bible. The English Hexapla, Persecutions On Account Of The Word Of God, 1519-21. Page 88, 89. The Forbidden Book, DVD, Authorized KJV.

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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Founding Fathers and other
Influencing Citizens. How They
Served Our Country—Phillis Wheatley

By David Streater, Ph.D.
Burke County



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

In 1753, a girl was born in Africa. At seven, she was abducted and transported to America to be a slave.

During the summer of 1761, Susanna Wheatley was in Boston at the Beach Street pier. She was seeking a young person for domestic duties. Mrs. Wheatley saw a humble girl who was frail, toothless, and naked. Susanna was reminded of her daughter, who was about her age when she died ten years before.

Back home, Susanna named this girl Phillis Wheatley. Her name came from the delivery ship and her own last name. Within a year, Phillis was reading the Bible, studying humanities, including geography and astronomy.

She was a prodigy being tutored by Susanna and her children. Phillis also started writing poetry. When her first work was published in 1767, she was recognized and given financial support by the Countess of Huntingdon. This recognition gave her passage to London and publication of her book of poems, “the first book written by a black woman in America”. Phillis’s astute writings received accolades from Americans John Hancock, George Washington, and English poet-scholars Pope and Gray.

All social classes, including abolitionists and slavers, enjoyed reading her poetry. When Mrs. Wheatly died in 1774, Phillis immediately returned home. The Revolution became her primary interest—supporting the colonies while opposing slavery.

As bequeathed a freed slave upon the death of Susanna, Phillis continued to write. Unfortunately, her second book was not a financial success. Phillis married John Peters and their three children died during infancy. Phillis was employed as a domestic worker and died at 31 during labor. Her literary work helped support the American Revolution and abolition movements. If she lived now, Phillis would have been a poet laureate.

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.

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

Sudoku

Solution on page 14

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

Thanksgiving Put Into Practice

By Ken and Jan Merop
Avery County



There’s an old hymn that instructs us to count our blessings . . . naming them one by one. This develops an attitude of praise and gratitude for those people and situations that bring us joy. But, it isn’t just this thankful attitude that is important.

Like faith, gratitude needs an object of integrity and genuineness to cling to. Otherwise, it’s just empty words without power. God is the only one worthy of our faith, trust, and gratitude. With him as our center, our actions will demonstrate the attitude of our hearts and minds.

At this season of Thanksgiving, my relationship with God the Father through God the Son, Jesus Christ, and the joy of the Holy Spirit indwelling me tops my list. Closely following is my husband and our children and grandchildren, our parents, brothers, sisters, and the rest of our extended family and friends.

The list is endless as I contemplate God’s protection, guidance, and provision at every bend in life’s road. I love knowing I belong to God and He belongs to me. And, God’s words of instruction aren’t only there to enlighten me; but, this unique Word is living and practically touches every aspect of daily living.

My enthusiastic response is gratitude.

Recently while reading in The Word in Life Study Bible published by Thomas Nelson, Inc., I came across some study notes that grouped together several Scriptures. They portrayed clearly the practicality of the Bible and its instructions for living the Christian life – a life of joy and peace ~ the abundant life Jesus spoke of.

These verses are directed to believers who are new creations in Him. Through His transforming power within, new character traits are budding. His instructions give the necessary nourishment to turn buds into blooms.

When depending on Him, we learn to love in self-sacrificing, encouraging ways. We develop fruit that is blossoming within us through God’s presence; such as, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. We are encouraged to think new and good thoughts that emphasize truth, purity, and virtue. At last, we are to clothe ourselves with tender mercies, humility, forgiveness, thanksgiving, and songs of praise.

All of these things touch on the practicality of living the Christian life in Christ’s power. When we apply them to relationships, finances, decision-making, entertainment, family life, and more, we see how the ordinary can become extraordinary.

And I love what it says in Galatians 5: 22b, “*Against such there is no law.*” Put faith into practice with thanksgiving. Selah

Fall Silent

*Sometimes the only response to such beauty is
to fall silent in its presence.
Hush! And experience a song without sound,
a poem in motion . . . and yet still.
Intricate beauty on display.*

*“Everything was created through him and for him . . .
He holds all creation together.”
Colossians 1: 16 & 17*



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.

*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.
James 1:17*

Since Prophecy Predicts Things Will Get Worse, Why Engage the Culture?

By Rev. Mark Creech

There are many reasons pastors and other Christians offer for avoiding politics and other forms of cultural engagement, but one I find particularly annoying is based on eschatology. The argument claims that the Bible prophesies matters will only worsen before the Second Coming of Christ; therefore, nothing can be done to stop the current trajectory of evil and injustice. Except for seeking to win others to faith in Christ before Judgment falls, it's mostly a waste of time to attempt changing the direction of a sinful society.

Frankly, there are many biblical responses to refute this point of view, but allow me to share one that's not so often given. It was a renowned Christian evangelist, Dr. Billy Graham, someone we don't typically think of as a social reformer, who articulated it quite well in his book, *Approaching Hoofbeats*. Graham wrote: "I believe the judgment of God can be withheld for a period of time. It doesn't even take the repentance of a whole city to delay God's judgment plans. Abraham was granted a delay if he could find a mere ten righteous men in Sodom. Still, the Judgment Day is coming. The distant sounds of the four horsemen grow louder every day. How long will God postpone the judgment? We do not know. But we do know from this wonderful vision of John [John's vision of the four horsemen in the book of Revelation] what we believers must do in the meantime. Those who have died in Christ must patiently wait for that day. Those of us still alive in Christ must continue working as God's allies in the salvation of the lost and social justice."

Graham's use of the phrase "social justice" didn't carry with it the Marxist trappings of nowadays. Graham was simply talking about the Christian's responsibility to work for changes in the world that reflect the character of our Creator. Graham stood for the civil rights of blacks in his day. His messages supported the battle against abortion, pornography, and vice.

Graham further admonished Christians in his book: "We must not be content with easy answers. The call to follow Christ is not easy. It is easy to receive salvation – but there can never be 'cheap grace.' Our redemption by the Cross of Jesus Christ was costly to God. So, also, we must be willing to deny self and take up a cross and follow Christ. It is not easy to follow him. It is not easy to decide what tasks you can do and what tasks you must leave for others. It is not easy to take a stand when issues are complex and two-sided. It is not always easy to witness for him. It is not easy to work against evil that judgment might be postponed, but it is the task to which we are all called."

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus told a parable about a man who owned land and wanted a tree cut down. He wanted the tree removed because it wasn't producing fruit. When he instructed one of his workers to destroy the tree, the worker replied, 'Sir, leave it for a while just yet. Let me dig around it and fertilize it. Perhaps after doing this, it will bear fruit, but if not, you can cut it down' (Paraphrase of Lk. 13:6-8).

Certainly, this parable demonstrates delayed judgment to allow the endeavors of God's people to attempt to turn things around. And throughout history, it seems clear this has happened.

In his book, Graham mentions two times from the Bible. There was that time when the reluctant prophet Jonah was sent to Nineveh to preach God's imminent judgment. But the people turned away from their gross wickedness, and Nineveh was spared for another 150 years. Huldah, the prophetess, told the people of Judah that God's judgment was going to soon fall. The King responded by humbling himself before God. So, the Lord said to him, *"Therefore I will gather you to your fathers, and you will be buried in peace. Your eyes will not see the disaster I am going to bring on this place"* (2 Kings 22:20). Judgment was delayed until after the King's death several years later.

What are these but examples of delayed judgments, in part due to the obedience of God's servants, whose actions worked to that end?

Two great spiritual awakenings in America – one which took place before the Revolution and the second afterward, unquestionably saved this nation from destruction in its formative years. Because faithful preachers, men like Jonathan Edwards, George Whitfield, and many others were bold in speaking to the sins of their time, numerous revivals broke out, resulting in God sparing the country from what would have likely been a great fall.

I know what I've written will throw some prophecy hawks into a tizzy. But as Graham said, "[T]he Bible's prophecies are in such stark contrast with the synthetic predictions of the computer. The Bible takes human nature into account."

In other words, everything that God's Word predicts will come to pass. But exactly when or how these prophecies will pan out is not always so clear. What is abundantly clear, however, is that what God's people do and the way the world responds is factored into it.

Therefore, the Rapture isn't an excuse for the church to be raptured from responsibility now. Our task is not simply to prepare ourselves, our families, and others for the next world. We have a mandate to work to better God's creation – which is a reference to this world. We can't do that and avoid politics. We cannot reasonably keep it out.

When Christ finally does come again, *"it will be good for that servant whose master finds him so doing"* (Mt. 24:46).





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




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O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. - O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy en

Missionaries Kidnapped In Haiti:
An Update And God's Call To Courage
By Jim Denison

"God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control" (2 Timothy 1:7).
"Please pray for us! We are being held hostage, they kidnapped our driver. Pray pray pray. We don't know where they are taking us."

This call for help was posted in a WhatsApp group Saturday as seventeen missionaries and family members were being kidnapped by a street gang in Haiti. The group included sixteen Americans and one Canadian and was made up of five men, seven women, and five children.

The missionaries work with the Ohio-based Christian Aid Ministries and were returning from a site visit to an orphanage when they were abducted. Authorities believe the "400 Mawozo" gang, one of the most powerful in Haiti, is behind the kidnapping. As of this morning, no ransom demands have yet been made public.

The Washington Post notes that Haiti is reeling from a power vacuum following the assassination of its president earlier this year and the August earthquake that killed more than 2,200 people and left tens of thousands homeless. One result is that Haiti has the highest per-capita kidnapping rate on earth; recorded kidnappings so far this year have spiked six-fold over the same period last year. Doctors, preachers, entire busloads of people, and even police on patrol have been kidnapped by criminals.



Children stand in the courtyard of the Maison La Providence de Dieu orphanage in Ganthier, Croix-des-Bouquets, Haiti, Sunday, Oct. 17, 2021, where a gang abducted 17 missionaries from a U.S.-based organization. The 400 Mawozo gangs, notorious for brazen kidnappings and killings took the group of 16 U.S. citizens and one Canadian, after a trip to visit the orphanage. (AP Photo/Joseph Odelyn)

Why would missionaries risk themselves and their children to serve in such a dangerous place? Assuming their answer is that God called them there, why would he? As we will see, these questions are relevant not just to missionaries in dangerous countries but to every Christian on earth.

Let's consider three biblical facts.

One: No place is safe

Last Friday, a member of the British parliament was stabbed to death inside a church where he was meeting with constituents. The next day, a deputy was killed and two others were injured in what authorities described as an ambush outside a Houston bar.

In other news, floods in India have killed at least twenty-six people. Meanwhile, authorities are warning that flooding could shut down a quarter of all critical US infrastructure in the future.

Last Wednesday, the largest cyberattack on an Israeli health system in its history forced it to shut down its technology network and caused delays in care. Understandably, a new poll shows that nine in ten Americans are concerned about hacking that involves their personal information, financial institution, government agencies, or utilities.

I placed these stories next to each other to illustrate the fact that no place on our fallen planet is truly safe. What happens overseas can happen in the US and vice versa. This is even more true for Christians: Jesus bluntly stated that "in the world, you will have tribulation" (John 16:33). He warned us: "If they persecuted me, they will persecute you" (John 15:20).

If you're looking for a way to live free from all temptation, problems, and pain, you'll have to wait until heaven (Revelation 21:4). There is no such place in this broken world.

Two: God sometimes calls us into or away from danger

God sometimes calls his people headlong into the dangers of their day. He led the nation of Israel into Canaan despite the challenges they would face (Numbers 13:28–29) with the assurance: "Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9).

Peter and the apostles refused to stop preaching even at the peril of their lives (Acts 4:5–12, 19–20). Paul insisted on returning to Jerusalem even after he was warned of the danger that awaited him (Acts 21:11–14). Jesus warned his disciples three times that he would die in the Holy City (Matthew 16:21–23; 17:22–23; 20:17–19).

However, earlier in his ministry, "when he heard that John had been arrested, Jesus withdrew into Galilee" (Matthew 4:12). When the Jews in Damascus plotted to kill Paul after his conversion, "his disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a basket" (Acts 9:25).

Clearly, there are times God calls us to serve him in dangerous places and times he leads us from danger to safety. How can we know which is true for us?

Three: We must follow his Spirit to fulfill his purpose

In the book Great Thinkers, we are introduced to the Stoics and told that their philosophy remains "immediately relevant and useful for our uncertain and panicky times." This worldview is described as asserting the fact that we can and will cope with the worst life can bring us; we must learn to expect less from life so that we are not angry when our hopes are unfulfilled, and we should abandon the faith that there is a providential purpose in a world dominated by unpredictable fortune.

By contrast, Jesus prayed at the start of the day (Mark 1:35) and all through the day. Paul taught us to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17), to be "filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18), and to surrender our lives continually to God as a "living sacrifice" (Romans 12:1).

Jesus declared, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12). The key is that we must follow him—not just believe in him, read articles about him, or even write such articles. If you're in a dark cave and the tour guide has the only flashlight, the Martin Luther King Jr.'s profound prayer

Please join me in praying fervently for the kidnapped missionaries in Haiti and their families. As we pray for their safety, let's also join their organization's call to "pray that the gang members will come to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ." And let's emulate the missionaries' courage with our obedience. When last did God call you to pay a price for your faith? Will you follow his light today wherever he leads, whatever it takes, whatever the cost?

Martin Luther King Jr. prayed, "Use me, God. Show me how to take who I am, who I want to be, and what I can do, and use it for a purpose greater than myself."

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After serving this this area for the past 43 years, Dellinger's has, after careful consideration, made the decision to close the store so that Linda and Jewel may have the opportunity to enjoy the next phase of their life - Retirement!

The owners Linda and Jewel along with their staff wish to THANK all of the loyal customers who have helped them to accomplish their mission .

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

WAMY Community Action, Inc Accepting Applications for Essential Single-Family Rehabilitation Program

By April Beck
Mitchell County

WAMY Community Action, Inc. is currently accepting applications for the Essential Single Family Rehab (ESFR) program, administered through the North Carolina Housing Finance Agency (NCHFA). Funding from ESFR will assist with essential and critical repairs to single-family homes that are owned and occupied by lower-income households. These repairs help veterans, seniors, and persons with disabilities stay in their homes, saving on health care and long-term care costs.

Qualifying units must be located in Mitchell County and be owner-occupied, having a full-time household member who is an older adult (age 62+), disabled or a veteran, or a household with a child under the age of six whose health is threatened by the presence of lead hazards. Site-built, off-frame modular units and manufactured homes on permanent foundations will be eligible for consideration; all homes served must be considered as real property. The gross household income (before taxes) cannot exceed 80% of the area median income for Mitchell County (see chart). The cost of rehabilitation cannot be less than \$5,000, nor exceed \$30,000 and the property cannot have been repaired or rehabilitated with public funding of \$30,000 or more within the past 10 years.

Qualifying Income Table (for reference) Maximum Gross Household Income

Household Size	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	\$33,150	\$37,900	\$42,650	\$47,350	\$51,150	\$54,950	\$58,750	\$62,550

80 % AMI Mitchell County

ESFR is an interest-free loan secured by a Deed of Trust, forgiven at the rate of \$5,000 per year until the principal balance is reduced to zero. No loan payments are required from the homeowner unless the house is sold or transfers ownership.

Typical repairs supported by the program might include roof repair/replace-ment, door/window replacement, plumbing/electric, accessibility improvements for individuals with disabilities, and other general improvements related to health and safety. Applications are available by calling WAMY Community Action, Inc. at (828) 406-4705.

Applications should be returned as soon as possible, but no later than 5 PM on December 31, 2021. The selection of units will not be completed until February 15, 2021.



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Miraculous Manifestations

By Kurt Bomar
Avery County



Do you ever feel that your faith could be increased substantially if God would just manifest Himself to you miraculously? “Just one time,” we ask, “let me see your glory and I will have enough faith to last me for the rest of my life!” We long to see the Red Sea parted, to walk through a fiery furnace unharmed, to see a blind man healed or a dead man raised. We silently ask, “God why don’t you do those kinds of things today like you used to?”

The truth is, even if we were to see something miraculous or hear an audible voice from God giving us some special promise, while we would be thrilled, it probably wouldn’t change us.

How do I know this? By looking at history. We see others who have witnessed unbelievable miracles and never changed their life. We tell our children the story of Balaam’s donkey talking to him, but by reading on in the story we see Balaam never even trusted in the Lord. Even with that remarkable revelation, He is in Hell.

How about a more noble person. Solomon.

1 Kings 11: 9 “*The LORD became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. 10 Although he had forbidden Solomon to follow other gods, Solomon did not keep the LORD's command. 11 So the LORD said to Solomon, "Since this is your attitude and you have not kept my covenant and my decrees, which I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your subordinates.*”

This tells me that miraculous manifestations do not produce spiritual maturity. So what does? It’s the Word.

Surprisingly Solomon’s father, David, never had a direct revelation from God, but he loved the Lord with all his heart and responded to God’s Word. Give me the heart of David over the manifestations witnessed by Solomon any day.

We really don’t need the miraculous, we already have the miraculous Word of God.

Selah (think about it)

Kurt Bomar is pastor of Walnut Grove Church.

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YOUR GOVERNMENT PAGES

NC Senate District 47



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

Last month, the Republican-led General Assembly passed Senate Bill 191 – The No Patient Left Alone Act, after nearly a year of deliberation. I co-sponsored this bill to ensure that sick loved ones being cared for in healthcare facilities can have a visitor present while fighting for their lives.

Lockdowns and visitation restrictions due to COVID-19 resulted in many patients coping with serious illnesses or medical treatments without the presence of a family member or friend. Even worse, many of these patients died alone. This is truly heartbreaking for those who died without the comfort and care of a loved one, nor the opportunity to say a final goodbye. It is equally heartbreaking for those loved ones who were denied a visit with their dying family member or friend. This legislation ensures that these situations never happen again.

The No Patient Left Alone Act creates mandatory visitation rights for patients in nursing homes, combination homes, hospice care facilities, adult care homes, special care units, and residential treatment facilities, and requires those facilities to follow federal guidelines for visitation. The Department of Health and Human Services must assess a \$500 civil penalty against a facility for each violation on each day a facility violates a visitation right.

Nineteen House Democrats were the only legislators who voted against The No Patient Left Alone Act. The bill became session law on October 15, 2021, and will become effective November 1, 2021.

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

NC House District 86



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

Important New Protections for Patients and Nursing Home Residents

Two important bills protecting patients' and nursing home residents' rights have become law. Both bills were introduced by NC House members in an effort to address threats to those rights arising out of the way the state has previously reacted to the Covid pandemic. One bill is known as Clifford's Law and the other as the Jeff Rieg Law.

Many will recall heart-wrenching events at the height of the pandemic in which nursing home residents who had Covid were denied visitation by family members or anyone else and died alone. This caused extreme distress for all involved. Clifford's Law directs the NC Secretary of Health and Human Services to establish visitation protocols in times of declared disasters and emergencies that will provide visitation rights for patients in nursing homes, combination homes, and adult care homes, including family care homes. The bill would allow each resident to receive a visit at least twice per month from one preapproved visitor or preapproved alternate visitor.

The ban imposed on visits also prevented clergy visits. The North Carolina legislature deemed this clergy ban an unnecessarily cruel and inappropriate stance. Indeed, both in the case of Clifford and Jeff Rieg, the bans that were previously in place appeared clearly detrimental to both the mental and physical health of the affected patients and nursing home residents left totally isolated. Worse, these isolated individuals often may have had reduced ability to understand why family and others seemed to have abandoned them. The Jeff Rieg Law was crafted to protect a patient's religious rights in times of disaster or emergencies. It requires a hospital to allow clergy members to visit admitted patients who wish to be visited by a clergy member.

NC Commissioner of Labor



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

What a difference one month makes – from the heat of early September to the crisp, cool air of late October. The fall season is now upon us, full of fun events and festive occasions.

One fall tradition that resumed this year is the N.C. State Fair. After missing out on 2020, I think this year's theme, "Worth the Wait," was quite fitting. As I write this, the fair is still underway for a few more days and features, among other things, dozens of rides certified by our Elevator and Amusement Device Bureau inspectors. In addition to our inspectors, many of our NCDOL employees signed up for volunteer shifts at our department's booth in the Kerr Scott Building. Our volunteers serve an important purpose in educating fairgoers about the mission of NCDOL as well as informing the public about interesting North Carolina trivia.

By the middle of November, our annual safety awards season will come to a close. Over the past three months, I've traveled to nearly 20 in-person safety award banquets and participated in several additional virtual banquets. I've appreciated the opportunity to recognize and honor employers, safety professionals, workers, and community leaders at these events. I also want to thank Meredith Watson, our Safety Awards Coordinator, who flawlessly organized these events in her first year on the job.

In addition to fairs and banquets, I also look forward to visiting several worksites in the coming weeks. These facilities have achieved either our Carolina Star or our SHARP award, which are the highest safety awards we offer. I also plan to meet with the Occupational Safety and Health Advisory Council in November. The Council is comprised of an employer, employee, and public sector representatives who offer advice and feedback on our occupational safety and health program.

Most importantly, I'm sincerely grateful for the service and sacrifice of veterans and their families. Happy Veterans Day.

Take time to enjoy the fall weather and have a wonderful Thanksgiving with your family and friends.

NC Senate District 46



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

Now that autumn is here, most of us turn our attention to the holiday season. Although many holidays have become more commonly associated with commercialism and sales, Thanksgiving is still that wonderful time of the year for reflecting on the blessings and benefits that God has allowed us to experience. I am especially thankful for the privilege to represent the citizens of Avery, Burke, and Caldwell Counties in the North Carolina Senate. In 2010, the people of North Carolina chose a different course for our state, electing for the first time since 1871 a conservative majority in the NC General Assembly. Beginning in 2011, that newly elected majority set out to create a government culture of fiscal responsibility and a business environment that would make it easier for businesses to start and grow, so that we could put our people back to work. We balanced the budget, installed a low, flat income tax rate, returned taxpayer money to North Carolinians through historic, economy-boosting tax cuts, increased the match to the state pension fund, increased funding for education, established a strong rainy day fund, retired billions of dollars in debt, reduced the size of government bureaucracy, shored up Medicaid, and made reforms to our regulatory laws. As your voice in the Senate, I am committed to continued efforts to reduce the size and scope of government, lower the tax burden, and advocate for pro-life and pro-family policies. North Carolina must continue to be a family-friendly, church-friendly, and business-friendly state. These values are the cornerstone of our society and the foundation upon which the American experiment was built. Blessings to you and your family during this Thanksgiving season.

God Bless America

YOUR GOVERNMENT PAGES

NC 11th Congressional District



Rep. Madison Cawthorn
828-808-2148

Show me a nation’s energy policies, and I’ll show you the future of that nation. It’s the lifeblood of any country; it fuels our direction and defines our foothold on the world stage.

When I filled up my truck in Hendersonville last week, I paid \$81. That’s a lot of money but had I filled up at one gas station in California, it would have cost me \$200. That’s because one town has been forced to charge \$8 per gallon, nearly three times what North Carolinians are paying. But soon, nationwide gas prices could inch closer to California’s numbers, and Americans will all be left shouldering the burden.

It’s not just gasoline that’s leaped in cost – coal, natural gas, and oil are all spiking under President Biden. Gas prices alone have jumped 42% under his administration. What’s caused this drastic shift in prices? The Biden administration has declared a war on fossil fuels in the name of destructive, progressive energy policies, and the American taxpayer is footing the bill. Energy production has sharply decreased under Biden’s administration, and less supply has led to a higher demand for energy essentials.

Under President Trump, our energy independence carved out our standing in the world. We augmented our national security through America First energy independence, not foreign reliance, and we took our rightful place among the nations as a global leader in energy dominance. America was leading the world.

The United States transformed into the world’s number one producer of oil under President Trump. We also solidified our position as the top producer of natural gas. Crude oil production soared to record highs along with energy exports, liquified natural gas exports increased almost fivefold, all while increasing air quality and leading the world in energy infrastructure development. When Joe Biden took office, our soaring, thriving energy independence came crashing down. One of his first acts in office signaled to the world that the United States had tapped out as a global energy leader. By canceling the Keystone Pipeline, he shouted to the whole globe that the United States was taking a step back from leadership and a step down from energy preeminence. It came at a high cost for all Americans; energy prices have peaked, and there’s not much hope for immediate relief.

Biden’s comments at a town hall with CNN last week gave consumers no hope for any form of economic recovery. “My guess is, you’ll start to see gas prices come down as we get by and going into the winter – I mean, excuse me, into next year, 2022. I don’t see anything that’s going to happen in the meantime that’s going to significantly reduce gas prices,” he said. “I must tell you, I don’t have a near-term answer.”

The lack of a near-term answer has long-term consequences for my district and all Americans. Flailing energy policies impact North Carolina more than other states; the natural gas and oil industry alone boasts nearly 239,000 North Carolina jobs, accounting for 3.9% of overall employment in the state. In North Carolina’s 11th Congressional District alone, the natural gas and oil industry provide more than 15,000 jobs and over \$660 million in household income. Joe Biden’s energy policies have destabilized a vital statewide industry; they are a direct assault on the livelihoods of people in North Carolina and NC-11.

The Biden administration needs to completely reverse its energy strategy. There is no legitimate reason to continue on this path – it’s unsustainable. This is not a seasonal problem, it’s the consequences of a fundamental policy failure. My constituents, many still reeling from pandemic layoffs and lockdowns, are struggling to make ends meet. America can reclaim our energy dominance and restore sound, sustainable, and economically viable domestic energy production. Let’s bring back proven, successful energy policies implemented under the Trump administration and ease the strain on Americans’ bank accounts.

Progressives may genuinely believe they are acting in Americans’ best interest, but they are not. They are bankrupting my constituents and Americans all across this country. The road to hell is paved with good intentions. And if progressives and Biden get their way, you’ll pay \$8 a gallon just to drive on it.



Chaplains Serving in Flooded Birmingham Suburb

By Lizzy Long

The Billy Graham Rapid Response Team (BG-RRT) is ministering alongside Samaritan's Purse to Pelham, Alabama, where more than 80 people were rescued after floodwaters submerged vehicles and homes earlier this month.

The National Weather Service said central Alabama experienced as much as 13 inches of rainfall, causing streams and creeks to overflow. These floodwaters inundated entire vehicles, caused a landslide, and left many drivers with no other option but to climb out their windows after their cars stalled. Four people died, including a 4-year-old girl and an 18-year-old woman in swept-away vehicles.



Over 100 rescuers with 16 boats helped save dozens of terrified drivers and locals submerged in muddy floodwaters in Pelham, Alabama, on Wednesday night, October 6. Pictured here is a Billy Graham chaplain ministering to a North Carolina resident after Hurricane Matthew caused deadly flooding in 2016. Chaplains are now sharing the same message of God's love in a Spanish-speaking area of Pelham.



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"The destruction caused by this flooding is significant and our prayers go out to all of those who were impacted, especially those who lost loved ones," said Josh Holland, BG-RRT's assistant director. "Our crisis-trained chaplains will be there to listen as people share their stories, and to share God's love and hope that is found through Jesus Christ."

Alabama resident John McGuire is heading up the team of chaplains, addressing the emotional and spiritual needs in the area. He served in Pelham earlier this year when a tornado hit the town in late March. While Samaritan's Purse volunteers work on mudding out people's flooded homes, BG-RRT chaplains are taking time to get to know homeowners, offering prayer and helping them process the recent disaster.

The Alabama deluge took place around seven weeks after over a dozen people died in catastrophic floodwaters in Tennessee. Nineteen BG-RRT chaplains offered emotional and spiritual care to the devastated region.

Please keep all those affected by these floodwaters in your prayers.



Freedom Life Ministries

By Jim Smith
McDowell County

Freedom Life has hired a Program Director for the McDowell Substance Use Coalition (MSUC) funded by Kate B. Reynolds Trust. The MSUC Mission is using advocacy, education, and empowerment to ensure McDowell County is a community where substance use prevention, treatment, and sustainable recovery are possible.



Angela Grubb began her position on October 4, 2021, and has experience in public health, public health research, mental health, child protective services, and grant writing/grants management. Ms. Grubb has spent the last 10 years at Wake Forest School of Medicine but also spent many years working with communities to address public health priorities in Stokes County.

Ms. Grubb believes that substance misuse is a public health crisis and that all of us are affected by it in some way. Having worked in mental health and social services, Ms. Grubb has seen how families are affected by substance misuse and hopes to encourage the community to support each other as we address this public health crisis. Those who live with the struggle of using substances need to know that it is ok to seek services and that we care for them as a family, friend, or community neighbor. Ms. Grubb says “the stigma associated with seeking substance misuse services or mental health services should be non-existent, but unfortunately that is not the case”. MSUC has been busy for nearly 9 years discussing community needs surrounding substance misuse issues. Now, with a Program Director, it can be possible with organizational development and capacity building to establish the coalition as a 501c3 nonprofit corporation. Being a nonprofit will open doors to the funding needed to address the goals and priorities for the McDowell Substance Use Coalition.



Ms. Grubb encourages everyone to remember loved ones who struggle with substance misuse problems and sees MSUC as an opportunity to get involved with their community to address this public health crisis. Substance misuse can be related to mental health issues, unemployment, food insecurity, domestic violence, suicide, and relationship problems. Based on data and just looking around to those you live with, play with, and work with; it is easy to see the need to get involved!!



MSUC believes that recovery is possible and believes in (1) the power of diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and ideas; (2) the power of collaboration, community, and connection, and (3) whole-person solutions to substance use-related challenges. MSUC values: (1) building and fostering inclusive environments, (2) open-mindedness and communication, and (3) leading with compassion, always.

Ms. Grubb is affiliated with Freedom Life Ministries and works closely with Executive Director, Danny Hampton. She can be reached at agrubb@freedomlifeministries.org.

Freedom Life held its first of many to come Life Recognition Celebrations. Clients were recognized that have moved above and beyond many of the life goals they set with Freedom Life. Addiction experts recognize the benefit of charting progress and marking it specially. Celebration ceremonies at Freedom Life offer a tangible way to celebrate client progress and see them through long-term success in recovery. These events act as an example for future sober celebrations and are part of the mental work of living sober.

Our celebration offers clients and their families many intangible benefits. This celebration gave our clients the ability to express their milestones in a personal way. They may want to remember the occasion without saying anything at all, removing social pressure from clients who prefer less public attention. Or, they may have the opportunity to speak about something important to them in a positive way.

People working through the disease of addiction in challenging environments, such as jails and prisons, benefit from such celebrations, which act as spiritual interventions. A positive ritual, such as a ceremony, gives people with a history of negative experiences the opportunity to create positive associations. The spiritual aspect of the ceremony helps them add meaning to sobriety. Ceremonies also are good times to practice meditation, reflection or prayer. These internal acts promote feelings of well-being and peace, which also support sobriety.

We celebrated these amazing accomplishments with 17 clients. Those present were: Lee Charles, Devon Harting, Arvin Hicks, Doug Honeycutt, Scott Kelley, Tim Ledford, Julie McCalister, Kyle Morgan, Tim Nealley, Julie Silver, Jason Wallace, Danny Wilson.

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

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Mt. Carmel Baptist Church

God Is Great... God Is Good

By Toby Crowder
Mitchell County



"Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable."
"The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works." PSALM 145:3 & 9

Let us thank Him for our food... By His hands, we all are fed... I imagine that is what passed through some folks' minds when they read the title of this article. Even though many of us grew up learning (and teaching to our children) that modest prayer of blessing, how many of us have ever considered the immense truth that is contained in these simple words? Even though I only included verses three and nine of Psalm 145, I encourage you to read the entirety of this Psalm and consider the goodness and greatness of God as we enter this season of Thanksgiving.

When studying the Psalms, we learn that several of them seem to have a repetitive nature or a consistent theme. The entire thought of this particular Psalm is one of praise and thanksgiving to God. Many times, in Scripture, the themes of prayer and praise seem to blend together. Even though the preceding four chapters deal largely with prayer, there is no petition or request involved in this Psalm. It is simply a beautiful declaration of praise as the writer ponders the limitless glory and goodness of God.

As we enter the month of November, we often take time to look towards Thanksgiving and reflect upon our blessings, even though we are blessed all throughout the year! As a result, our lives should praise God daily... in all that we do. Certain people may vocally praise God while others do not. Some folks have their eyes fixed upon Him and cannot help but appreciate His goodness while others are self-absorbed, and live a life focused on their own desires. When God is the center of our life and being, we cannot help but praise Him. I am sure that this Psalmist was not perfect, and neither was His life... but he found reasons to praise God.

The Psalmist begins his chorus of praise by focusing on the greatness of God. We read about "great" men of History and Science, but God is greater than them all! If He is going to be God, He must be greater than anything else in our lives. Even though God's greatness is immeasurable, we consider that He is great in His person AND His works. In verses 4-5, the Psalmist speaks of God's wondrous works and terrible acts. In verse five he mentions the majesty of God. Majesty refers to that for which a person is admired or extolled. As we consider this word, we realize that everything about God is glorious... His name, His works, His ways, and all that He does is truly worthy of our praise and thanksgiving. The Apostle Paul knew God as few men ever have and yet he said in Romans 11:33: *"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"*

Not only does the Psalmist recognize that God's greatness is immeasurable, but he also recognizes that God is good! God is the culmination of the two traits... goodness and greatness. If God was only great but not good, He may not manifest His love to us in the ways that He does. On the other hand, If He were good, but not great He would be incapable of being our God! And so, we rejoice today in the fact that God is both great and good! God does not will anything evil for His children. We are reminded of this in James 1:17: *"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."* God's goodness is abundant (v.7), compassionate (v.8), and universal (v. 9) which inspires the Psalmist to lead a universal declaration of praise in v.21: *"My mouth shall speak the praise of the LORD: and let all flesh bless his holy name forever and ever."*

As we consider the simplicity of this message and prayer, let us not forget the necessity of thankfulness during this holiday season. Truly we can say together with the writer of this Psalm... "God is great, and God is Good!"

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

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Marlene's Meditations

Shift Your Weight of Worry

By Marlene Houk
Burke County

Philippians 4:6-7 *"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."*

My husband reached for our sleeping child, completely relaxed on my shoulder. Gently lifting the chunky thirteen-month-old weight from my sagging shoulders suddenly lifted me up. Instantly, I felt enough energy returning to settle my son for the night and finish small chores.

Relieving burdens. Shifting six bags of groceries to the kitchen counter. Carrying things to a moving van and hearing the satisfying clunk when they slide off our backs. Sensing a weightless surge of relief when we transfer our load to someone or something reminds me of spiritual truth in Philippians 4:6-7.

Adding thanksgiving to our requests results in peace that guards and keeps us. The spiritual effect of thanksgiving exhilarates the children of God. The encouragement phrase in these verses, *"Be careful for nothing;"* or, simply put, don't worry about anything, opens the door to enjoying the use of prayer and supplication. But, like the armor described in Ephesians, prayer operates as the key to using the armor. Similarly, thanksgiving shifts our weight of worry to Jesus who longs to bear our burdens of life.

We often color our problems in life with emotions, honoring them with first place in our reactions. But this verse implies that we possess the privilege of lifting those emotions in our many requests to our God who hears His children at any time of the night or day. With a simple letter, s, He invites us to talk with Him about multiple troubles that plague us.

In the act of thanksgiving, Jesus gently untangles the limbs and body of the weight of our worry to Himself. Like a guaranteed inoculation against disease, the next verse injects our spirits with peace—protection against soul pain. Somehow, the simple act of adding thanksgiving to the voicing of our worries invites Jesus to rescue our sagging strength by exchanging His peace for our problems. What a relief that we can instantly discern the difference between the lonely responsibility of things we can't change to the certain knowledge that our Savior can direct circumstances and change people to His will.

Thirty years later, I still feel the refreshing relief of my sleeping son's heavy-weight sliding from me as strong hands took care of him. My memories remind me that Christ's command to simply add thankfulness to my requests during prayer adds the protection and power of peace to my daily life.

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.Marlene-Houk.com



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

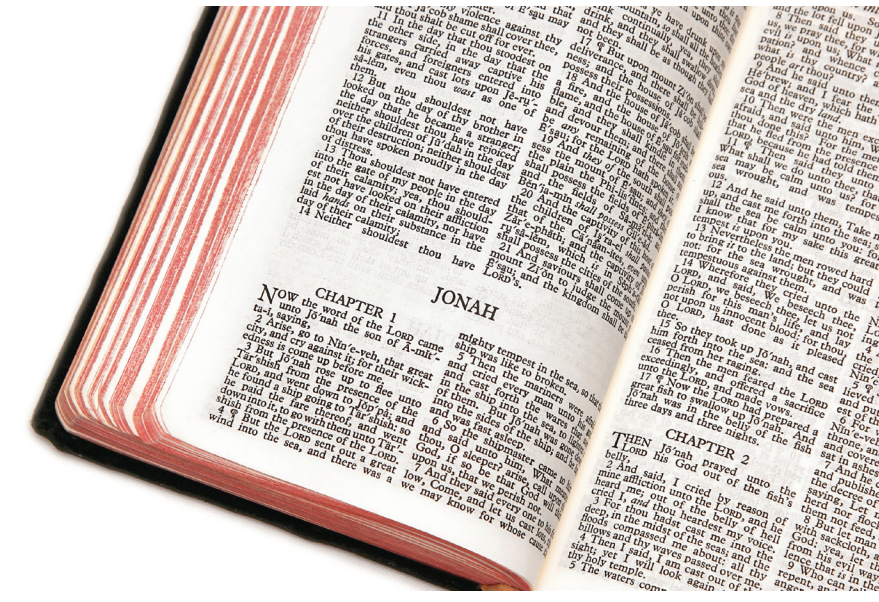
on the ____ (Gen 8:20)
63 they consult a wooden ____
and are answered by a stick
(Hos 4:12)
64 Tell them everything I
command you; do not ____ a
word (Jer 26:2)
65 Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth ____ to men
(Luke 2:14)
66 no remedy for your ____, no
healing for you (Jer 30:13)
67 they will ____ out the bread
by weight (Lev 26:26)
68 appointed priests from all
____ of people
(1 Kings 12:31)
69 Abraham set apart seven
____ lambs from the flock
(Gen 21:28)
70 the prophets declare good to
the king with one ____
(2 Chr 18:12) (KJV)
71 The owl will ____ there and
lay eggs (Isa 34:15)
DOWN
1 Do not ____ because of evil
men or be envious of the
wicked (Prov 24:19)
2 Laban had two daughters;
the name of the older was
____ (Gen 29:16)
3 Ahab son of ____ became
king of Israel
(1 Kings 16:29)
4 since we are surrounded by
such a great cloud of ____
(Heb 12:1)
6 He will ____ and will exalt
himself over everything
(2 Thess 2:4)
7 the ____ was upon the earth
forty days and forty nights
(Gen 7:12)
8 go to the lake and throw out
your _____. Take the first fish
(Matt 17:27)
9 Then said he unto the ____ of
his vineyard (Luke 13:7)
KJV
10 push roughly, jostle
(Ezek 34:21)
11 I mean not that other men be
____, and ye burdened (2
Cor 8:13) (KJV)
12 She crieth at the gates, at the
____ of the city (Prov 8:3)
KJV
14 that appeareth for a little
time, and ____ vanisheth
away (James 4:14) KJV
16 Also unto ____, O Lord,
belongeth mercy (Ps 62:12)
KJV
24 So God created man in his
____ image (Gen 1:27)
26 Take off your sandals; the
____ where you are standing
is holy (Acts 7:33)
27 ____ was the father of
Nimrod (Gen 10:8)
28 He came ____ his own, and
his own received him not
(John 1:11)
29 King David himself walked
behind the ____
(2 Sam 3:31-32)
31 Therefore now ____ your

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

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

Solution on page 14



A Pastor's View

“Winning Over Worry” (Philippians 4:4-9)

By Shawn Thomas
Angleton, Texas



In Amor Towles’ A Gentleman in Moscow, a Russian count was exiled within the confines of a hotel which he could not leave at the risk of his life. At one point, the Count is consumed with worry: “Sleep did not come so easily to our weary friend. Like in a reel in which the dancers ... come skipping brightly down the aisle, a concern of the Count’s would present itself for his consideration, bow with a flourish, and then take its place at the end of the line so that the next concern could come dancing to the fore.” (p. 267)

Some of us have basically have had that same experience: one worry after another takes its place in our minds! That is NOT the state God desires for His people. But how do we deal with worry? Philippians 4:4-9 shows us:

First, it encourages us to REMEMBER THE LORD. It begins “*Rejoice in the Lord always ...*” and adds: “*the Lord is near.*” Many of us who worry need to consciously remember that God is with us, and rejoice in HIM. There’s an old expression: “glance at your problem; gaze at God.” We don’t need to “stick our heads in the sand” and pretend problems aren’t there. But we shouldn’t obsess over them either. “Glance” at that problem — but GAZE at God! And rejoice in who He is in your life.

The first thing to make sure of is that Jesus IS the Lord your life. You can’t rejoice in Him always if you’ve never really committed your life to Him. The gospel is that we sinned, and separated ourselves from God. But Jesus came to die on the cross and pay for our sins, to reconcile us with God. When you repent of your sins and trust Jesus as your Lord & Savior, He forgives your sins, sends His Spirit into your heart, and promises you a home in heaven with pleasures that are literally “out of this world”! With that kind future ahead of us, a person who belongs to Christ can ALWAYS find something to rejoice in! When you’re tempted to worry: “Rejoice in the Lord”!

A second way to alleviate worry is to PRAY CONTINUALLY. Verse 6 says: “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”

This could be summed up: “Worry about nothing; pray about everything.” That’s easy to remember, and makes sense — but the thing is DOING it! Many things in life we “know” to do — but we just don’t DO them!

I’ll be honest: there have been situations in my own life when I began to worry about something, and only later thought: “You really need to PRAY about this — PASTOR SHAWN!!” We’ve all probably been in that situation. We get so caught up worrying that we forget to REALLY pray. We “know” to, but we don’t always DO it as we should. And like everything in Christianity, the power is not in the “knowing” of it; but in the DOING of it.

So every time you’re tempted to worry; PRAY. Put this verse on a card in your pocket or tape it on your mirror; memorize it; and each time you’re tempted to worry, quote it, and pray. How many times do you need to do that? AS MANY TIMES AS IT TAKES! 500 times a day if need be. This is the spiritual battle. Don’t give in to worry. “*Worry about nothing. Pray about everything.*” If you’ll do that, God’s peace will guard your mind, and you will win the victory over worry.

Third, WATCH YOUR INPUT. The old adage is, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” That applies to worry as well. It’s no coincidence that:8 says: “*Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure ... let your mind dwell on these things.*” Why would God say that, right after He spoke to us about anxiety? Because what we “feed our minds” has a big impact on how we think and feel. At least SOME of the anxiety we experience is a result of what we watch, read, and listen to.

Sometimes the media seems to THRIVE on making people anxious, so they’ll stay tuned:

- we have to see if that storm develops!
- we have to know if that riot gets worse! And so on.

Several people have told me over the past months: “I’m turning the news off; it’s making me too anxious.” And that’s legitimate. Not that we should “bury our heads in the sand” and ignore what’s going on in the world, but we also don’t need to watch the news 24/7 — especially if it increases our anxiety. Again, a good prescription here would be: “glance at the news, and gaze at God.” Give God more attention than you do the media.

We should evaluate all our input by Philippians 4:8: “*Is this ‘true’? Is it ‘honorable’? Is it ‘right’? Is it ‘PURE’ ...*” If it’s not, we shouldn’t read it, watch it, or listen to it. Many of us would worry less if we better guarded what we feed our minds.

And it’s not just what we DON’T watch or listen to, but what we DO. We need to fill our minds with godly books, music — and especially the word of God.

A doctor grew up in England in the 1800s, with a widowed mother and several siblings. It was hard for her to provide for them. But he said whenever his mother was discouraged or worried, she would sit down and quote Psalm 20, and it would give her peace. So the kids called Psalm 20 “Mother’s Psalm.”

Find a scripture that will become “your Psalm,” and turn to it whenever you’re tempted to worry. God’s Spirit will use that to help you trust Him. But that scripture won’t just “magically” appear in your mind — you have to make the effort to memorize it. But replace your anxious, worrisome thoughts with God’s words that are true and right and pure; and it will make a difference in your attitude.

Each of us should ask ourselves:
— What input should I cut out, that causes me to worry or stress?

— What input can I ADD to my life that will help? Start with daily Bible reading. Memorize scripture. Listen to Christian music. Cut OUT what drags you down; add IN what helps you trust God. It will make a difference. What you feed your mind matters.

Verse 9 says: “*PRACTICE these things, and the God of peace will be with you.*” You can have the peace you’re looking for. You can win the battle over worry. But he says you have to “PRACTICE these things.” You must DO what he shows you here. But if you will, you CAN win the battle over worry.

“*PRACTICE these things — and the God of peace will be with you*”!

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

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