



BLUE RIDGE CHRISTIAN NEWS

*John 1:36 -
And looking
upon Jesus as
he walked, he
saith, Behold
the Lamb of
God!*



Pause . . . and Consider

Dazzled by the Dance of the Kites

By Ken and Jan Merop
Avery County



March winds whipped my hair back from my face and lifted my spirits high...like a kite soaring toward the clouds.

In the early evening hours along the beach near the lake, my husband, Ken, was eager to see what might present itself for his photographic eye. Ever his cheerleader and companion ~ and lover of cool, outdoor breezes ~ I accompanied him...book in hand for entertainment.

Around that time, a gentleman arrived with his kite. My eyes left my book and turned skyward where the kite soared and dipped buzzing in the breeze as the man skillfully maneuvered it.

However, the best awaited us.

After a time, leaving the one kite behind, he walked to his truck and I again returned to reading. Then I noticed him carrying what appeared to be another kite. Instead, it was a case holding five kites.

With great precision, he lined them up and then attached the lead to both hands. As he expertly navigated the kites, the wind lifted them from their sandy perch. With tails flying, they soared into the sky like planes in formation to put on a show.

And what a show they put on.

The whirring sound set my heart to fluttering. The flawless dancing kites soared, dipped, and waved swishing this way and that ~ elegant, a colorful winged movement against white billowing clouds and blue sky that dazzled and amazed me.

Out there surrounded by God's creation of the sky, lake, foliage, and relentless breezes, I was refreshed. But, watching this man make use of the gift of the wind and the natural beach backdrop, I felt my spirits soar.

It reminded me how the Holy Spirit of God ~ when invited into our hearts ~ is like the wind that lifts us up, up, and away to realms we could not reach on our own. And as we respond to His promptings, we motivate others to catch the breeze of the Spirit so they can soar, too.

When Jesus spoke to Nicodemus (a Pharisee and ruler of the Jews) about being born again of the Spirit in John 3: 8, NKJV, he said, *"The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and*

where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

A kite alone is a beautiful thing. But, like those five kites ascending, gliding, dipping, and swooping, let's work together in the Spirit ~ catching the breeze for his glory. Selah

Dancing across the sky

*Like ballerinas holding hands and gliding across the stage,
these kites glided and dipped in the breezes...
creating a dance of color and inspiration.
Let's let the Holy Spirit lift us together
in a dance of hope and enthusiasm captivating others
so they hear His music and dance for joy.*

*"Let them praise His name with the dance...for the Lord
takes pleasure in His people."
Psalm 149: 3 and 4a*



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.

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

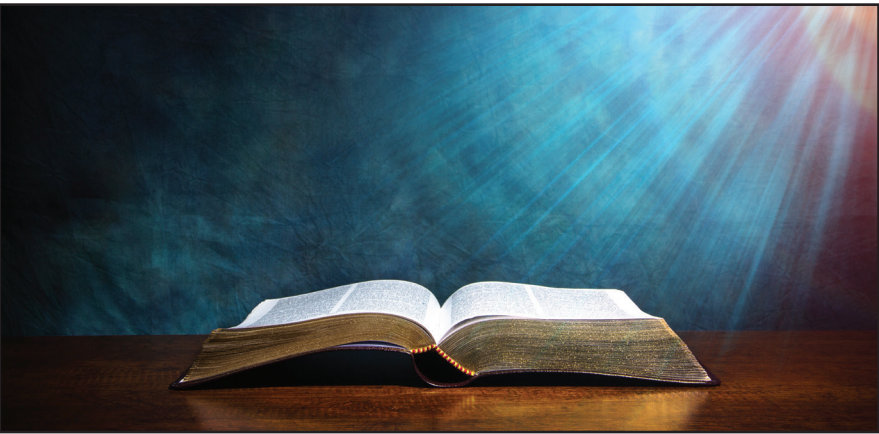
Humanity is designed and made by God in His image. We have been created as cognitive, moral, ethical, and physical beings and have been equipped by God for both relationship with Him and with one another. Both male and female are gifted by the Creator with characteristics which equip them for the purpose 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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Contents

In Every Issue

Life Lessons - p. 9
Your Government - p. 32

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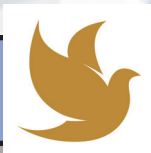
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“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace: that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation: that saith unto Zion. Thy God reigneth!”

Isaiah 52:7 KJV



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John's Precision Auto Body (6)

AUTOMOBILES - Tires

Buff Tire & Service (7)

McCabe Tire & Service (35)

Spruce Pine Tire (12)

CHURCHES

Bear Creek Baptist (4)

Berry Chapel Baptist (4)

Burkemont Baptist (4)

Faith Fellowship (4)

First Baptist Spruce Pine (4)

Grassy Creek Baptist (4)

Landis Orthodox Presbyterian (4)

Morganton Seventh day Adventist (4)

Newland Christian Church (4)

Pine Branch Baptist (4)

Pleasant Hill Baptist Church (4)

Plumtree Presbyterian (4)

Spruce Pine United Methodist (4)

The Rock Church (4)

The Bridge (4)

West Burnsville Baptist (4)

CHIROPRACTIC

Cruz Chiropractic (22)

CPA

Jamie Miller (14)

DENTIST

Scott Murphy (13)

DSS

McDowell DSS (13)

Mitchell DSS (37)

EVENTS

Catawba River Baptist Assoc. (23)

Freedom Life (8)

Maynard Taylor (34)

Spruce Pine First Baptist (36)

Spruce Pine Tire (22)

Yancey Baptist Assoc. (8)

FINANCIAL PLANNING

Peoples Home Equity (26)

Retirement Resource Management (23)

FLOORING/CABINETS

Carolina Flooring/Cabinets (17)

FUNERAL SERVICE

Beam Funeral Service (33)

Heritage Funeral Home (12)

Sossoman's Funeral Home (35)

FURNITURE

Buck Stove (25)

L&L Furniture (30)

HARDWARE

Three Nails Hardware (26)

HEALTH CARE

Carolina Home Care (14)

HOSPICE

Hospice of Rutherfordton (20)

Hospice of Blue the Ridge (17)

Compassionate Care of Western North Carolina (18)

HOUSING

Clayton Homes (34)

INSURANCE

Fortner Insurance (30)

Life Store Insurance (29)

McDowell Farm Bureau (19, 21)

Miller Insurance Group (11)

Mitchell Co. Farm Bureau (39)

Premier Insurance (5)

State Farm Insurance (11)

LAW FIRM

Table Rock Law (21)

NURSERY

Lakeview Nursery (37)

PLUMBING/HEATING

Burleson Plumbing Heating (7)

Benjamin Franklin Plumbing (8)

RADIO STATION

WMNC (8)

WSVM (39)

REALTORS

Whitson Realty (15)

RESTAURANTS

Abele's (5)

Bantam Chef (20)

Bubba's Good Eats (13)

DT's (31)

Western Sizzlin (2)

RETAIL

Grassy Creek Clothing (25)

REHABILITATION/NURSING

Brian Center (6)

STORAGE

DR Storage (36)

TAX

Jackson Hewitt Tax (31)

TREE SERVICE

Ray's Tree Service (24)

Church Directory



Bear Creek Baptist Church

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

Reverend Bruce Cannon

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

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

Landis Orthodox Presbyterian Church

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

Elder Mike Cloy

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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The Rock Church

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

Pastor - Billy Chapman

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

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Grassy Creek Baptist Church

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

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

Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church

2187 Jamestown Road
Morganton, NC
828-584-8212

Pastor Steve Bietz

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 Rev. Tony Lominac - Associate Pastor

Sunday School - 10:00am
Worship - 11:00am
Sunday Evening - 6:00pm
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

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

"A Local Congregation of Christ's Church"

Burkemont Baptist Church

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

For more information,
please visit
www.burkemontbaptist.org

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 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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Pine Branch Baptist Church

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

Reverend Bobby Joe Greene

Sunday School • 9:45-10:40am
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Marion, NC 28752
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Pastor Tim Sheridan

Sabbath (Saturday)
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Sabbath Worship - 10:50 am
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www.marionnc.adventistchurch.org

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 Pastor's View

Accept God's Direction To Wait

By Shawn Thomas
Angleton, Texas



Acts 1 tells us that just before Jesus left earth after His resurrection, He gathered His disciples together and commanded them “not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised ...”.

Significantly, Jesus commanded His disciples to WAIT. Maybe they were thinking about leaving because they weren’t from there, or maybe they even wanted to go and begin the mission work Jesus told them they would be doing. But for whatever reason they were thinking about leaving, Jesus told them, don’t do it. Stay where you are. “*WAIT for what the Father had promised.*”

Of course, in Acts 1, Jesus wanted them to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit, but the Bible is full of similar commands from God for His people to wait on Him:

- Jesus told the disciples here, “*WAIT for what the Father had promised.*”
- Psalm 27:14 says, “*WAIT for the LORD; be strong and let your heart take courage; yes wait for the LORD.*”
- Psalm 37 is a great Psalm of trust in the Lord; it says in:7 “*Rest in the LORD and WAIT patiently for Him;*”;9 says “*those who WAIT for the LORD, THEY will inherit the land;*”;34 says, “*WAIT for the LORD and keep His way, and He will exalt you to inherit the land.*” Psalm 37 continually encourages us: “*WAIT FOR THE LORD!*”
- Psalm 130:5-6 says, “*I WAIT for the LORD, my soul does WAIT ... My soul WAITS for the Lord more than the watchman for the morning; indeed more than the watchman for the morning.*”
- Isaiah 40:31 famously says, “*They that WAIT on the LORD shall renew their strength ...*”

Over and over the Bible indicates there are great blessings for us when we wait for the Lord. But it can be hard to wait, can’t it? So many times we find ourselves in situations where we feel like nothing’s happening, and we’re “just tired of sitting around,” and we feel the need to get out and just “do something.” Sometimes we ourselves may feel that way — but sometimes it is other people who are pressuring us: “You need to do something!” They may or may not know what it is we should do, but they just think you should “do something”!

The problem is a lot of times when we just “do something,” that “something” we do ends up being wrong. We see an instance of that in I Samuel 13 when King Saul was at war with the Philistines. The prophet Samuel had told Saul to wait until he came and made the sacrifice for them before the battle, but Samuel was late. Verse 8 says “*the people were scattering*” from Saul, so:9 says that Saul, who was not a priest, went ahead and made the burnt offering himself. But “*as soon as he finished offering the burnt offering, behold Samuel came.*” Samuel said, “*What have you done?*” Saul told him, well you hadn’t come, and I saw that the Philistines were gathering for war, and our people were scattering, “*So I forced myself and offered the burnt offering.*” Samuel told him, “*You have acted foolishly.*” And he told him, “*Your kingdom will not endure.*” The Lord seeks a man after His own heart, who will obey Him. Saul felt that pressure; everybody wanted him to “do something.” He gave in to that pressure, didn’t wait on the Lord, and it cost him the kingdom.

Sometimes the best thing we can do is just wait. On November 21, 1960, the new U.S. space program attempted to launch a Redstone rocket, but when all the smoke from the launch had cleared, the rocket was still standing there! The parachutes had deployed, and the “umbilical cord” that held the rocket had come off. Now, what were they going to do? They had a rocket they had no control over, which could be knocked over by the wind, and it would be dangerous for any technicians to approach it.

NASA flight director Chris Kraft listened intently to his crew as they desperately searched for a way out. Then one of the test conductors came up with a plan that made sense: “‘The winds are forecast to remain calm, so if we wait until tomorrow morning, the batteries will deplete, the relays and valves will go to the normally open condition. ... then it will then be safe to approach the rocket.’ Kraft nodded and growled at his controllers, “That is the first rule of flight control. If you don’t know what to do, don’t do anything.’ ‘Doing nothing’ worked: by early the next morning, the batteries were depleted, the system disarmed, and the pressure relieved.” (Gene Kranz, Failure Is Not An Option, pp. 31-32)

Waiting overnight solved the problem. They just needed to wait.

That’s a good lesson for many of us today too. Sometimes the best thing we can do is just wait. You don’t always just need to “just do something.” Make sure you are doing WHAT God wants you to do WHEN God wants you to do it. If you don’t, that “something” you do will end up being wrong, and it will cost you, and likely hurt others as well. So don’t “just do something.” Wait until you know what God wants you to do, and for His timing for you to do it. We need to learn that obeying God not only means GO when He calls us to go, but WAIT when He needs us to wait!

So what does that look like?

- Sometimes “waiting” on God literally means just to wait. Don’t do anything yet; don’t make any decisions now; just wait on His timing.
- But often in scripture, “waiting” on the Lord means seeking Him in prayer and His word. So don’t just “sit there and wait;” actively seek what God has to say to you in His word about your situation. Don’t “stick your finger in the Bible” looking for a miraculous word, just do your normal daily Bible reading, but watch for what God might say to you about your situation there.
- Don’t make the mistake that Saul made: don’t just decide because everybody

else thinks you should. You wait and make sure that you have peace that this is what God wants you to do and that it is when He wants you to do it.

- Don’t just marry “somebody;” WAIT for the right one God has for you!
- Don’t just go to any college; go where God is really leading you.
- Don’t just take off in “some” direction; wait for God’s clear leadership first.

Make sure you are doing WHAT God wants you to do WHEN He wants you to do it.

Jesus told His disciples: don’t just head out of here and go “somewhere.” Wait for the promise of the Holy Spirit. He may be saying the same thing to some of us today. Don’t just do “something.” WAIT for the Lord!

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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Walnut Grove Church

The Thief on the Cross

By Kurt Bomar
Avery County

With Easter, right around the corner, it's a good time to remember God's master plan.

When Jesus was nailed to the cross, Luke tells us a beautiful story of how we are saved. Hung among two criminals, one joined the crowd and scoffed at him. The other, however, uttered those famous words "remember me when you come into your kingdom".

That thief had nothing to offer. He hung there naked and hopeless. He had no money, prestige, or power. He couldn't even promise to do better "next time". His time was over. Jesus looked at him with compassion and said "today you will be with me in Paradise" and the church's first member was admitted. An admitted loser.

We too are losers with nothing to offer. The sooner we realize that our pitiful attempts to please God with our efforts will be no less successful than the thieves, the better off we will be. He told his followers, "Unless you are more righteous than the Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of God" and to the thief, "you're in". What was the difference? The degree that each depended on their own self-worth.

We can never clean our life up enough to earn his favor. We just need to ask the Lord to take us as we are. That's what He is waiting for. That is when we will hear him whisper to us, "you are secure in me, welcome home."

Kurt Bomar is pastor of Walnut Grove Church.



To satisfy the desolate and waste ground; and to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth? Job 38:27

First Baptist of Marshall

Humor

By Buddy Freeman
Madison County



Real estate is coming back. I just paid for a townhouse what, a hundred years ago, I would have paid for the town.

I always feel sorry for people who go to church but don't contribute. I think they plan to get into heaven –but on a scholarship.

“When I grow up, I want to be a musician.” “Well, honey, you know you can't do both.”

Q: When does a joke become a dad joke? A: When the punch line becomes apparent.

When I was a kid I would never have believed how much parenting in 2022 involves finding missing iPad chargers.

My daughter is smarter than Abraham Lincoln. She can recite the Gettysburg Address, and she's only nine years old. Lincoln didn't say it until he was 50!

The young girl of the house, by way of punishment for some minor misdemeanor, was compelled to eat her dinner alone at a little table in a corner of the dining room. The rest of the family paid no attention to her presence until they heard her audibly praying over her repast: “I thank thee, Lord, for preparing a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.”

The sermon was very long this Sunday morning and Donny was getting more restless by the minute. Suddenly, in a whisper too loud for his mother's comfort, he blurted out, “If we give him the money now Ma, will he let us go?”

A pastor places his order at the pet store. “I need at least 50 mice, 2000 ants and as many of those little silverfish as you can get.” The clerk replies, “ We can probably do that, but it might take some time. Mind if I ask why you are placing such an unusual order?” The pastor replies, “I've accepted a call to another church and the deacons' board said they'd fine me if I don't leave the parsonage the way I found it.”

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



John's Precision Auto Body

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Don't Become Complacent
Stay Focused on God

By Glenda Ward
McDowell County

“Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.” Revelation 3: 3

Christians are to be attentive, to stay alert and focused on things of God, the One who is perfect in all His fullness. In Revelation 3 verse one the church at Sardis had a good reputation in the community, but they had lost the power of God – He was no longer being glorified. Just as this congregation lost its connection with God, Christians today sometimes lose connection with God and become complacent exchanging a personal relationship with God for a superficial form of Christianity, but not having an intimate, personal relationship with Jesus Christ, a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof or turning away. Becoming complacent is feeling so satisfied with one’s own abilities or situation that the attitude is, you don’t need God. You are content with where you are in life. This complacent attitude ignores the reality of God’s guidelines of having eternal life. We can’t afford to be complacent about our eternal security.

Christ Himself bestows the Holy Spirit on His followers. A displaced Spirit and misplaced confidence can lead to our being complacent in our Spiritual Journey. We are to stay alert and focused on things of God and the return of Jesus Christ. Don’t become overly content, that being one with the world. Don’t become marked by self-satisfaction. Don’t become satisfied with your own abilities. Without Christ, we can do nothing. If we stay focused on God, we have got to include the things of God in our daily lives! A complacent attitude ignores the reality of the time, becoming satisfied with current worldly situations and unconcerned with changing their current state of living, to the point of being proud and pleased with themselves.

Easily one distraction after another hinders staying focused on our individual worship time with our God, our Heavenly Father. We need someone whispering in our ear to stay “Focused on God”. We are not to become complacent in our daily walk with God. We are to make sure to preserve our own faithfulness. In Revelation 3:3 people who have become complacent with self in worldly matters are urged to go back to what they first heard and believed, to get back to the basics of our faith. It is important to grow in our knowledge of the Lord our God and to deepen our understanding through careful study. But no matter how much we learn; we must never abandon the basic truths – God’s Truth. No new truth we learn through Scripture will ever contradict these Bible teachings.

Don’t become complacent in your wealth and worldly comfort. Don’t let your self-satisfaction cause you to die Spiritually and stop growing in your Spiritual faith. Don’t lack compassionate service to others or unity of love. Are you watchful and alert? If God has given you a place of responsibility to teach, lead, or serve, use that position to encourage those around you to be Spiritually awake and morally prepared to meet Jesus Christ at His return. Be the whisper that others hear to stay focused on God. Christ Himself bestows the Holy Spirit on His followers. We are to be “clothed in white raiment” which means we are to be set apart for God, signifying purity, righteousness, and sanctification in Him (Psalm 51:7; Isaiah 1:18; Revelation 7:14; 19:14). Don’t give the appearance of being alive, but being actually dead to Christ’s teachings. God can look below the surface of one’s heart and mind, He knows if your works are ineffective. Don’t be a Christian in name only while your works remain incomplete for the Kingdom of God. Our work will not be complete until Jesus Christ returns.

Jesus said in John 15:1-11, “*Abide in me.*” He repeated that in two other ways in John 15:5-8 while also providing a stark warning and a vast promise: “*I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abides not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.*”

Staying focused on God requires abiding in Him. If you create the discipline to spend the first minutes of your day reading the Word of God and talking to Him about the day ahead, you will have a greater focus on Him throughout the day. If you don’t know where to start, try reading John 15:1-11 each morning for a week. Listen to what God has to say.

Becoming smug in satisfaction with oneself or one’s achievement causes them to become overly content with themselves which in return causes them to feel they do not need to do anything about their Spiritual situation, They become too complacent to make changes even though their situation may be uncertain or dangerous and often without awareness. We can’t afford to become complacent about God in our lives and our Spiritual well-being. We simply can’t become complacent about our future. (Reference Revelation 1:3)

NOTEWORTHY

As long as the presence of doubt is detected, neither faith nor knowledge can ever be complacent.

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.



No To-Do List

By Christopher L Scott
Moses Lake, Washington

I get stressed out when my to-do list reaches double digits. But the to-do list for the Israelites in the Old Testament was 613 items!

One of those items was the Sabbath. It started where Genesis 2:21 says that God “*rested on the seventh day*” (NASB). The word in Hebrew is shabat which means to “repose” or “cessation” from exertion.

The Sabbath was one of 613 laws instituted as a way to help the Hebrew community trust God, to bind the Israelite people together closely, and to keep them separate from the rest of humankind. But we now live in what’s called the “age of grace.” Paul tells us about the grace we receive by writing, “*Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God*” (Romans 5:1-2). We no longer are bound to the “to-do” list of the 613 laws of the Old Testament.

We enjoy a constant state of Sabbath rest based on grace. Works are not required for this rest we enjoy. Later in Romans Paul writes, “*The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*” (Romans 6:23). We enjoy the free gift of eternal life because of our faith in Christ, not because of our works. Therefore we have rest from works.

This rest from works is discussed in Hebrews 4:9, 10, “*So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His.*” These two verses don’t tell us we are supposed to take a Sabbath Day rest (but I do believe that is important for us to do). The author of Hebrews uses the Sabbath as an illustration to explain his big idea of the entire book: Christ is better. Throughout the book, the author says that Christ is better than the prophets (Hebrews 1:1-4), better than the angels (Hebrews 1:5-2:18), better than Moses (Hebrews 3:1-4:13), better than the Levitical priests (Hebrews 4:14-10:18), and better than the priest Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:1-8:13).

Just as God ceased from His creative activity on the seventh day (Hebrews 4:4) now believers cease from working for their salvation. This is because believers enter God’s rest through faith. “*Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life*” (John 5:24).

We enjoy rest in Christ because our faith in Him saves us, not our to-do list.

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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High County Prison Ministry

By Jody Griffin
Avery and Mitchell Counties



“And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem,” (Luke 9:51)

There are many lessons available to the student willing to invest time and energy in the exercise of the disciplines presented to ‘would be’ disciples of the Lord Jesus during the 40 days of Lent. Lent is the season of the Christian year (beginning Ash Wednesday and culminating on the Saturday before Easter-calculated minus the Sabbaths) wherein individuals and churches focus on the painful truths of the substitutionary atonement of all humanity through the suffering and death of God’s only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. The first and perhaps most misunderstood of these disciplines is seen through the determination and commitment of Jesus to the call of God, no matter what suffering and pain He might experience.

Rare is the person today who will willfully deny themselves the usual pleasures of life. Rarer still is the human being who will sacrifice their own comforts on behalf of another. To do such would require an exceptional level of intestinal fortitude! Or to put it another way: Living determined lives and demonstrating a commitment to faithfulness to God... takes guts!

Our Lord demonstrated such for us as He began His journey to Jerusalem for the last time before He would face rejection, ridicule, and even death at the hands of those He had come to redeem. Luke records his understanding of Jesus’ obedience to God’s Will that He experiences the horrors awaiting Him by “setting His face” to go to Jerusalem. The Greek word *sterizo* (pronounced stay-rid’-zoh) meaning ‘to turn resolutely in a certain direction’ indicates that the two aforementioned disciplines are on display for anyone paying attention. Nothing would keep Jesus from experiencing what He most surely knew would be a level of suffering beyond anything we can imagine.



Thus, Ash Wednesday and the forty days of Lent present anyone who desires to gain new insight and motivation in living as a Christian with the challenge of practicing determination and commitment. Imagine the hope born from an incarcerated individual when reflecting upon these things. Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, was determined and committed to becoming the sacrifice for all of our sins! He would suffer the cruelest form of execution to purchase our redemption!

As Chaplain, it is my joy to witness those who ‘set their faces’ turning towards the future and face rejection, ridicule, and suffering as a result of their allegiance to God in Jesus Christ! I report with great enthusiasm that some resist the temptation to just survive the days of their confinement and choose instead to thrive on the spiritual path upon which their faith has placed them! I love encouraging them to realize that they are not alone and that they have what it takes to follow Jesus. Their number might be limited, but one can literally see in their eyes above their masks that they are choosing the attributes demonstrated by their Savior in their daily walk. Granted this challenge has been even greater during the long season of COVID we have endured. But in my interactions with many I see, hear, and understand that they’ve got the guts needed to get to their destination. Do you?

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

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FREEDOM
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A DIVISION OF FREEDOM LIFE

By Doug Harrell
Mitchell County

As I look at the calendar I realize that another planting season is right around the corner on the farm. We have already plowed the gardens, ordered seed corn and fertilizer for the fields. We have been feeding the cattle hay and grain for some time now and are looking to pastures getting green and the cattle getting back out on the pastures. I think about the change of seasons that are ever so evident out on the farm and then my mind goes to the changes in our lives, the seasons of change that we each go through if we live long enough.

This year will be the 79th time that Barbara and I have gone around the sun with 58 of those years being married. As we all look at those seasons we oftentimes think back on the past days of our lives. Sometimes we refer to them as the good old days and long for a return to those days. The reality of it is there is no going back, the only direction we can truly have is forward. How we approach those days is critical to our mental well-being and our physical well-being also. When we look back all the time we are heading for a wreck of major impact. When you are driving your car your front windshield is much larger than your rearview mirror for a reason. It is good to look in the mirror to see what is back there, but you need to focus on what's out front. If you put your car in park or reverse, you will certainly not accomplish much.

"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:13-14 KJV

We are encouraged to always be looking forward to the next project, the next goal in life. We are also told in the Scripture that a people without a vision shall perish. This is so true for us as individuals as well. I have often heard the old saying that you are either getting better each day or you are getting more rotten each day, we never stay the same. I want to encourage each of you to ever be looking forward with anticipation, setting new goals, and establishing new plateaus that you want to reach. It does not matter if you are in the springtime of your life or if you are approaching wintertime, we need to decide to live until we die.

Many books have been written about a purpose-driven life and how critical that is. Even in these troublesome days, we are living in we need to be ever aware of the fact that we need to constantly be striving to make a difference. The difference does not have to affect the entire world, but strive to exert a positive influence on your immediate environment, the people around you, and the family you come in contact with. Let your light become brighter each day as you continue to gain knowledge that only comes from age. Don't quit thinking and planning.

"While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." Genesis 8:22 KJV

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



Jesus Did It

By Steve Bietz
Burke County



The phrase, "What would Jesus do?" often abbreviated to WWJD, became popular particularly in the United States in the late 1800s after the widely read book by Charles Sheldon entitled, In His Steps: What Would Jesus Do. The phrase had a resurgence in the US and elsewhere beginning in the 1990s as a motto for Christians who use the phrase as a reminder of their belief in a moral compass to act in a manner that would demonstrate the love, character, and deeds of Jesus. "What would Jesus do" is indeed a good motto to imitate Christ.

However don't we have another level of imitating Jesus that should garner our attention? We have the Gospel accounts of scripture at our fingertips that relate to us not what Jesus would do, but what He did!

For example, we see in the gospels that a man named John, nicknamed The Baptist, was preaching at the Jordan River. And what was his appeal? John told his listeners to repent and be baptized. And as this happened, we see Jesus in Nazareth, removing his tool belt and leaving the family carpentry business and He makes His way to the Jordan River where John is preaching.

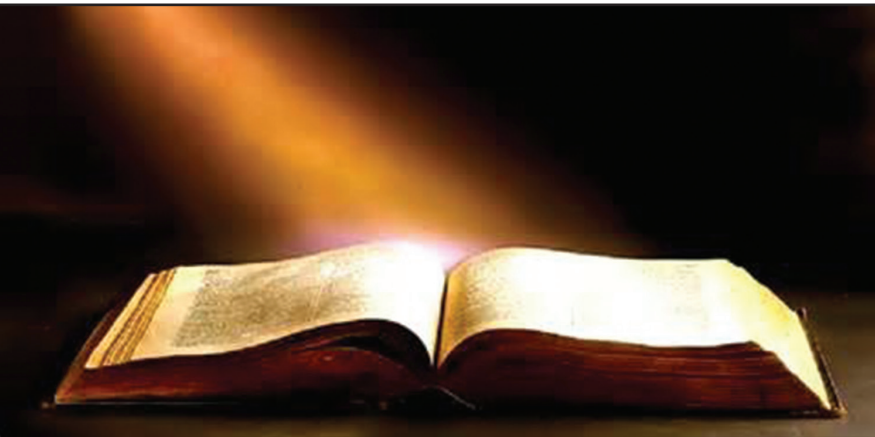
After we listen in on a brief conversation between Jesus and John as we hear John tell Jesus that he isn't good enough for Jesus to ask him to baptize Him, John consents. And indeed, Jesus was not getting baptized because He needed cleansing from sin. Not at all! This is why John was reluctant. But as the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy and as an example for all, Jesus convinces John to perform the valuable and important task.

There in Mark's Gospel in the 1st chapter and the 10th verse we read: *"And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove."* Interesting. Jesus came up out of the water. The form of baptism that Jesus did, is what is known as baptism by immersion. If one wants to do what Jesus did, and I hope we all want to do what Jesus did, then we would be baptized by allowing our bodies to be put under water thus showing the death of the old and the rebirth of the new man.

Jesus, as He concludes His time on earth when for a few weeks following His resurrection, He shares closing instructions to His followers before returning to Heaven. Jesus shares what is often called, The Great Commission. We have it recorded for us in Matthew 28:19, 20. *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

I see in many situations in scripture, where we do not need to wonder what Jesus might do. The Bible tells us again and again what Jesus did. And wouldn't we all agree that it is always best to do what Jesus did?

Steve Bietz, Pastor, Morganton Seventh day Adventist Church.



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NIV Bible Corruption

By Robert Garner
Rutherford County

“Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought [word or thing] from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you;” Deuteronomy 4:2.

The Authorized King James Bible is God’s word to mankind and contains the Masoretic Text which is Hebrew and Aramaic, and Textus Receptus the received Greek. These original language texts are inspired by God Almighty and are faultless; spoken by holy men of God moved by the Holy Ghost in perfect order without error. The King James Bible is revered as God’s Book, The Lamb’s Book of Life. Psalm 12:6; “the words of the LORD are pure words: as silver is tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven time.” Proverbs 30:5; “Every Word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in Him.”

For 600 Years leading up to the Authorized KJV Bible Acts 3:26 is translated the same way. Along comes the NIV, which adds and removes words, deletes complete verses, and changes many scriptures. Countless other examples of changes made to God’s Word could be shown to prove why the NIV is a corrupted bible. Acts 3:26 is just one example of this corrupted NIV bible scripture.

Authorized KJV Bible - Acts 3:26, “unto you first God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.” “His Son Jesus” (Removed from the NIV bible) NIV Acts 3:26

NIV Bible - Acts 3:26, “when God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.”

Moses was a servant (1Ch 6:49); Paul was a servant (Tit 1:1); James was a servant (Jas 1:1), and many others. Acts 4:12 “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved”. That would be The LORD Jesus Christ, The Son of God.

Pastor Cooper Abrams, Calvary Baptist Church, Utah, USA, comments on corrupted bibles. “I bring to the table over ten years of formal study and three earned degrees in Bible, the last being a Ph.D. with a Bible major. The English Revised Version of the Bible, (1885) was based on only two Eastern Greek texts, the Greek Sinaiticus (Aleph), dated 340 AD, and the Codex Vaticanus (B) dated 325-50 AD. Both of these manuscripts plainly show they have been changed and tampered with making them a corrupt and inaccurate text. It is important to realize these changes are part of all the modern versions such as the NIV, ASV, NASV, RSV, and all other modern versions. Another thought to consider is who benefits from corrupting God's word? The answer is obvious. Satan, as he directs false teachers, churches, and cults which bring confusion to God's saving word”. (End)

A severe warning from God Almighty directed to those who deliberately remove or add words to the prophecy of the Bible. Revelations 22:18 19; “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city; and from the things which are written in this book.”

This NIV Bible corruption is part of the fiery trial which is to test every professing Christian. Give a warning to them; Ezekiel 3:17 “Son of man, hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me.” 1 Peter 4:12, “think it not some strange thing happened to you concerning the fiery trial which is to try you.”

The NIV test is an open book test requiring no memory of bible verses. A 6th-grade reading student knowing nothing about Bible Scripture would have no problem taking the test. You will need an NIV bible to look up each verse outlined in the test. Using the New International Version (NIV) Bible, answer the questions. Do not rely on your memory. As the Bible is the final authority, you must take the answer from the Bible verse (not from footnotes but from the text). Finally, you will need The Authorized King James Bible as a comparison study. Take the test here; [https:// bible-truth.org/NIVtest.html](https://bible-truth.org/NIVtest.html)

Isaiah 45:22 & 23, “Look unto me [God Almighty], and be saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself [God Almighty], the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me [God Almighty] every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.” Excellent Bible Study tools to assist anyone with the study of the Authorized KJV Bible are available. J.P. Green Interlinear Hebrew, Greek, and English Bible is tied to the coded Strong’s Concordance and is one of many excellent Bible study tools. Also, the LITV, a Literal Translation of the Bible. The English Hexapla provides a historical record of 600 years of the 6 most important English language translations, along with the original Greek text after Scholz leading up to the world’s most accurate English translation, the Authorized KJV. Also, the “Blue Letter Bible” online is a very helpful Bible Study Tool.

Luke 12:2; ‘for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known.’

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

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

It was a Murphy’s Law Kind of Week

By Dr. James L. Snyder
Ocala, Florida

I am not what you would call a superstitious person. [Knock on wood.] I am a realist in a modified definition of that word and I usually take things as they come.

My past week, however, was an open commentary on “Murphy’s Law.” Offhand I am not quite sure who came up with this concept, but they must have had a week somewhat like my past week.

If I had it within me, I would establish “Snyder’s Law” which, simply stated, means what can go right will go right. Then all would be right with the world. Well, except for those who are left-handed.

It all started Monday morning when I had an early morning meeting. I meant to set my alarm clock for 6 AM but for some reason, I set it for 6 PM and overslept. Have you ever noticed when you are 15 minutes late in the morning the day ends up being 90 minutes late? Do not ask me how that happens. Ask Murphy.

In the mail, I got a notice from the bank that I was overdrawn and they were charging me an insufficient fund fee. Well, I was furious. After all, I know how to add and subtract and I know how to take care of my bank account. I was about ready to call them and give them a piece of my mind when I noticed, how it happened I will never know, I forgot to include two checks I had written last week. I hate when that happens. My whole checkbook is now screwed up. I think it might be easier for me just to close my account and start all over again.

It was Tuesday but I had to go across town and endure all that traffic. It is not my favorite place to drive, I will tell you right now. Just as I turned onto a street, my engine sputtered a little bit. Then, much to my chagrin, the engine stopped completely. I hate when that happens.

I turned the key several times and then, I do not know why I did it, but I glanced at the gas gauge and the arrow was pointing way beyond the E. My gas tank was about as empty as my bank account. It is bad to run out of gas, but the worst thing for me about running out of gas is calling the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage and asking her for help. I would walk 100 miles not to tell her I am out of gas.

She always comes and bails me out. However, for the next six months, I am reminded and reminded and reminded to put gas in my tank.

Thursday also had its issues. My wife wanted me to go to the store and pick up something and for some reason, I cannot remember it now, I used her car. Maybe it was because I did not want to run out of gas!

I got to the store, paid for my purchase, came out, and tried finding my truck. I walked up and down and my truck was nowhere in sight. The only thing I could think of at the time was that somebody had stolen my truck.

I thought about calling the police, and then I thought better and decided I would call my wife first. You know what it is like when your wife hears something secondhand. And so I called her.

“I can’t find my truck,” I said trying to keep my voice as calm as possible not to get her upset, “I think somebody stole it. Should I call the police?”

Silence on the phone. Then I heard her say in a very calm voice, “Whoever stole your truck parked it in our driveway.”

I then remembered I was driving her car.

I tried to chuckle within but I knew that this incident would hang in our house for months to come and I have Mr. Murphy to thank for that.

It was such a horrific week and I was so deep in trouble with my Better Half, I decided to take her out Friday night for a nice meal on the town. I took her to her favorite restaurant and we ordered our supper, then set back and kind of sighed the week away. Maybe all that could go wrong has gone wrong and the week was about to turn around.

We chatted; I tried to skew the conversation away from running out of gas and misplacing my truck. Then the waitress came with our meal. I was ready to settle down, enjoy a scrumptious meal and end the week on a happy note.

The waitress set my wife’s plate in front of her and she smiled. Then the waitress set my plate in front of me and I freaked out. For some reason the waitress got my order mixed up with somebody else’s order and right in the middle of my plate was a pile of broccoli.

The only hope I have is that it cannot get any worse than this. I think David, the psalmist, understood this when he wrote, “... weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning” (Psalm 30:5 KJV).

As bad as it gets, as a Christian I have some great things to look forward to in Jesus Christ.

Dr. James L. Snyder is pastor of the Family of God Fellowship, 1471 Pine Road, Ocala, FL 34472. He lives with his wife in Silver Springs Shores. Call him at 352-687-4240 or e-mail jamesnyder2@att.net. The church web site is www.whatafel-lowship.com.

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Bear Creek Baptist Church

By Bruce Cannon
Mitchell County

Are we getting very close to the coming of the Lord for His Church? Let's investigate the Scriptures. The Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3:1-5: *"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away."*

News headlines dated mid-February, as I am writing this article, bear this out and show that the above passage is a perfect commentary on what is happening in our nation today! We are seeing perilous times and, as Dr. Jimmy Evans said in an online broadcast recently, they are going to get worse and worse in 2022. I believe that we are indeed very close to the return of the Lord Jesus for the Church!

Check out the headlines and see if you also believe they point to His soon return:

- 1) "Massive crime spike stems from social unrest and COVID lockdowns."
- 2) "The CIA is secretly collecting data on all U. S. citizens."
- 3) "Biden tells Americans to leave Ukraine immediately as war is very likely and will have many casualties."
- 4) "Inflation expected to be worse this year than in decades previously."
- 5) "Canadian trucker protests will have an impact on U. S. goods."
- 6) "The Health and Human Services will provide \$30 million to provide crack pipes to help drug users use drugs more safely."
- 7) "Non-U. S. Citizens will be allowed to vote in certain elections."
- 8) "Florida fights to stop gay and transgender counseling in school classrooms."
- 9) "Black Lives Matter turns up the pressure to defund police."
- 10) "Feds test Digital Dollar in certain U. S. markets."
- 11) "Iran refining enriched uranium to produce a nuclear weapon."

What about that! Isn't that exactly what Paul said in 2 Timothy 3:1-5? Jesus said in Matthew 24:9-12, *"Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold."*

We are seeing iniquity abound, the persecution and hatred of Christians and their beliefs, and so many people offended by everything godly! Are you ready? If the Lord were to come for us today can you go? Do you know Him as your Savior? If not, or if you are not sure, ask Him right now to come into your heart, forgive you of your sins, and be the Lord and Savior of your life. Amen!

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



Evergreen Church

A Picture of Hope

By John McCoury
Roan Mountain, Tennessee



Read: Isaiah 11:6-9 *"The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them."* Isaiah 11:6 What a beautiful picture! Here is the time when the dreams of men will be fulfilled, when all the longings that reflect themselves in peace demonstrations and cries for disarmament will find their fulfillment. There is a deep hunger in mankind for this kind of world, although we do not know how to achieve it. But there is coming One who does know how. Then, even the animals will lose their ferocity and lie down one with another. How would you mothers feel if you found your child playing with a cobra? But there is coming a time when it shall happen when the animals shall lose their ferocity against one another when the lion shall eat straw like the ox. Some people ask, Is this literal or is it only symbolic? Is this all metaphor? Some commentators say this is a picture of the work of Christ in human hearts today.

I believe that. I believe this is a metaphor, picturing spiritual peace. I think of our church elders in those terms. One of them is like a lion; he roars every time you cross him. Another one is like a great bear; he swallows you up as you come into contact with him. Another is like a leopard—sneaky. And here was I, a meek lamb in the midst of them! Our elders' meetings sometimes give that impression, but when we would look to the Lord He comes among us as a great lion tamer. Then the lion lies down with the lamb, the wolf and the leopard dwell together, and everything works out. This is what our Lord has the power to do in human hearts today. He can heal controversy and bring peace among men. But I also believe this is literal. There is coming a day when the curse will be removed from the earth. Paul sings about a day when creation shall be released from its bondage (Romans 8:19). Then the curse will be removed and the whole earth will break into a verdant blooming, the likes of which we have never seen; when the desert shall blossom like the rose, as Isaiah describes it in Chapter 35. The animals lose their ferocity and even the carnivores return to eating grass, as in creation before the Fall.

Father, I look forward to the fulfillment of these gracious words, when even the animals shall lose their enmity one with another and lie down together, and a little child shall lead them. Grant that I may discover the reality of these words in my own life. Both peacemaking and peacemakers are God's business. As we anticipate its final fulfillment, are we seeking to be authentic messengers of His peace day by day?

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

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Testament Trauma

By Jim Huskins
McDowell County



The Christian faction I grew up in refers to itself as a “New Testament Church.” That term is code for claiming to be “unsullied” by the “burden” of the “Old Testament.” Pop Theology lauds the superiority of “grace” over “law.” We are told that divine assurances given to the Patriarchs were revoked when Jesus died and that the Sinai covenant was a stopgap intended to be canceled by Paul. Supposedly, God now ignores His promises to redeem Israel, and He transferred His focus to something they call the “Gentile Church.” Popular teachers claim that “Gentile Christians” were never intended to keep “The Law of Moses.” Some insist that the Prophets could not “see” the Church.

None of these claims hold up in the full light of scripture. It would be impossible to hold convictions that fly in the face of what the Bible teaches without first pretending that the book is divided into two sections: the “good stuff,” and the “old, mean-spirited, irrelevant” part. Replacement Theology owes its existence to the fantasy that God’s Word is a house divided against itself.

The terms “Old Testament” and “New Testament” are not found in the text of the Bible. They have been forced onto God’s Word by fallible humans. Specifically, that division is the legacy of a Second Century, heretic named Marcion of Sinope. Marcion devoted his life to proclaiming a strict separation between the “old god” and the “new god.” According to Marcion, YHWH was bloodthirsty, evil, and ruthless. No amount of human devotion could appease him. He was never satisfied until people were destroyed or dispersed.

The new god, however, is a benevolent, loving savior who came to oppose and offset the mean god. Marcion taught that creation is a trap by the old god to force the universe into physical, rather than spiritual, form. He said that Jesus is unrelated to, and came to free us from, the old god. He claimed that Jesus was not Jewish and did not have a physical body. He said that Hebrew Scriptures have no authority over Christians. Marcion’s heresies present an almost one-to-one correspondence with Modern Church theology. The promotion of his lies would have been impossible had he not taken the brilliant, tactical step of dividing the Bible into artificial sections which he labeled “old testament” and “new testament.”

But God’s Word is not divided! It is one story from beginning to end. It is impossible to understand the last fourth without first understanding the first three-fourths. One key for understanding the Gospel accounts is found in the book just before Matthew—Malachi.

This powerful, prophetic proclamation was written about 100 years after Judah’s return from captivity. That return, led by Ezra and Nehemiah, was accompanied by great expectations. The returnees planned to rebuild the Temple and their lives and then see the fulfillment of the great prophecies. Messiah would appear. He would reunite Judah and Israel, rule over the nations and establish universal peace and justice. That might have happened had the people who repopulated Judea not proven to be as rebellious as their ancestors. Instead of utopia, they experienced poverty, injustice, and corruption.

Malachi indicts Judah for several specific sins. He does this through a series of disputes between God and the people. God proclaims His love for His covenant people despite their rebellion. He accuses the people of defiling the new Temple by presenting inferior sacrifices. The Priesthood is complicit in this defilement. God blasts Judean men for turning against Him and their wives through a wave of divorce and remarriage to Canaanite women who import their pagan gods.

The people deny these charges. Beginning in 2:17, they accuse God of injustice. He replies that they have failed to bring Him their tithe to support the Temple and the Priests. Beginning in 3:13, the people claim that serving God is useless. They say that He allows wicked people to prosper and does nothing about it.

God responds to these disputes by saying that He will send a messenger who will appear as a purifying fire. He will remove all vestiges of idolatry and those who practice it. Only God’s faithful will remain to see His plan completed. This remnant is made up of people who fear God and devote themselves to serving Him and encouraging others to do the same.

Many church leaders love to invoke Malachi 3:10 and its instruction to bring in the full tithe. Seldom do they mention the call in 4:4 to “remember the Law of my servant Moses.” They teach that tithing “opens the windows of heaven,” but they do not point out that God does not change and that our job is to keep His statutes. Malachi wraps up his prophecy with an ode to the Law and the Prophets. They remind us of the history of God’s gracious outreach to His children. They point us to the glorious resolution He will bring in the end. The wicked can only dread the Day of the Lord, but the Faithful will greet that Day with joy and thanksgiving.

The links between Malachi and the Gospels are stunning. Malachi gives us the context for the genealogy of our Savior, the role of John the Immerser and the work of Messiah. Malachi 4:2 is one of the most glorious passages in scripture. “But unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings.” In Matthew, the book that immediately follows, we learn who the Sun of Righteousness is and how His healing is applied. More importantly, all the Gospels and the Epistles teach that Jesus fulfills the promises made to Israel.

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.

"Putin Has Just Launched A Full-Scale Invasion Of Ukraine"

By Jim Denison

Russian forces invaded Ukraine by land, air, and sea overnight in the largest attack by one nation against another in Europe since World War II. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said on Twitter, "Putin has just launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Peaceful Ukrainian cities are under strikes."

According to European Union affairs chief Josep Borrell, "These are among the darkest hours of Europe since the Second World War."

In a televised declaration of war, Russian President Vladimir Putin said he had ordered "a special military operation" to "strive for the demilitarization and denazification of Ukraine." He added that "Russia cannot feel safe, develop, and exist with a constant threat emanating from the territory of modern Ukraine."

Then he claimed in true dictator fashion, "All responsibility for bloodshed will be on the conscience of the ruling regime in Ukraine."

"This is a grave emergency"

As CNN's Stephen Collinson reports this morning, "Decades of peace between nations on the European landmass ended with loud blasts in multiple Ukrainian cities. . . . thunderous explosions soon loomed over the capital Kyiv as air raid sirens wailed, heralding a dangerous new crisis for a world already rocked by turmoil."

Shelling and missile strikes have been reported across the country. Russian-backed separatists launched attacks in the breakaway regions of Luhansk and Donetsk to the east, while Ukrainian officials said Russian troops have also attacked to the north from Belarus and to the south from the Black Sea.

According to an adviser to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, about forty people have been killed so far in the Russian attack and several dozen wounded. President Zelenskyy said at a briefing, "The Ukrainian military is waging hard battles, repelling attacks in Donbas and other regions in the east, north, and south."

Global financial markets have plunged and oil prices are soaring. The Associated Press reports that Russia's actions "could cause massive casualties, topple Ukraine's democratically elected government and upend geopolitics and Europe's post-Cold War security balance."

US Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield stated, "This is a grave emergency." President Biden said the US and allies will be "imposing severe sanctions on Russia" later today. Mr. Biden said he spoke with the Ukrainian president, who asked him "to call on the leaders of the world to speak out clearly against President Putin's flagrant aggression and to stand with the people of Ukraine."

What does this mean for America?

CBS News reported yesterday that gas prices had already hit eight-year highs; they are now surging even higher. Sanctions or export controls against Russia could make semiconductor shortages even worse, while restrictions on wheat or metals "could drive the fiercest bout of inflation in decades to climb even higher." Russian cyberattacks that continued yesterday against Ukraine could be directed at the US as well.

And this invasion could spark a wider war directly affecting American military personnel.

William Taylor, former US ambassador to Ukraine, predicted, "If the Russians succeed in establishing a sphere of influence or of dominating Ukraine, it won't stop there. They will continue. The Poles and the Romanians, the Czechs will be very concerned as they see Russian tanks coming west from Russia into Ukraine toward them, and they will ask for reinforcements from the United States."

American military families are already understandably concerned. Chris Brooks, one of my favorite radio hosts, told our listeners yesterday that he was especially praying for our military and invited them to call into our conversation with specific prayer requests. One person who responded asked us to pray for a Marine and his wife, who is expecting their child any day. I cannot imagine what these days must be like for them and so many others like them.

"We must be global Christians"

The day after 9/11, the French newspaper Le Monde announced, "We are all Americans." Queen Elizabeth II sang the American national anthem at Buckingham Palace's Changing of the Guard. In Brazil, Rio de Janeiro put up large billboards showing the city's famous Christ the Redeemer statue embracing the New York City skyline.

What the billboard depicted is more than symbolism.

The renowned theologian John R. W. Stott used to say, "We must be global Christians with a global vision because our God is a global God." Because God is the king of the universe, every dimension of the universe falls within his care and compassion. He loves Ukrainians just as much as he loves Americans and Russians just as much as he loves Ukrainians.

This is why, one day, all the nations of the world "shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore" (Isaiah 2:4). It is why in heaven we will join "a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb" (Revelation 7:9).

And it is why our Father calls his children to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:39). Lest you think your "neighbor" is limited to your local geography, remember that Jesus' story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-38) identifies your neighbor as anyone who needs something you can provide. If you can intercede with compassion for the besieged people of Ukraine today, they just became your neighbor today.

If you had loved ones living in Ukraine, how would you feel about this crisis? That's precisely how God feels about it.

Let's join him. Today, we are all Ukrainians.

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.





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Sudoku Solution

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5	6	2	8	4	7	3	9	1

"Temptation's Wreckers"

By Russell McKinney
Mitchell County



As a lifelong resident of North Carolina, I'm interested in historical tidbits of information about my state. Somewhere along the way, I picked up an old legend about Nags Head, a town located on the Outer Banks of eastern North Carolina. This legend has never been officially verified, but it sure makes for a good story.

The legend has it that in the 1700s Nags Head was home to a group of ruthless land pirates known as "wreckers" (sometimes also called "bankers"). These men would hang lanterns around the necks of "nags" (horses or mules) and slowly walk the animals up and down the beach at night. Out in the darkness of the Atlantic, a ship would mistake the bobbing light for the light of another ship. Figuring that the other ship had found safe passage around the dangerous shoals just off the island, the ship in the darkness would turn inland and run aground on Diamond Shoals.

In the morning, the "wreckers" would come along and gather up the timber from the wrecked ship to sell it and make money. The timber was used in everything from building new houses to making kitchen utensils. It was all a thriving business. Even now visitors to Nags Head are shown old houses that were supposedly built and furnished with the material taken from these shipwrecks. They're also told that it's very possible that Nags Head took its name from the practice of hanging the lanterns around the necks of the "nags." Estimates say that over 2,000 ships perished off this coast during that time period.

Nags Head is now a tourist town of around 2,700. If it ever was a haven for land pirates, those days are long gone. This doesn't mean, though, that there aren't still some "wreckers" out there that need to be avoided. A "wrecker" is anyone or anything that causes another to sail into dangerous water. For example, a seductive man or woman can wreck a marriage, a bottle of booze can wreck a life, a dirty business deal can wreck a career, and a church leader who doesn't follow the Lord can wreck a church.

The key to avoiding a "shipwreck" is to accurately recognize a wrecker for who or what it is. Don't fall for just any light on a dark night. Don't be misled by a false reality. Don't be so quick to trade the known for the unknown.

Most of us have heard the old saying, "God won't put more on you than you can handle." I even had a friend once call me and ask me where that verse is in the Bible. Even though the saying's principle is a sound one, I had to tell my friend that no Bible verse specifically supports the saying. The verse in question actually has to do with temptation. It is 1st Corinthians 10:13, and it says:

"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it." (N.K.J.V.)

Please note the teaching of this verse. God will never allow you to be tempted beyond what you can withstand. On the contrary, whenever you get close to your breaking point, He will provide you with an escape hatch out of that temptation. His job is to provide the way of escape; your job is to use it.

I don't know what's going on in your life right now, but could it be that you are considering sailing off toward some strange light? Are you just about to change your course in life simply because you think this light will lead you into safe waters? Friend, beware the wrecker! If God really wanted you to chart that course, the way would be much clearer and more sure. The night wouldn't be so dark and the light wouldn't be so questionable. Therefore, rather than turning yourself toward that light, you need to start looking around for God's way of escape from that temptation. Based upon 1 Corinthians 10:13, that way will be there, and if you use it, it will keep you from a disastrous shipwreck.

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

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Reflections on A Secret Place

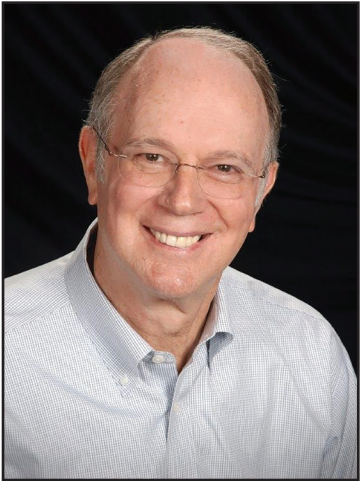
By Steve Brubaker
Burke County

At the January 11th CBMC* meeting, Gene Kirby led a study on our Secret Place. *“But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door, and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”* Matthew 6:6 (ESV) Gene referenced Caron Cline’s January BRCN article, wherein she encourages readers to set “Getting to a Secret Place” as a worthwhile New Year’s resolution. This is a Bible study and article that quickened my spirit and challenged me.

Since then, I have been reflecting daily on those Words from God and recalling my “Secret Place” experiences down through my 73 years. How have they impacted my life? How have I followed through? Where did I succeed? Or more painfully, where did I fail? What have been the results of success or failure (there are positives to both)? Beyond asking forgiveness for my failures, can I still follow up or -through them? What has God taught me – from either outcome? Thanks, Brother Gene, for kicking off these moments. And, “Thank you, Caron,” for reminding us of the importance of spending time in our Secret Place.

What I most appreciated about Gene’s teaching is what I call his “List of Secret Place Attributes.” He suggested nine of them. Here are some of my reflections on each:

- Discipline – Without a question, a key component of a Secret Place experience. I know when my obedience and discipline are strong, SPs happen. And when I recall periods where there were few or none, I can usually pinpoint a lack of discipline. I treasure my early morning quiet times, but also acknowledge the impending day often detracts from my focus. I have observed most of my SPs occurred when I disciplined myself to purposefully set aside a block of time to be alone with Him.
- Darkness – When Gene initially listed this attribute, I’ll admit I found it difficult to associate “darkness” with our God. While I know He creates and allows both, and there are lessons to be learned in Light and Darkness, how do I associate a Secret Place with darkness? Gene suggested, “Dark places, which we all have, can be places of fear, confusion, uncertainty, and seemingly loneliness. Yet, ironically and truthfully, we are always His, always in the light and ‘just under the shadow of His wings.’” *“He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler. You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday.”* - Psalm 91:4-6 (ESV)
- As I ponder this further, some of my “darkest” times are when I have experienced a Secret Place. Our 25 years of prayer until God delivered our son from addiction provided several SP experiences. “Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received, and it will be yours.” Mark 11:24(ESV)
- Reverence – Without a doubt! In a true SP experience, there is an undeniable reverence - “revering God Almighty.” Unfortunately, today’s “church” rarely, if ever, allows, provides, or encourages a sense of reverence. Far too often, the focus is on the music, the production, the technology, and a subtle acknowledgment of peoples’ uncomfortableness with reverence. My point is simply, “it’s uncomfortable because we fail to teach and show people how to experience the blessing and benefit of “being reverent” in God’s presence.”
- Awe – Hands down, many of my SP experiences have occurred in the beauty of God’s creation! He made this for me! Wow! Having grown up in the Colorado Rockies you needed only to open your eyes – but I’ve also been at the ocean, even sitting on the deck in my backyard. God’s gift of creation is everywhere – a playground of children, an elderly couple walking hand-in-hand, a baby’s simple smile.
- In my past, I was a solo backpacker – spending time in the mountains and canyons surrounded by God’s Masterpiece. Never is there a doubt when I’m totally alone in these settings that I can be filled to overflowing with “Awe.” *“The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof!”* Psalm 24:1
- Intimacy – Yes, no one knows us like God. There are no secrets – good or evil – He does not know – see Psalm 139:1-16. Becoming comfortable in that knowledge is sometimes difficult, but understanding He knows everything about me is a freeing realization. Caron’s article reminded us that “Intimacy is God’s desire for every child,” and in our SP we come with vulnerabilities that allow us to uncover secret sins and irrational fears, and to deepen our relationship with God. I can be myself in my SP – no airs necessary!
- Consecration – Secret Places are definitely places of consecration – sacred places and times. When we experience a true SP, it always becomes a consecrated moment. SPs in my living room to moments in the mountains have always been “sacred.”
- Revelation – In a word, the real benefit and blessing of SPs. From my Kansas farmhouse living room to a youth ministry in Florida – from my singleness to marriage. These were all moments of revelation. God has plans for us...they are frequently revealed in our Secret Place. It’s important to go there often to learn His plan for our lives.
- Silence – Ah, often this is the attribute many people find most difficult and sometimes scary. We live in a world that bombards us with sound 24x7...and when we find ourselves surrounded by silence we can immediately become



ill-at-ease. In today’s technology-filled environment, it is far too easy to fill the silence with noise. “My music calms me... helps me concentrate... drowns out the background... I just need the TV on to give me company...” I’ve heard so many “reasons” to avoid silence and sometimes used the excuses myself.

Still, I’m someone who can travel miles in the lonely silence of an automobile. Some of that is due to my years as an OTR truck driver – miles alone with the Lord are always a blessing. The point is I often seek silence and I testify to the power of silence as a powerful prelude to, and perpetuation of, SP experiences. *“Be still, and know that I am God.”* Psalm 46:10

• Glory <just a glimpse> – Herein lies what I consider the most memorable gift of Secret Place experiences. Like Moses, who wanted to see God’s Glory, Exodus 33:18, while we may not seek it, we too can be blessed by catching a glimpse of His Glory in our SP. Our “cleft-in-the-rock” experience may take place in our Secret Place – or perhaps as we are obedient to the plan He reveals in our SP. It’s available to us all – and often manifested in the “Silence” of a “Secret Place.”

In 2011, I was blessed to hear Mama Maggie Gobran, founder of Eygpt’s Stephen’s Children, speak. She said, “The Silence is the Secret.” Her life, while intimidating, is an awesome example of how to regularly have Secret Place experiences. Mama Maggie rarely chooses to participate in social evenings, a discipline that allows her to get a good night’s sleep so she can arise at 3:00 a.m. every day to spend several hours alone with her Heavenly Father. Yet, even as the leader of a huge ministry, she purposefully sets aside one week every two months to spend at a monastery in total Silence.

My prayer is we all grow by experiencing our Secret Places. Morganton CBMC (Christian Business Men’s and Women’s Connection) meets every Tuesday, Noon -1 p.m., Morganton Community House, for Lunch, Bible study, and Fellowship. Join us.

Steve Brubaker, and his wife, Myra, moved to Morganton in 2019 after retiring with 30 years at John Deere. Steve’s background includes several years in Youth Ministry, on staff, and as a volunteer. He also served as a lay pastor in western Colorado, where he grew up and worked 10 years in the family farm equipment business. He and Myra attend Alliance Bible Fellowship in Boone.

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March 2022 - Blue Ridge Christian News page 15

Are You Ready?

By Chris Rathbone
Mitchell County

By the time most of you read the articles for this month, the signs of spring will most likely be showing up all around us. There have been quite a few conversations already going on about folk looking forward to warmer weather, longer days, and of course garden season! While I’m more of a cool weather person myself, the change of seasons from winter to spring is a welcome sight when the colors of spring begin to show up. We will all be reminded that God has kept His promise that “*While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.*” Genesis 8:22 Listening to some at the church one would think this winter has lasted for 6 months and we’ve really only had 1 good snow! Did I mention my love for snow also?

Spring always brings a sense of renewal and new life. After months of bare trees and plants, the leaves begin to show up, flowers begin to bloom, and the grass turns to a vibrant green. These are all signs of the coming season. Spring rains come at just the right time to give nature a boost (It's almost as if God made it that way! Funny how that works!). Folks with farms and gardens will be busy preparing the ground for the new growing season. I purchased some fertilizer and lime from Griffith's and Son store in Tipton Hill just this week. According to them, the fertilizer has been a hot seller lately as people are looking ahead. There’s an excitement in the air, so to speak, about this new time and the hope it brings for the days ahead. Days of increased warmth, outdoor activities, and doing the work a lot of folks enjoy.

This time of year there is always a great sense of anticipation. The renewed sense of better days ahead. We will be leaving behind those days of dreary weather, cold wind, and blowing snow. We are looking for warmth and sunshine. Our hearts are longing, hoping, and anticipating days that will be brighter. What seemed like long winter days will be in the past behind us and we will be enjoying and basking in the warmth and hope of spring, of light, of life renewed! The colder the winter, the sweeter the spring!

We as believers in Jesus and His word can look around this world and see how dark things are getting. The events that the Bible tells us will happen in the last days are happening all around us. There is a blatant push towards world government, world currency, and economics. We hear cries for unity among nations that will lead to peace. We hear cries for unity among world religions, for tolerance, and for compromise, that will lead to a utopia where every belief, religion, and philosophy is on equal ground and acceptance. There are increased calls for Biblical beliefs to be removed from the public and governmental policies. Christianity is under increased hatred and persecution. In our nation specifically, leaders seem to be determined to remove Christianity and promote freedom of other faiths. We can believe but it has to be following what is accepted in the secular realm, no descent, no disagreement, no standing on Biblical truth or authority. You’ll be labeled a religious bigot, judgmental, far-right extremist, even racist or intolerant if you adhere to Biblical teachings. And it really doesn’t matter if people try to adhere to what is being taught in this secular realm. Next week the standard will be changed and the same accusations will be shouted from the rooftops towards those who don’t conform. To focus on this old world and its systems would lead one to lose hope for the future. It’s like having to endure a never-ending, dark, cold, spiritual winter!

What we see happening now in the world around us is pointing and leading to a better and brighter future. Adrian Rogers said, “It’s getting dark, but for the believer, it’s getting gloriously dark!” These are birth pains getting the church ready for delivery. The wars, rumors of wars Jesus taught about, the great falling away Paul taught about, the love of many growing cold, the hatred the unbelieving world has for Christ and His church and Israel is all around us. These things may trouble us in the flesh, but should excite us in the Spirit! The more we see these things come to pass, the closer we are to the coming of Christ! He is coming just as He said. God will deliver His church, this world will be judged along with the wicked and the wicked systems and religions of this world. God will fulfill His promises and His word.

Are you ready for the return of Christ? Have you been born again by repenting of sin and placing your faith in Jesus to save you and give you the free gift of eternal life? Have your sins been forgiven and washed away by the blood of Jesus? If you have answered no to these questions, I implore you to come to Jesus! He gave His life on the cross, shed His blood, suffered the wrath of God so you wouldn’t have to! In Him and Him alone is eternal life and salvation! No one else did for mankind what Jesus has done. Give your life to Jesus, trust Him as your Savior, and be born again.

Like a long, dark, cold winter, this world is coming to an end and the spring of eternal life is near. Are you ready? If not, there’s no time to waste! Now is the accepted time, today is the day of salvation! Jesus is coming, just as He said!

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

For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations. Isaiah 61:11



By Terry Cheek Th.D.
McDowell County

James 1:26-27 ‘*If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. (27) Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.*’

James, the Lord’s half-brother writes to the church in his epistle. He covers many topics, but this month look with me at two verses from chapter one. These two verses challenge us to mind our mouths. Let’s visit these two verses.

The word or term religious is very popular and yet it is a word people very seldom think about. Exactly what does it mean to be religious? This question can be answered using many different approaches, for our study I will be using the text above. The word James uses is the Greek word thrace'-kos and it means a proper demonstration of respect to the only deity.

This is fine; however, it does raise another question: What is proper respect and devotion to the deity? That depends on who or what the deity is. Pagan gods are seen as selfish, greedy, and unpredictable. When we consider these, proper devotion may take the form of a sacrifice that is nothing more than a bribe or protection money. A religious person who shows honor to a pagan god hopes the god will be pleased and not cause a disaster.

However, the one and only true God that is revealed in the Bible has nothing in common with pagan gods. God as revealed through our Bible is just, righteous, and good in all things, He is generous and forgiving. God’s wrath does burn against evil, but His grace is abundant for those willing to receive it. Our Bible teaches us that God takes the side of the weak and helpless – those who recognize their great need for what only He can give.

Therefore, proper respect for the one and only true God is behavior that reflects who God is. This behavior involves being obedient to His will while upholding His standards of justice, mercy, grace, and forgiveness. Respecting God means acknowledging God’s supreme authority in what we say and do.

According to our passage, all of this begins with how we use our tongues. Speech that honors God is speech under control, for illustration, the way a horse with a bit and bridle is under the control of its owner. The speech of a God-honoring person will follow the path that God establishes; he or she will use speech that is filled with love, grace, and forgiveness but tempered by righteousness and justice.

Verse 26 dealt with words and their importance in the life of a godly person. Verse 27 considers the deeds which validate our speech. Here James further explains proper devotion to God with a shortlist of representative actions. In James' day, these were very familiar to Christians of Jewish background.

The Old Testament often names the widows and fatherless as special objects of Gods attention. They are typical of those in a position of weakness. God is their only hope for help. Those who know God will reflect His mercy by responding to this need.

James pairs generosity to the helpless with being unspotted by worldly corruption. Knowing that God is good, just, righteous, and merciful the world which is in rebellion against God is anything but these things. If we allow the world to influence us, we end up bearing the attitude and behavior it produces. What exactly illustrates this attitude and behavior well let’s see; selfishness, violence, hatred, and vindictiveness just to name a few. The individual with a God-honoring life contrasts with and stands out from the world. The life of that individual reflects God Himself rather than the world that runs and hides from Him.

In closing pure...and undefiled is the kind of devotion we seek when we see ourselves and our situation correctly. If we try to split the difference between God and the world, we reveal that we are holding onto sin and not embracing our salvation. Grasping the truth of God's word impels us to end the world’s kind of life and pursue God’s kind.

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

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



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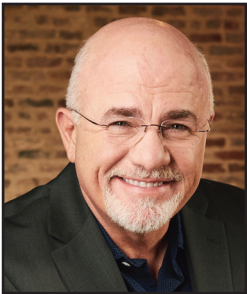
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Dave Says

By Dave Ramsey

Dear Dave,
We have \$15,000 in credit card debt. My husband works very hard, but only makes about \$25,000 a year. We're also living in a very old trailer right now, and I stay at home with our newborn. My dad told us he is willing to pay off our debt if we agree to get financial counseling together, and show that we are serious about doing better with our finances. What should we do? Harper



Dear Harper,
I wouldn't accept the money from your dad if it's going to be a loan. If you really want to ruin family events, have a debt to your parents. It twists you up inside. And it'll be especially hard on your husband. No matter what anyone else says, the borrower is always a slave to the lender.
If it's going to be a gift, meaning there's no expectation of repayment, that's a different story. Still, I think your dad has a great idea in making the debt payoff contingent on you two going to some kind of financial counseling, and making a proactive effort to change things, get out of debt and save money — for your child's future and yours. I'd probably do the same thing.
It doesn't sound like you're being crazy with your money, but it's tough to provide for a family on that kind of income. You and your husband need to sit down together, develop a monthly budget and a realistic five-year plan to improve his earning potential. Make it a date night. Hold hands, do something inexpensive you both enjoy, and let him know he can be anything he wants to be. Then, help him decide exactly what and where he wants to be in five years. What does he want to be making, and what feasible steps can he take educationally or in terms of job training to get there?
If you want to go to work at some point when your baby is a little older, that's fine. I completely understand the desire to be at home with a brand new baby. But hard work alone just isn't enough these days. You've got to boost your brainpower and value in the marketplace, too. God bless you guys!— Dave

Dear Dave,
My husband and I are 30, and we are on Baby Step 2. He wants to go back to school and become a social worker. He currently makes about \$20,000 a year as a teacher's assistant, and he wants to take out student loans to do this. He already has an associate's degree, which wouldn't mean four years of loans, but the idea scares me a lot. I have a good job, so how can I still support him and his desire to further his education without agreeing to go deeper into debt? Britney
Dear Britney,
So, it's kind of a situation where you're working the Baby Steps and he's not. On top of this, he wants to go into debt to do social work. Does he know what social workers make these days?
This guy obviously has a heart for helping people. That's a great thing. But I've got to believe there are ways to expand his options. Social work is one path, but there are probably several paths he could follow to get involved in what he loves about the idea of social work.
I'm guessing he has a passion for counseling and advocating, too. Finishing a four-year degree would put him in a position where he could potentially move into a guidance counselor role or something along those lines, considering his background. But taking out loans isn't necessary. He just needs to be patient, and wait a little bit while you two buckle down on the Baby Steps and get out of debt. He could get a second job for a while nights or weekends, and then you'd be able to pay off your debt faster and avoid those stupid loans thanks to the cash you set aside. Plus, there are millions of dollars in scholarships out there for traditional and non-traditional students.
Sometimes when people feel stuck in a job, they automatically default to the idea they need a degree. What your husband really needs right now is a clear idea and direction. Then, you determine if a degree is necessary to get there. Don't misunderstand me — I'm not against social work. But I've talked to so many people who went six figures into debt, only to wind up making \$38,000 as a social worker for the state. That's crazy!
You two need to sit down together and talk all this out. Tell him why you're worried, and point out that borrowing a bunch of money isn't the only way — and definitely isn't the smart way — to make this happen. If you really want to support him, Britney, you need to help him see there are steps he can take to pursue his dream without it turning into a financial nightmare for both of you. — 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.



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The Power of Mentorship

By Rev. John B. Sorensen



Jesus did not merely commission us to take the Gospel and make converts. He commissioned us to go and make disciples. The prayer of salvation is the first step in our life-long discipleship journey. God seeks those who are willing to grow in their faith and knowledge of Him. So, as we lead others to faith in Jesus, it is important to do all that we can to not to leave them stranded.

Think back to your first steps as a believer. What questions did you struggle with? Did someone walk beside you? Or did you learn in a group from a teacher? For many of us, our faith grew because someone invested time to teach us. We have the same opportunity to invest that time into someone else.

When possible, one-on-one discipleship usually works best. Offer to meet with them once a week to share prayer requests and study the Bible. Share more about your testimony and launch into deeper discussions about questions they might have. Not only will we grow stronger in our faith, but we develop deep, lasting friendships in the process.

Jesus gave us the ultimate example of mentorship. After teaching to the crowds, He often pulled His disciples aside to answer their questions privately and share deeper spiritual truths so they could grow in their faith. Jesus invested time in His disciples to equip them for ministry, so that they could, likewise, invest time in others.

But Jesus didn't stop there. He also modeled to His disciples how to share their faith with others. Witnessing is a vital part of our spiritual growth – just as vital as worship, prayer, reading the Bible, and fellowship with other believers. Our faith grows as we step out in faith and watch God at work in the lives of other people around us.

Mentoring new believers (or even not-so-new believers) in sharing their faith is part of ongoing discipleship. Take someone with you the next time you plan to talk to someone about your faith. Allow them to watch and observe how you break the ice and transition into a deeper spiritual conversation. Take time to answer their questions afterward and share your experience in sharing the Gospel. If you don't know how to share ask someone from your church to mentor you!

Discipleship is a life-long process, but so is the process of making disciples. As we continue to grow spiritually, we can help others grow in their faith by investing in their lives through mentorship. Who will you invest time in this year?

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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Enjoying Everyday Life

Getting Along When Differences Get in the Way

By Joyce Meyer

You've probably noticed that every person is not the same. Each of us has a unique personality with various likes and dislikes. And while we are often drawn to people who are different from we are, it's these differences that can lead to strife in our relationships.

Sometimes we try to convince others to be more like us, but that's not what the Bible teaches us to do. We're all created for freedom and liberty, and if we want to have healthy relationships with people, we need to give them the freedom to be who they are.

I can't tell you how many years I tried to get my husband, Dave, to stop watching sports. But it seemed the more I tried, the worse it got. One Saturday afternoon, I walked into the family room to find him shining his golf clubs while he watched one game on TV and listened to another game using his headphones. I thought, Joyce, your plan is just not working!

The truth is I wanted Dave to do what I wanted to do—I wanted him to be more like me. But trying to change him wasn't accomplishing anything, and it left me frustrated and upset.

I love what Romans 12:16 (AMPC) says: “*Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty (snobbish, high-minded, exclusive), but readily adjust yourself to [people, things]....*”

It's impossible to be selfish and have healthy relationships. If we truly want to live in peace and harmony, it's going to require some give and take. At times, we'll have to adjust our lives to accommodate someone else's needs or desires.

Sometimes this simply means being patient and understanding with those who don't share your own strengths. For instance, have you ever noticed yourself getting irritated with someone who takes more time to make decisions than you do? Or maybe they don't catch on to things as quickly as you would like.

If we allow ourselves to get into prideful thinking, we can hurt people by acting out of our own self-importance and selfish interests. The Lord doesn't want us to have a lowly opinion of ourselves, but He certainly doesn't want us to think we're better than anyone else!

First Corinthians chapter 12 provides the perfect illustration. It says we are all part of one body, each with our own distinct and important role to play. Verse 25 (NIV) tells us “*there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each another.*”

We all need each other, and when we learn to recognize and appreciate each other's talents and abilities, it develops respect that can strengthen and heal our relationships.

Let's make this practical. When I'm having a hard time accepting someone's differences or agreeing with others, there are a few things I try to do to maintain the right attitude...

- When you need to confront someone about a problem or discuss a negative issue, choose your timing wisely. Pray about what to say and ask God to lead you in each conversation.
- Be respectful, even if the other person doesn't agree with your opinion.
- Listen with an open mind. Be willing to pray about what they say.
- Look for things to agree about, instead of focusing on your differences.
- Use positive body language and voice tones, and choose every word with care.

There will be times when you won't find a thing to agree on, and in those circumstances, the best thing you can do is trust God, let it go, and become an expert at forgiveness.

Yes, some things are very important and you need to stand your ground, but there are so many things in life that just don't make a difference.

The bottom line is you won't always agree with your spouse, family, or friends, but you can still respect and appreciate them. I don't agree with Dave about all his opinions or 100 percent of everything he does, but I do agree with Dave. He's a good man, and I love him and value his character and principles. Over the years, we've learned how to "disagree agreeably."

I encourage you to trust God with the people in your life. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you see the positive in your relationships and the things you have in common. And as you do your part to “keep the peace,” God will not only honor your commitment, He will also bless your life in greater ways than you can imagine.

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.



Book Review

A Light in the Darkness

By Shelia Ramsey

Yancey County

The national news blares a worldwide warning of increased natural disasters, rising energy costs, the climate in crisis, shortages, and the rising cost of food, companies declaring bankruptcy as the Covid pandemic continues to take lives and affect every family worldwide.

I believe we are living in the last days of Creation,
as the End of Time is nearing as prophesied in Matthew 24:7 (KJV): “*for nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.*”

As we watch and wait for the glorious coming of our Lord and Savior, we must encourage and minister to the needs of each other. This book of poetry, “A Light in the Darkness” by Regina McIntosh, will encourage, strengthen faith and bring peace and joy to the reader.

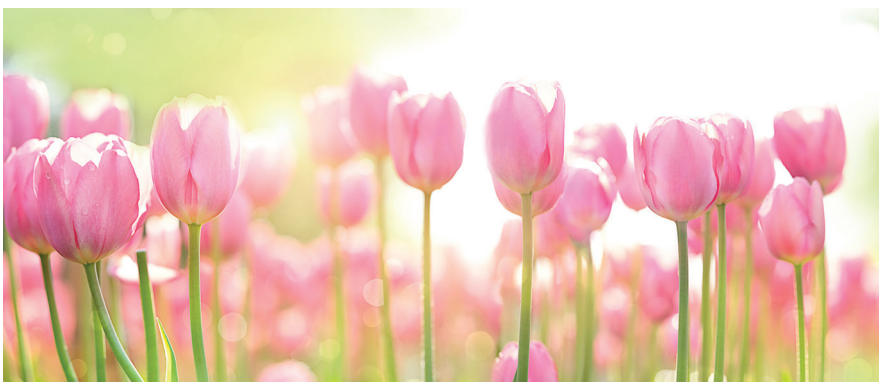
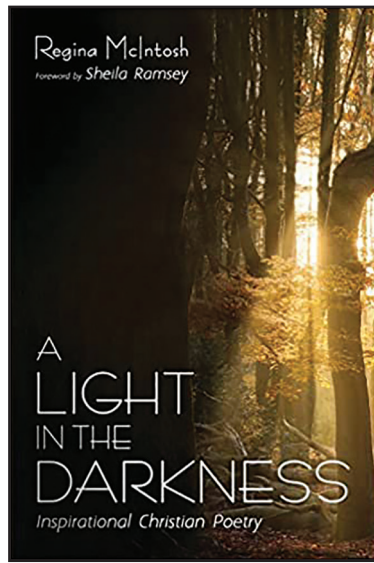
I met this Christian poetess on the first day of school as she came into my second-grade classroom. Sporting a new purple dress with matching hairbows, she walked with a bounce of enthusiasm that gave the head full of natural curls freedom to spring-like corkscrews, framing her large September sky-blue eyes.


Her pursed little lips gave way to a heart-melting smile that revealed new white teeth with a space between the front incisors. She was interested in two main learning centers: art and writing!

Gina was the class catalyst as she chose to write about the things she knew. Living beneath the shadow of the John King Mountain in the Appalachian chain of Yancey County, NC, she saw wildlife and nature's creation visible to only a few who are fortunate enough to live among such splendor. Reared in a Christian home, with a loving family, Gina was never without paper, pencils, and the beauty of nature and God's word to capture and create visions in poetic form for others to enjoy.

Continuing to write, this poetess has written professionally for others who published her works. God recently placed a yearning in her heart to use this gift He has given her to bring honor and glory to His Holy name. Reading her work stirs the soul... rekindling fires of hope, reminding us of God's Amazing Grace as it takes our thought from the darkness we are experiencing in these days of crisis and renews our faith in God and His promises as we press "Homeward".

*You can find Regina McIntosh's work at reginamcintosh.com or search for her work on Amazon.







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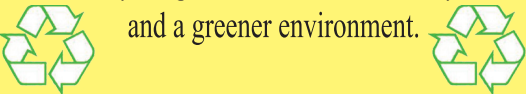


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The Nut Cat

By Christy Lowman
Burke County



This month I wanted to talk about a backyard critter that you more than likely see in your own backyard. My family refers to them as Nut Cats. This animal is usually mostly gray in color however they have been found with red, black, brown, and white fur. In fact, you can find white ones in Brevard, North Carolina. Do you know which backyard critter I'm talking about?

Tree Squirrels!

Tree squirrels have four teeth that continually grow. They have to gnaw to keep their teeth the correct size and shape. I was shocked to find out that tree squirrels are omnivores. Not only do they eat, nuts, flowers, buds, bark, seeds, roots, they also eat eggs, baby birds, insects, and caterpillars!

Their front feet have 4 long fingers plus a short stubby thumb. Their back feet have 5 toes. They have bald soles and their ankles are very flexible which gives them the ability to lay their hind feet flat against the tree while climbing it.

Squirrels have several predators. When these predators are around, tree squirrels use a buddy system. They will alert each other with a whistle and bark that a predator is nearby. Every time they bark, they will flick their tail. Squirrels also snort, screech, and make all sorts of other sounds for communication.

Some squirrels hide and hoard nuts in many places. They do not come back and eat all of the nuts they bury resulting in new tree saplings in the spring.

The smallest tree squirrel is the African Pygmy which is only 5 inches from its nose to the end of its tail.

The largest tree squirrel is the multicolor Indian Giant which grows up to 3 feet long!

The most common tree squirrel is the Eastern Gray. This squirrel was made NC's state mammal in 1969. The Eastern Gray can be found with white, black, and red fur.

Is it not awesome that God made all these tree squirrels? Not only that, the Eastern Gray, (and other types) can be found in multiple colors!

This reminds me that God made people, He made us many different colors, but there is no difference in us at all. We bleed, we sin, we love, and we all have a soul that needs to be saved by God's grace. God loves us all equally no matter what color we are. Just like He loves all the different colors of the Eastern Gray squirrel. He doesn't have a preference or favorite color! They are all equal in His eyes and all colors of people should be equal in our eyes! Remember our daily goal is to be Christlike!

Dear Lord, help us love one another the same no matter what we look like! We thank You dear Lord for loving every one of us equally! Help us strive to be like You and treat each other how we want to be treated! In Jesus's name, I pray, Amen.

"For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile-the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on Him." Romans 10:12

"But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.'" 1 Samuel 16:7

If you are interested in seeing the white Eastern Gray squirrel, visit Brevard NC. They also have a yearly festival celebrating this squirrel around Memorial Day weekend.

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

Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven. Psalms 85:11

By Steve Carter
Tupelo, Mississippi

Reggie’s black hoodie complimented his salt and pepper beard, while Tony sported a black toboggan and pullover shirt. While sitting on stools and leaning on a counter we talked, as old friends do, and discussed our place in God’s overall plan.

Reggie, his face beaming from the memory pointed out; “God blesses us in ways, only those in His service could understand.” As one of my Associate Pastors, Reggie presented himself to God as a “blank sheet of paper.” The fact that he felt “unqualified” and needed no praise for his work, made him fit right in as a servant God can use. Soon after entering the ministry, Reggie started accomplishing things he had no training or experience in. God “brought out talents unknown to me” and these undiscovered skills soon began to have a positive impact on people’s lives. In no way did his previous life indicate what a welcome presence he would be. Forever greeting people at the door with a sincere handshake, he instantly makes newcomers and members alike know they are welcome.

These little things we do, have harvested spiritual fruit in my life as well. Personally, one of my biggest rewards is being thanked by a friend from work for “sticking with me all these years” and “making a huge impact on my life.” This man had never been mentored and needed a slow steady guiding hand. At the time, my efforts seemed to be going nowhere fast, but the result, of helping mature a very strong Christian man made it more than worthwhile. I certainly did nothing spectacular or noteworthy on the job. I simply walked the walk and let God handle the details.

When I called a dear friend, Harold, for his input on this article, he enthusiastically told of singing in a ‘pandemic thinned choir while God fills the sanctuary with voices like they were one hundred strong!’ Aside from being simply a great guy, his many “unsung talents” include his ability to cook. The church where he is a member would not dream of planning an event involving food unless Harold is manning the grill. Being the good Methodist he is, Harold can turn a chicken into something Heaven sent!

Tony, another Associate Pastor, in his soft-spoken voice stated, “The journey is the destination.” Having spent several years in high-level management and playing football, Tony picked up an appreciation of “team effort.” This gentle but strong man in the faith understands his place in the plan. His job, while often being “behind the scenes” like Reggie, Harold, and me, is as important as anything else done for the congregation. The overall performance of any organization, whether it be a football team or local church depends on all the parts working in harmony. For those who have no desire to “be in the spotlight,” there is much to do in performing what might seem insignificant duties. God has special rewards waiting that cannot be found outside of God’s plan for our personal ministry.

While each of those mentioned in this article has a strong enough personality for something more “appreciated,” we realize the pitfalls that often go together with pats on the back. None of us are comfortable with a lot of attention and are content with where God placed us in His Kingdom. He knows where our value lies. While it is often not what we would have chosen, we have faith in His ability to place us where we will be the most productive. All He needs is a little cooperation.

God expects very few of us to preach to the multitudes or be featured in televised ministry. He has plenty of folks taking care of all that. If we aren’t called to anything high profile; change a flat tire for a stranded motorist or buy a little gas for those on dire straits. Helping the handicapped to their car is, in His eyes, as important as singing on the Praise Team. Mowing a yard for no payment goes a lot further than simply feeling sorry for those that can’t.

Any time an encouraging word is offered or paying for a stranger’s meal anonymously, God’s love is displayed by our actions. It’s the small things that make the difference. God views the “little things” we do in His name as if we are doing them for Him personally! Answer yes when asked, God will fill in the blanks.

Steve Carter is entering his 5th decade of Christian ministry. Steve had peddled across the continental United States twice. Mr. Carter's email is: Msroadkill@bellsouth.net



Rusting in Peace
By Tracy Jessup

“Blessed are those who trust in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. They shall be like a tree planted by water; sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of drought it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit.” (Jeremiah 17:7-8)

On April 2, 2007, a devastating earthquake in the western Solomon Islands caused a tsunami that killed 52 people. Reefs were pushed up an estimated 10 feet and exposed a World War II torpedo boat that had rested on the ocean floor for over 60 years. Only the hull with its deadly cargo of explosives remained intact. According to JayWaura of the National Disaster Management Office, “a Solomon Islands Police Force bomb disposal unit was be sent to the island to safely detonate the explosives.”

Decaying military wrecks from World War II are believed to be scattered across the coastline of the Solomon Islands, including the torpedo patrol boat commanded by John F. Kennedy. Commenting on the discovery, Waura said, “We were amazed by this finding, as previously this wreckage had long been sitting under the sea and rusting in peace without anyone knowing about it” (“Quake brings WWII PT boat up from ocean floor,” 4/27/07).

“This wreckage had long been sitting under the sea and rusting in peace without anyone knowing about it.” Jeremiah, often called the weeping prophet, was no stranger to suffering, and he reminds us that we are offered two options in the face of adversity and the wreckage we sometimes encounter in life. Everything hinges on the object of our trust and where our hearts are. *“Cursed are those who trust in mere mortals and make mere flesh their strength, whose hearts turn away from the Lord”* (v. 5). On the outside, things may appear to be fine, but spiritually, there is “wreckage...rusting in peace without anyone knowing about it.” Their life is a spiritual desert of thirst and loneliness apart from God (v. 6).

But there is an alternative to trusting in mere mortals. *“Blessed are those who trust in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. They shall be like a tree planted by water; sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of drought it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit”* (Vv. 7-8). This does not mean that the one who trusts in God never encounters adversity. Jeremiah recognizes that drought and heat will still come, but because our trust and strength are in the Lord we will endure the difficult conditions. As a matter of fact, rather than “rusting in peace,” we will thrive spiritually – *“not ceasing to bear fruit”* (v. 8).

God can be glorified in our suffering when we bear fruit amid the wreckage of life. But first, we must resist the temptation to trust in ourselves or others and place our trust in God and God alone.

Prayer: Lord, we do trust you, but we ask for grace to trust you more.

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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2022 National Day of Prayer

By Monica Kirtz
Mitchell County

Hello! It is that time of year again, as we are looking forward to the National Day of Prayer 2022. If ever, ever, ever there was a time to come together and pray, it is now, now, now. We cannot afford to sit still anymore. We cannot afford to close our eyes to problems anymore. We cannot afford to waste our time with every other distraction...besides prayer. Our nation is depending on it. Our state is depending on it. Our town and county and communities depend on it.

So attention, all pastors and Christians...I'm depending on you to help me spread the word.

Thursday, May 5th
Prayer & Prayer Walk at Riverside Park
2 times: 12:00 noon
6:30 p.m.

Please put this on your calendars now and plan to come.

Pray.
Repent.
Abounding (full of) thanksgiving.
Yield ourselves.
Exalt The LORD.
Rooted & grounded in Him.

The 2022 theme is "Exalt The LORD Who has Established us".
The 2022 Scripture is Colossians 2:6-7, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving."
Monica Henley Kritz
Prayer Coordinator
County Coordinator for the National Day of Prayer

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



By Joe Sturz
Shenandoah, Virginia



A wonderful inexpensive gift for yourself, your children, and/or grandchildren are the McGuffey Readers to learn to read, write, and speak English for grades 1-6 schooling. For over the first 100 years of our country the: Bible, Noah Webster's 1828 Dictionary, and the Eclectic Readers (informally known as the Mc Guffey Readers) were the main basics of educating American schoolchildren. Their influence in shaping American culture was incalculable.

Many Christians doing homeschooling still use the Mc Guffey Readers due to the simple way they teach English and instill Biblical values in young minds. This is true, especially for the first edition published in 1836-1837 which has been reprinted many times due to the large demand. Later revised editions of the McGuffey Readers have greatly weakened Christian values.

Brother Joe "recommending original Mc Guffey Readers" Sturz 2/16/2022

Out-of-print for over 125 years, the original McGuffey's Eclectic Readers are considered educational classics. These books are world-renowned for their teaching of reading through the integration of faith with learning. William Holmes McGuffey, the outstanding 19th-century educator, and preacher, combined both of his God-given talents in the preparation of these early textbooks. Millions of copies were sold in their original Christ-centered form. The character of our Nation was molded in an upright manner through the repeated use of these textbooks over several generations.

A reprint of the original complete set of 8 books are available now for less than \$100.00
<https://www.christianbook.com/original-mcguFFEys-eclectic-reading-series-teachers/william-mcguFFEy/9780880620291/pd/620293?en=bing-pla&event=SHOP&kw=homeschool>
www.sturzchristiancounseling.com You can look on my website for my "Workbook for Couples" that prepares singles for marriage as well.

Sharing what the Lord has taught me through His Word, my mistakes, failures, and successes in 42 years of marriage (before my beloved went to heaven) and 51+ years as a Biblical counselor. Look for my short, daily Bible messages on my Facebook Group and Timeline. Seeking to apply all of the Bible to all of life as a means of raising kingdom builders for the Lord. If they help you understand the Bible better and you would like to read more of them then click on "Following" and please feel free to use them in your ministry with others.

If you are coming to God for salvation here is a prayer to help you. "Heavenly Father, I know I have done many sins. I cannot remember them all, but You have a record of them and I ask that You blot them out. I believe You will, as I fully repent of my sins and with Your help change my ways. I believe and fully trust in Your Son Jesus Christ dying on the cross for me. His blood was shed for my forgiveness and His rising from the dead securing a place in heaven for me." "I ask this in Jesus name because of what He did for me (John 16:23-24)." "Amen."

Addendum

The Eclectic Readers (commonly, but informally known as the McGuffey Readers) were a series of graded primers for grade levels 1-6. They were widely used as textbooks in American schools from the mid-19th century to the early 20th century, and are still used today in homeschooling.

The editors of the Readers were brothers William Holmes McGuffey and Alexander Hamilton McGuffey. William created the first four readers and Alexander McGuffey created the fifth and sixth readers.[1][2][3] About 120 million copies of McGuffey's Readers were sold between 1836 and 1960, placing its sales in a category with the Bible and Webster's Dictionary.[4] Since 1961, they have continued to sell at a rate of some 30,000 copies a year.[4] Only the Ray's Arithmetic series (1834-1913) matched it in popularity, written by a colleague of McGuffey's and begun in 1834.[4]

https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/McGuffey_Readers

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.

OUR FAMILY WOULD LIKE TO ANNOUNCE THE GRADUATION OF

Alicia Waycaster

from South College in Asheville, North Carolina. She is the wife of Anthony Waycaster, mother of Noah and Elijah Waycaster, and daughter of Karen Stewart (John and James Buchanan Jr. (Ranae)).

Alicia received a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree Cum Lade in December of 2021. She was the Vice President of the nursing cohort. A pinning honoring the graduates of the program was held on December 17th 2021, at Biltmore Church of God in Asheville, where she was presented with the "Outstanding Nursing Student" award.

Alicia has accepted a job as a Registered Nurse on the Cardiac Telemetry Unit at UNC Healthcare Blue Ridge. She would like to personally thank each colleague and patient she has had the pleasure of working with throughout the years, especially those who not only supported her, but believed she could achieve great things.

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A Difference-Maker!

Dr. Jack R. Hodges, Jr.
Burke County



In Mark 10:46-52, we read about an interesting encounter that Jesus had with a blind man. Mark reported (v. 46), *“Then they came to Jericho. And as He was leaving Jericho with His disciples and a large crowd, a blind beggar named Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the road.”* This amazing encounter occurred while Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem and ultimately on His way to Calvary. Needless to say, He had a lot on His mind and heart. And yet amazingly, amid the emotionally and physically challenging journey toward the cross, Jesus heard the cry of a blind man for help. The blind man is identified by Mark as Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus. When Bartimaeus heard that it was Jesus passing by, he cried out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” Others around him, who also had gathered along the road heading out of Jericho to catch a glimpse of the one that they had heard had performed many miracles, tried to quieten the blind man. But he would not be silenced. He continued to cry out.

And then, all of sudden, Jesus stopped. He had heard the man’s cry, even though the noise of His own thoughts and emotions, even while the Savior’s mind was focused upon the horror of the impending events. And when He heard the cry for mercy, Jesus knew He could do something about it. Jesus called for him to come close. And then the Master asked, “What do you want Me to do for you?” Bartimaeus replied, “Rabboni [Master], I want to regain my sight.” Immediately, Jesus commanded him, *“Go; your faith has made you well.”* The blind man was immediately healed by the word of the Lord Jesus activated by the faith of the one who placed his faith in the mercy of the Lord.

How did Mark know the formerly blind man’s name? The answer is found in the second part of verse 52, *“...And immediately he regained his sight and began following Him on the road.”* Bartimaeus received his sight, beheld the Messiah, and followed Him.

Perhaps as you read this devotional, you find yourself identifying with the blind man. Maybe you have experienced the debilitating effects of illness, loss, fear, anger, or any number of paralyzing experiences. I urge you to cry out to the Lord for mercy and healing. He will hear your cry and act upon your faith according to His will and way.

But there is another aspect of this story that I want you to see. The interesting thing about following the Master, is that although He was focused upon a specific plan, purpose, and destination ahead, Jesus was always attending to the unexpected needs and opportunities that were along the way. Jesus heard the cries of the blind, desperate, unclean, and helpless.

He offered them mercy, grace, love, and salvation.

There is, quite likely, a “blind man” (woman, son, daughter, neighbor, or friend) sitting by your pathway. They are begging for your attention, your time, your presence—and perhaps you don’t even see them or know that they exist. Too busy or preoccupied with your own difficulties, plans, or purposes, you miss the need and opportunity to minister a word of comfort or encouragement. You miss the privilege of serving them with the kindness and love of the Savior. As a follower of Christ, it is now time to see them! Not just see them, but to invest yourself in their lives and bring mercy, grace, love, and blessing. You can be a difference-maker for the glory of the Lord and allow the Master to use you to touch other people’s lives in His name

Dr. Jack R. Hodges, Jr. is the Senior Pastor at Pleasant Hill Baptist Church in Morganton, Burke County. He has served as a pastor, a biblical counselor and a International Mission Board missionary.



By Christy Young
Mitchell County



Do you ever feel as if you are unworthy of God’s love and attention? I do! We all struggle daily to make the right choices and live a godly life. But we all fail, we all have a past, and we all fall short of the glory of God. With great thanks, I can say as a child of God.He forgives us and still loves us. We all need Jesus because every one of us with no exception has sinned and has failures in our lives. We can’t go back and change our past, but Jesus forgives us and can use our testimony. In Hebrews 13:8, the Bible says, *“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever.”* Isn’t that great to know, that in our sin, our failures, Jesus can wipe us clean, and offer us a new beginning?

Do you desire a friend that will never leave you or forsake you? I do! We all have had friends that have let us down and disappointed us. But Jesus offers a friendship with no attachments. He knows your weaknesses, yet He believes in your best. He sees great things in each of His children. He treasures us and sees the potential that we have to offer. What a true, unchanging friend that Jesus is.

Jesus holds the future. Who else are we to trust? In the perfect hands of Jesus, He secures our today, our tomorrow, and all eternity. Jeremiah 29:11-12 says, *“For I know the thoughts I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you.”* Jesus teaches us through this scripture that He has great plans for us. He wants to see us live a life of fulfillment and peace. He wants to give us hope, and that hope is Heaven.

We all are just passing through this world. God gives us a choice to accept him as our Lord and Savior, or deny Him. If we choose to accept Him, we choose everlasting life. We are forgiven, we have a forever friend, and we have everlasting life in Heaven with Jesus. I can’t imagine a life without my Lord and Savior. No matter what struggle or hardship I face, I find comfort in the presence of the Holy Spirit. He gives me the ability to overcome and endure. Knowing that one day that I will dwell in Heaven with Jesus and pain, sorrow, and sickness will be no more. Without accepting Jesus as your Savior, there is no hope. Your future will be that of torment forever and ever. If you have not accepted Jesus as your Savior and desire to be set free from your past, have a forever friend by your side, and know that Heaven is your future home, please pray this prayer:

Jesus, I invite you into my life. I believe with everything within me that you died, shed your precious blood for me, and rose on the third day. Your blood paid for my sins and provides me the gift of eternal life. Jesus, I am sorry for the wrong that I have done. I ask you to please forgive me of my sins. By faith, I accept your precious gift of salvation, eternal life. I acknowledge you as My Lord, My Savior. Amen!

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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Mt. Carmel Baptist Church

“What Do You Expect?”

By Toby Crowder
Mitchell County

Acts 3:6-7 *“Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.”*

We all have expectations... things that we not only hope for but fully anticipate. I remember reading about the student who consistently failed to meet the expectations of his teacher. After one particularly frustrating assignment, he said to his teacher “I am not an under-achiever, you are just an “over-expecter.” Speaking of humans, it certainly can lead to disappointment if we “over-expect,” but when considering what we expect from God, we learn that He has never been, nor will He be found inadequate to meet our need! The Psalmist said in Psalm 62:5 *“My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him.”* God owes us nothing... yet, in grace and mercy, He makes salvation available to us and blesses us! Many times, we do not realize the blessings that we forfeit by expecting too little from a God who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.

In Acts 3:6-8, Peter and John are seen going to the Temple to pray when a beggar asked them for money. He was a crippled man who sat outside the Temple courts begging each day. He sat daily in the splendor of the Tabernacle, in the gate called Beautiful, yet he was destitute. This man was daily in the temple, but not to offer worship... he was simply trying to provide for himself. His circumstances were tragic to him... but we all have circumstances that we would change if we could. While we may be whole physically, other situations are beyond our control...possibly a failed or failing marriage or relationship, or trauma from a past event that happened. Maybe it is an addiction that no one realizes... a sin that has its grasp or a situation that makes us feel bound by our circumstances.

Even though he asked them for alms...they replied with a strange request... “Look on us.” Notice that Instead of opening a purse and dropping a few coins towards the man, Peter said..." *Silver and gold have I none;*" ... When the beggar heard this, I am sure his heart fell as once more his plea was being ignored. But then he heard Peter say, *“but such as I have give I thee.”* and he commanded the man in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth to get up and walk! The man was miraculously healed and left a completely changed person. He had asked for alms, but he was given healing. I wonder...like the beggar, How many times do we ask God for temporary fixes and short-term solutions rather than for His intervention in our lives? Have I asked for physical or material things when I should have been expecting the richness of the spiritual blessings that God intends for His children? Could it be that his desire was limited by his conditions? He had been bound by this illness for so long, that he could not imagine being freed from it and only desired enough to survive another day.

How many of us settle for the day in... and day out of our lives? We do not expect anything more because we cannot see past our circumstances. We do not ask for healing, because we expect pain...We do not ask for change, because we expect the status quo. We do not ask for light, because we expect darkness. We do not ask for revival, because complacency has us bound to our routines. Instead of “over-expecting” our circumstances have conditioned us to do just the opposite. May we realize, as the beggar did, God can not only send help...but healing. The old prayer still rings loudly today that says: "I asked God for strength that I might achieve. I was made weak that I might learn humbly to obey. I asked for wealth that I might do greater things. I was given the infirmity that I might do better things. I asked for riches that I might be happy with. I was given poverty that I might be wise. I got nothing I asked for, but received everything I hoped for."

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



Snow Hill Baptist Church

Where to from here? - No Regrets

By Dean Honeycutt
Mitchell County

Have you ever arrived at a place and then said where do we go from here? That is the way I feel coming through this pandemic. We are getting to the place where we are looking for direction. I for one do not like waiting around. I like to know what I am doing and where I am going, and how to get there.

Shutdowns, mask mandates, and fear have thrown the church into a tailspin. I have discussed the frustrations with pastors who struggle with making plans and moving forward. Churches were considered non-essential during the initial stages of the pandemic. And this mindset has caused a lot of people to avoid returning to church and has lowered the importance of faithfulness and commitment to the local church.

The following scriptures teach us that fear does not come from God, and that gathering with Christians in a worship service is expected. 2 Timothy 1:7 (KJV 1900) *7 “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”* Hebrews 10:25 (KJV 1900)

25 “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”

Church attendance is necessary and expected of all believers and is never an option. The bottom line is people avoid church because they do not have a deep devotion to Jesus Christ. A study of the early New Testament church demonstrates a Christian’s devotion to the local church despite an imminent possibility of persecution. The book of Acts describes great persecution against the church and the martyrdom of believers, yet the church continued to meet and spread the Gospel. For a few months, I have been struggling with direction and what to do next. I grow tired of the confusion surrounding all the mandates and COVID restrictions. I felt like I was always pumping the brakes on ministry. So, I began to talk to the Lord about what to do. At first, I thought the answer to my concerns was something physical in nature. I needed more of something that I did not have. I could not put my finger on what more I needed, I just knew something needed to change. So, I spent several weeks praying about what I needed more of and the direction I needed to take.

On a Wednesday night just before I went to bed I was speaking with the Lord and He said, “you need more of me.” In other words, I need to spend more time with Jesus. I need to concentrate on my relationship with Jesus Christ. This really makes sense to me now because when my focus is on Christ then my direction on where to go will always involve Jesus.

The disciples after the crucifixion must have felt like this as well. They must have thought where do we go from here? Jesus is not with us. They have crucified Him, and He is in the grave. Having seen Jesus after the resurrection the disciples take on an entirely distinct perspective. They now have great purpose, resolve, and direction for life. And this purpose and direction would never change for these followers of Christ. The disciples would wholeheartedly pursue the establishment of the New Testament Church and the preaching of the Gospel.

This pandemic and the birth pains we have been experiencing have not changed God’s plan and direction for the Church. Our Mission and mandate have not changed. Matthew 28:19–20 (KJV 1900) *19 “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”*

My marching orders have not changed. In this world, we are going to have trials and challenges, but our instructions have not changed. Our mission and mandate are still the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Heaven is my destination and telling others about Jesus is my job while I am on my journey.

Problems in this world can cause my purpose and direction to be obscure. But one thing is for certain. God has not changed. His purpose is clear and His direction is certain. My job is to follow Him faithfully in all circumstances.

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



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Teaching Children How to
Protect Birds in Your Backyard

(StatePoint) Part of being a good environmental steward is passing on this wisdom to the next generation. Here are three hands-on ways parents and grandparents can teach children to protect the birds in their very own backyard.

Build a Bird Feeder

Build bird feeders using natural or recycled materials to teach two earth-friendly lessons in one: the importance of reducing waste and the need to take care of local wildlife. Bird feeders can be crafted from milk cartons, tin cans, mason jars, or even natural materials like pinecones. As you decorate your bird feeders, talk to your kids about how birds are not just beautiful, but also a vital part of the ecosystem and how you are offering these creatures a chance to rest and refuel. Fill your finished products with birdseed and choose a safe spot to hang them. Experts recommend bird feeders be positioned either closer than three feet or farther than 30 feet from windows.



Protect Flight

Birds in flight are prone to strike windows. Fortunately, there's an easy home project you and your children can complete together that will help prevent this from happening. Applying decals that reflect ultraviolet sunlight to your home's windows, particularly windows that are highly reflective of open sky, has been proven to substantially reduce the likelihood of bird strikes. Those from WindowAlert feature patterns that give the appearance of slightly frosted translucent glass, but glow like a stoplight for birds. Kids can help select from fun decal designs like snowflakes, butterflies, and maple leaves. The brand also makes a high-tech UV liquid that offers even greater protection when applied between decals. To learn more, visit WindowAlert.com.

Keep a Log

Now that you've invited birds to your yard and have taken steps to protect them, inspire young naturalists to keep a log of flying visitors. Kids can draw pictures of the birds they see and note their observations. Visit Audubon for Kids at audubon.org for a birding guide, activities, games, and additional projects that can help kids learn to identify various bird species by sight and sound.



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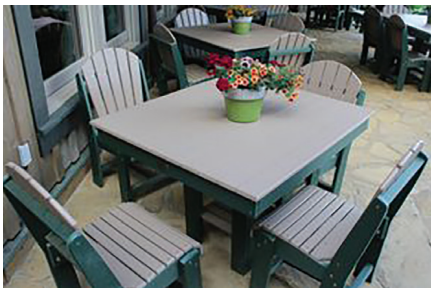
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Elementary Students Awarded At The Science Fair

By Jonelle Sigmon
Burke County

Burke County Public Schools recently held its annual Elementary School Science Fair awards ceremony at the Old Rock School in Valdese. There were a total of 35 projects coming from each of the 14 elementary schools. The science projects showcased experiments about magnetism, battery power, buoyancy, paper airplane flight, and which brand of popcorn pops the best.

After each school and their participants were recognized for their participation, first-, second-, third- and fourth-place winners were recognized.

Bailey Heape from Oak Hill Elementary was awarded first place with the science fair project titled “Mask Madness.”

Adalynn Thomas from Valdese Elementary was awarded second place with the science fair project titled “Making Plants Grow.”

Zoey Taylor from Icard Elementary was awarded third place for the project titled “Which Brand Pops the Best.”

Will Lowman from Icard Elementary was awarded fourth place for the science fair project titled “Paper in Flight.”

Burke County Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Mike Swan said, “It was so encouraging to see so many of our students engaged in projects that help them not only in learning about science but also in problem-solving, critical thinking, and teamwork. We are proud of each student and congratulate them on their hard work. We can’t forget about the teachers and parents who came alongside them to guide and lead throughout the whole process. Great job to all!”



Pictured are students Bailey Heape, Adalynn Thomas, Zoey Taylor, and Will Lowman.

What Many Women Desperately Need to Hear from the Pulpit

By Rev. Mark Creech



It was “Sanctity of Human Life Sunday” at this church; I was a guest speaker for the morning worship. The pastor invited me to come and preach on the very controversial subject of abortion. The message I gave addressed not only the wanton destruction of human life but also addressed any woman who might be considering an abortion, as well as any woman who may have already had one.

Afterward, a woman came up to me and said with an expression of tremendous gratitude how glad she was my message spoke to women who had had an abortion. She never divulged whether she ever had an abortion or not, and I didn’t ask. But she said to me with great emotion: “Thank you for telling women that God will forgive them for their abortion. Sometimes I think we give them the impression they are automatically damned to hell. They need to hear that Christ will forgive them of anything.”

Another lady who overheard our conversation then chimed in and interjected, “Yes, but some women say they have no regrets and are happy they had an abortion.” To which the first woman replied, “You know, I think most of them are just projecting. The guilt can be profound.”

That short conversation impacted me like never before of an additional reason for speaking from the pulpit about abortion. Women who suffer the emotional pain of having destroyed the life in their womb need to hear there is healing and reconciliation.

Too often, the blood-guiltiness of the willful destruction of human life in abortion is vilified (and rightly so), but without emphasizing God’s offer to be cleansed and forgiven. Abortion has two victims – the child and the mother.

According to Live Action, in June of 2020, a poll on the abortion pill demonstrated 77% of women regretted their abortions. The study found:

- 83% of the women said they were changed by their abortions, with 77% saying the change was negative.
- 77% said they regretted their abortions.
- 60% reported feelings of isolation and alienation.
- 38% reported problems with anxiety, depression, drug abuse, and/or suicidal thoughts as a result of the abortion.
- 50% said the baby’s father or other family members “used negating language as a means to justify a woman’s need for an abortion.”

A few years ago, I was trying to recruit a woman to run for a seat in the North Carolina General Assembly. I knew her background well and thought she would make a sensational candidate. While we talked, she suddenly and unexpectedly burst into tears. The grief in her voice was severe and distressing. She said: “Perhaps I should run for office. Because of what I did, I need to give back something of what I took away.” She had had an abortion when she was younger and still bearing the anguish many years after.

In a small and powerful 59-page book titled, *Spiritual Reflections of a Pro-Life Pilgrim*, Michael T. Mannion explains how critical it is for the pulpit to speak to this aspect of the abortion issue. Please forgive the long quote by Mannion, but it’s worth it. He most eloquently writes:

“[M]any women who have had abortions...are presently suffering in a painful, lonely and silent world of guilt...looking for a way out. Each Sunday, they might listen intently for one word – one phrase – one motion of compassion that tells them that their church or congregation is open to help heal the pain – that there is a way back. These women need to hear the words of Jeremiah being personally spoken to them: “*There is hope for your future, says the Lord’....* (Jer. 31:17)

“The guilt and loneliness felt by a woman who has had an abortion are more often than not accompanied by a sense of worthlessness, inadequacy, and inability to help others, let alone herself. These feelings present a unique faith opportunity to the person in the pulpit. As we begin our homily or sermon, we can seek a spiritual and emotional affiliation with that woman in the pew. We can ask her to pray for us as we speak, that our words might help heal and console her, that our words might help prevent some of her sisters in distress from making the same tragic mistake. We can speak out with honesty and compassion, without betraying either [the mother or the unborn child], and show there is hope for the future – for the woman who has had an abortion, for the woman facing the decision.

“We can speak of our church’s desire to be an instrument of the Lord’s healing by welcoming her back to wholeness and reconciliation and of the need for her prayers for women facing the decision she once faced. We must speak out. The harvest of pain and the destruction of life will be too great if we don’t.

“We can tell her that we all, in one way or another, abort God’s will in our lives, perhaps not as dramatically as in a physical abortion but certainly spiritually through selfishness, greed, anger, pride, and resentment. For all these ‘spiritual abortions,’ we all must seek forgiveness, for they have helped to create a world where the physical abortion is common and promoted.”

Yes, let us speak boldly from the pulpit against abortion, let the laity courageously speak out too. Abortion is a cruel practice in our culture, and it must be stopped. But let us also say with equal tenderness there is room at the Cross for anyone – no matter how egregious the sin. “*If we confess our sins, he [Christ] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*” (I John 1:9).

It’s a message from the pulpit many women desperately need to hear.

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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Red Pill or Blue Pill

By Tim Tron
Burke County

In C.S. Lewis’ work, “The Weight of Glory,” he asks a very pertinent question that we seem to be facing more and more each day in that, “How do we decide what is good or evil? The usual answer is that we decide by conscience. But probably no one thinks now of conscience as a separate faculty, like one of the senses. Indeed, it cannot be so thought of. For an autonomous faculty like a sense cannot be argued with; you cannot argue a man into seeing green if he sees blue. But the conscience can be altered by argument; and if you did not think so, you would not have asked me to come and argue with you about the morality of obeying the civil law when it tells us to serve in the wars. Conscience, then, means the whole man engaged in a particular subject matter.

But even in this sense, conscience still has two meanings. It can mean (a) the pressure a man feels upon his will to do what he Thinks is right; (b) his judgment as to what the content of right and wrong are. In sense (a) conscience is always to be followed. It is the sovereign of the universe, which “if it had power as it has right, would absolutely rule the world.” It is not to be argued with but obeyed, and even to question it is to incur guilt. But in sense (b) it is a very different matter. People may be mistaken about wrong and right; most people to some degree are mistaken. By what means are mistakes in this field to be corrected?”

Then, when we contrast Lewis’ words to the account in the Gospel of John, when the Scribes and the Pharisees brought the woman caught in adultery and placed her before him, planning to accuse him of judging, we see how the conscious can be a powerful force. It is a crucial aspect that many overlook.

“So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.”

Why did they depart beginning at the eldest? Were there mistakes they realized that needed to be corrected? When we read this line of scripture we get the feeling that the older Pharisees immediately recognized their own sin and, in so doing, were shamed into dropping their figurative stones of accusation and leaving the temple.

But again, I ask, “Why did the old men leave first and not the young?” When presentations to an audience are given, it is widely known that the younger the general age of the listeners, to a point, the quicker and more amplified is their reaction to what is being delivered. So, how was it that those who usually took longer to respond would leave first? Should they not have spent time trying to recall all those years of living in sin? Or were they deciding upon the options – fleeing would be dropping the charges on a slam-dunk case, essentially saying that this unlearned teacher was right? Saving face must have been another reason not to exit because doing so was only confirming the speaker’s own reversal of accusatorial questioning.

To answer these questions, we must look deeper into scriptures and understand what those Pharisees would have known and to consider that the power of the Holy Spirit was indeed at work.

We start at the beginning, when God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”

Up until that point, man’s consciousness was only aware that he was alive, awake, and able to tend to the garden of Eden. There was no need to understand beyond what God knew. This freedom of will, the ability to choose between obeying a simple command, was man’s gift – to do with it as he pleased. But when they partook of the tree, “Seeing that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise,” they suddenly became aware of their nakedness, “And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons.”

Not only had they now broken God’s commandment but they also became the cause of the first physical death. God made the first blood sacrifice to cover their sins when he provided them “coats of skins, and clothed them.” As the natural man develops, we can now see how one physically matures. In children or childlike nature, we see innocence. The desires of the flesh are not understood until the age of puberty. When the growth hormones kick in, and suddenly our childhood playmate, sweet little Susie, has curves we men never noticed before, and something inside us starts to smolder, like kindling that was dry and brittle, waiting for the spark to ignite. A beautiful body, free of cumbersome coverings God had made, and with it, a place of such beauty and profound richness that man could have literally lived forever. They were fully mature and with a knowledge probably far exceeding that of today’s man. They understood that God’s command came with a price, for he didn’t simply say “Do not eat of the tree,” but rather, he told them the consequence that would occur if they did, “You will die.” Yet, the disobedience, that choice to decide to go against God’s will, his one and only rule, brought forth retribution for all mankind.

It would take the Grace of God to save us from ourselves. Those Pharisees who had cornered Jesus in the temple that morning were suddenly made aware of their own judgment of the flesh. The simple statement, “He that is without sin among you, let he first cast a stone at her;” reminded them of



their mortal shortcoming. The adultery, the sin of the flesh, brought about an accusation based on the Mosaic law, yet those who judged were no better. A sudden conviction of their own conscious shook them to their core. Alone, a conviction of one’s conscious can be humbling, but when that sense is in the presence of God, it becomes enhanced, amplified to a level that must have been unbearable.

Now, let’s focus on the younger men who were with the accusers. Were they lingering longer because they had less sin to fear? Or were they following the lead of their elders? Or was it possible that the next generation doesn’t have enough consciousness to know when to leave or stay?

“What do you mean by that,” you might ask?
1 Cor.8:7-12 “Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to them that are weak. For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol’s temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.”

Think about how the world is trying to reshape consciousness. From the video game addictions to just how we are being controlled through social media, we are constantly being bombarded by the growing presence of AI. The movie “The Matrix” has an almost cult following among our youth. In it, humanity exists as a level of consciousness connected by a supercomputer, plugged into every human so that their collective consciousness is one. Our youth have already begun to question if the reality we see is really the real thing – red pill (reality) or blue pill (to live in the fabricated world of The Matrix)?

Which pill do we choose?
When left to the powers of their own natural instinct, men are carnally minded and think in linear terms. They follow their “gut” instincts, allowing the world to influence their decision-making. We can predict from their past behaviors what their future actions will become. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is based on this assumption. The Oxford Languages definition of AI is “the theory and development of computer systems able to perform tasks that normally require human intelligence, such as visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making, and translation between languages.”

Does the next generation have enough consciousness to know when to leave or when to stay? Those in the temple that day tarried. Did they lack the same level of conviction? Are they representative of our youth today? What will be the driving consciousness to the next generation? Will they rely on AI to give them the answer?

Rosalind Picard of MIT warns, “The greater the freedom of a machine, the more it will need moral standards.”

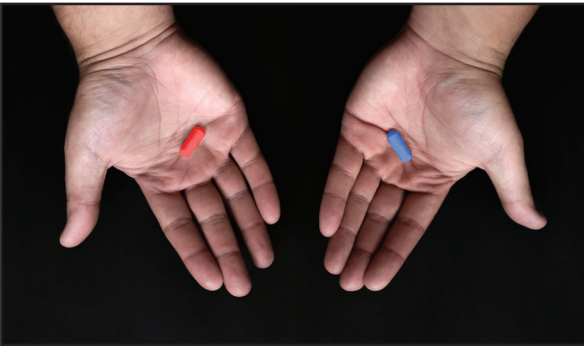
Left to our own devices, we will find comfort in those images, songs, and pages of information that AI will feed us. Unfortunately, the more we allow the input, the more we go down that path, being led to a destination that is less than desirable. We become like an opioid addict, requiring more of what the world has to offer until we diminish the very consciousness meant to govern our will.

We need to wake up and realize that we must make our own decisions and not be led as an animal is to slaughter. We’ve been given the means to know the truth, for it is by the Word of God that we can find comfort, hope, and truth. The Bible is one of the most precious gifts we have. We must not let the world change that.

God created man in his image so that being human is more than just having knowledge wisdom, but the conscious sets us apart from his other creations. Through our consciousness, we can do his will. Through this God-given capacity, we are capable of knowing right from wrong because each of us is a free moral agent.

Which pill will you choose, red or blue?
When those Pharisees turned and left the temple that day, had they experienced the power of the Holy Spirit, and were they suddenly and completely awakened to who Jesus really was, the Son of God?
“I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost,”
Someday, we shall know the answer.
Thanks be to God.

Timothy W. Tron lives in Collettsville, NC. with his family. He is currently the Systems Administrator for the Computer Science Department at App. State. Timothy is the former Director of the Trail of Faith in Valdese, where he still volunteers and helps with tours. He is the author of a new Christian series, “Children of the Light”, with the first book being, “Bruecke to Heaven”, revised as “Bridge 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 is currently acting as the Faculty/Staff Liaison for the Ratio Christi campus ministry at App. State. He can be reached at trontw@appstate.edu You can visit his website at //www.timothywtron.com/ or see more of his writings HERE.



There’s Something About Light

By Caron Cline
Burke County



On March 13, we will once again set our clocks ahead by one hour as we usher in Daylight Savings Time. That extra hour of daylight, along with the steadily warming temperatures, is a reminder that spring is near with summer not far behind. DST was first proposed in 1784 by Benjamin Franklin to conserve candles. In 1895, a New Zealand entomologist and astronomer proposed changing the time by two hours to allow more daylight hours for collecting and examining insects. Germany was the first to establish DST in 1916 to save fuel during World War I, and the rest of Europe soon followed suit. Finally, in 1918, the United States realized that this would be an opportunity to extend the workday, and also adopted DST. There’s something about light that energizes and motivates. In the winter, people want to be home by 8:00 pm because they are worn out and ready for bed! Once DST begins, 8:00 pm seems the perfect time to shop, visit or start a new home project! Colder temperatures and shorter daylight hours drain our batteries as well as our spirits. But there’s something about light that changes our entire perspective. As Christians, we have the opportunity to shine the light of Jesus every day, 24/7. Jesus made a powerful statement to His disciples in John 9:4-5, “*We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world*”. In John 8:12, Jesus added this: “*he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life*”. Followers of Jesus possess the Holy Spirit Who fills each believer with an eternal flame, warming and illuminating those in our sphere of influence. Walking in the supernatural Light of our Lord provides the power to change the atmosphere in our homes, schools, communities, and workplaces. The extra hour of light provided by DST cannot compare with the Holy Spirit’s ever-abiding Light within. His Light extinguishes darkness, renews minds, and overcomes the world. John 1:5 says that the darkness cannot overcome the Light of Life found in Jesus, therefore, it cannot overcome us. The Spirit within enlightens the eyes of our heart so that we are no longer blind to the schemes of the prince of darkness; God’s truth sets us free from the clutches of the enemy. The Spirit also reveals God’s calling upon our lives, the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and the greatness of His power toward all who believe. The Spirit enlightens our minds with wisdom and revelation to know and fulfil the perfect will of God. Being a carrier of the Light of life is sobering. Jesus stated that we are the light of the world, therefore we have been chosen to reveal the character of God to others through our actions and words. There’s something about God’s Light shining through His people; darkness has to flee!!

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.



Sudoku

Solution on page 14

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

By Jim Smith
McDowell County



In preparation for April being National ReEntry & Alcohol Awareness Month, I wanted to share in this article a challenge to all our area churches or community connection groups. What can YOU do to help celebrate ANY form of recovery? Let me share some powerful yet easy program ideas that can make tremendous impacts and connections.

This past month – Freedom Life and Catawba Valley Baptist joined together to hold a Celebration of Recovery Concert. During this concert, Heart Cry (the music ministry of Freedom Life) shared songs of recovery and inspiration. Regional Community Resources Agencies set up booths in the Family Life Center and the cake was served by the church. This was a very uplifting event and many community connections were made.

Creative ways to Celebrate

- 1.Cardboard Testimonies. This is a simple way that individuals can share their struggles on one side, and flip it over to show their progression in recovery. Songs you can play during this time for people to walk forward and share: Chain Breaker, Let Me Tell You About My Jesus, and I am Redeemed.
2. A Chalkboard Ministry for the month. You can place a large chalkboard or even designate a bulletin board for this purpose. On one board, you can have people write their struggles and on the other their progress. It can become a focal point of prayer and connection.
3. A StoryBoard. Ask members of your group to write their story/journey in recovery and board it on the board for all to see and read. Maybe high light stories in your newsletter throughout the year to keep recovery at the forefront of people’s minds.
4. Social Media Video Post. Have community members share their testimony of recovery in a short video. They can send it to you, and you can post a new story weekly or monthly in celebration of what God is doing!
5. Invite Freedom Life to YOUR community meeting or church and allow us to celebrate in SONG and Testimonies. We would love to worship along with you!

Addiction is real. Addiction is hard. Addiction damages families. Addiction ruins lives. But there is HOPE! There is hope in Jesus and the power to overcome. Moving forward one of the best things you can prepare your community group or church for is HOW to identify and in a healthy way- walkthrough addiction with those struggling. We can turn a blind eye to things we are not comfortable with or do not want to deal with because the struggle can be extremely difficult. Special focus events such as recovery rallies, community accountability groups, special times designated for awareness such as Alcohol Awareness month, are all designed to reduce the stigma associated with alcoholism and addiction. Alcoholism is a chronic, progressive disease, genetically predisposed and fatal if untreated. However, people can and do recover. There are many reasons to quit, and the decision is a major milestone. So, here are five reasons to quit drinking and make a life-changing choice.

1. There is never a better time than the present. At this point, there are no excuses. So, do it today. It will be one of the best decisions of your life. It’s time for a fresh start. You will regret putting it off if you don’t take that first step. So, today is the best day to begin a new, healthier life.
2. Summer is coming. Make this summer different from those in the past. Enjoy evenings with friends and family that you’ll remember the next day. Take advantage of the great weather and get outside. Start a new regime of exercise. Hike. Go to the beach. See the world with a new and amazing perspective.
3. Save money and do more. When you stop drinking, it can pay off in several ways. Saving money is the most obvious. You’ll be surprised how much money you spend on drinking. If you put that extra money in the bank, who knows what you’ll be able to enjoy. A new car. A great vacation. Better restaurants. And an overall, better life.
4. Feel healthier and better about yourself. Everyone wants to look good for the summer. Everyone wants to go to the pool or the beach and feel comfortable with their bodies. If you stop drinking, you’ll start to feel better. Once your body begins to recover from the effects of drinking, you’ll feel less bloated and have more energy. Also, your skin will look and feel healthier. And you might lose some weight.
5. Get your relationships back on track. Heavy drinking can have a negative impact on relationships and can make conflict resolution difficult. So, with a summer of barbecues, picnics, pool parties, and family vacations ahead, getting sober will allow you to approach these relationships with a fresh start and a clear head.

*These points were taken from Recovery Centers for America

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



Whatever Happened To Commitment?

By Dennis Love
McDowell County



First Corinthians 15:58 says; “Therefore, my beloved brethren, by ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” This final verse in this great 15th chapter sums up what we are to be doing because the rapture of the church is imminent. Soon and very soon we will be “caught up” to meet the Lord in the air. I don’t know about you, but that lights a fire under my feet, and makes goosebumps pop out all over me big enough to hang a hat on!

The word “abounding” in this verse literally means “to excel.” God wants us to excel for Him. The Greek thought here has nothing to do with personal greatness. The Bible is not talking about becoming a big-name preacher, an international recording artist, or a Christian celebrity. Instead, the word here is used to convey the idea of giving 100 percent. Jesus is telling us that He expects us to give the best we have with what we’ve got. In other words, God wants us to live for Jesus like this might be our last day on earth. He wants us to be committed.

Jesus said in Luke 19:13; “Occupy till I come.” That word “occupy” doesn’t mean to just sit down and take up space in a pew. It literally means, “to be busy.” Luke 19:13 could literally read; “Be busy until I come.” As we get closer to the coming of the Lord for His church, our attitude should be.....” Hallelujah, I get to serve,” not “Oh no, I’ve got to serve.” We only have one opportunity to live for the One who has saved us, and that opportunity is now. Brothers and Sisters, you and I will never pass this way again. What a terrible shame it would be to waste the gifts, abilities, and opportunities that have been given to us.

These are not the days to be lazy about serving our soon-coming King. Our prayer should be..... “Lord, I don’t want to back up, give up, shut up, or let up... until I am taken up!”

I know the COVID-19 pandemic has taken a toll on the church. Almost every church I know has suffered a loss of members. Remember, the church is not going down, the church is going up! Therefore, this is an exciting time in the history of the church, and in our individual lives. Why? Because we could indeed be the generation that exits this world without going through the graveyard! We could be the generation that doesn’t see death! This is not the time to be less committed to the Lord and His church. This is the time to be more committed than ever to the Lord and His church. I do not want to stand before Jesus and hear Him say to me; “What happened to your commitment?” Jesus is coming soon, and the time to be committed to the Lord and His church is now!

Dr. Dennis Love is the Associational Missions Strategist for the Blue Ridge Baptist Association in McDowell County. Dr. Love has been in full-time ministry work for 31 years. He and his wife Vicki have been married for almost 42 years, and they have lived in Marion for almost 8 years. They have two sons, four grandchildren and two step-grandchildren. He can be reached via email at: dlovebrba@yahoo.com

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Remembering Billy Graham: Heaven Is Home

From Redeemed by Will Graham

As it is written: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.” —1 CORINTHIANS 2:9

My grandfather was one of the most heaven-focused people I’ve ever met. Though Bible verses such as 1 Corinthians 2:9 make it clear that we have no understanding of the magnitude of “the things which God has prepared for those who love Him,” for my grandfather, heaven was not a distant and inaccessible realm.

Especially in his final years on earth, heaven was just as real as the house in which he lived. It would be his new home where he would reside once his journey here was complete.

Long before he slipped quietly into eternity on February 21, 2018, my grandfather made the following proclamation about his own passing:

“One day you’re going to hear that Billy Graham has died,” he said, somber and serious, but also brimming with hope and peace. “But don’t believe it! For on that day I will be more alive than ever before. I will have just changed addresses!”

You see, my grandfather spent decades proclaiming the reality of heaven and the narrow road that leads there. Just as an ambassador promotes his home country and pursues its best interests in a foreign land, my grandfather traveled the world as a representative of Christ, sharing and promoting the hope and glory in the heavenly realm for those who call upon the name of Jesus.



Franklin Graham, Will Graham, and Billy Graham (1981)

I believe heaven became increasingly real to him as he aged well into his nineties. The things of this world—especially his beloved wife (my grandmother, Ruth, who made her own final journey to heaven in 2007) and most of his friends—had already gone on ahead of him. He once joked that he had lived so long that his friends in heaven would In many ways this world was no longer home and heaven was clearly where his heart resided, even before the glorious morning when he passed from this broken realm into God’s presence.

I assume that most of you who are reading this are younger than my grandfather, but you may be dealing with a terminal disease. You may have lost a loved one recently. You may be clinging to the hope of heaven as your anchor in the storm.

If this is you, bless you. I pray that you’re finding the peace of God as you walk this valley.

In addition to focusing on the hope of heaven, I would encourage you to cling to the reality of heaven as well. Like my grandfather, understand that heaven is a very real place where you will reside for eternity with your Savior.

But it’s not just a different address. This very real place will be something so far beyond what our human minds can begin to comprehend. There will be no mourning or pain, hunger or thirst. There will be a place specially prepared for you. The old will be gone, and all things will be made new!

If you’ve surrendered your life to Jesus as your Savior, don’t fear death. Instead, anxiously anticipate heaven and the promise of eternity with Him.

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Poem

By Regina McIntosh
Yancey County



*Dear God of love
Send hope from above
You're the answer to a prayer
For light to smile across this heart
Whispering faith, joy, and grace*

*Please, dear God
Shed your wonder from above
Your kind and gentle favor
Upon the soul who labors
Longing for the answer, the way
To find serenity in the day
When hurt has been the companion
And leaving a heart feeling less than
Even like there is no answer*

*Please, dear God above
Rain down the sweetness of your love
Open the door to faith that abides
Breathing inspiration on the inside
Where I know you will always reside
An intimate peace that is so very alive
You shine through the spirit
Burning away the darkness and doubt
Filling me up with kindness throughout*

*Please, dear God, my Father
Send your grace to this place
Of sadness and worry, pain and dread
Fear that mingles with sorrow
Bringing disgrace to the heart
And crushing the spirit with thoughts
That brings destruction and despair
A shadow of the heart in pain
Feelings so humbling they never fade
But silence all the joy that might be*

*Dear God in heaven,
Please pour out your warmth
Freeing me to love like you do
With a love that is wise and true
A love that is like a prayer of praise
Calming the soul and soothing the faith
Of one who loves beyond their dreams
With a love that You have inspired
A love that You left inside them
There to lift, love, and guide them
With hope for the promises you sent
With the scriptures, sweet tenderness*

*Dear God, my beautiful treasure,
The One I know as life, light, and love
The answer to my every hope or doubt
The reason I can say that love is alive
And that I know what it means to shout
With a wonder of joy that comes from knowing
You are here with me, living in my soul
Singing triumphantly of joy forevermore
Joy that comes from the hope of heaven
Where You are waiting for me to enter!*

Regina is a heart and soul who loves the Lord, her family, church, nature, camping, writing, and reading. Her poems have been published by Blue Mountain Arts and she has a recent book of Inspirational Christian Poetry available on Amazon – *A Light in the Darkness* by Regina McIntosh. Learn more about her by visiting her website at www.reginamcintosh.com



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Burnsville Cross Shines On Through Conflict

By Kiesa Kay
Yancey County

A cross glows in Burnsville, greeting anyone who looks toward Phillips Knob Lookout to splendid light. It’s a beacon of hope and has eased the pain of many a heart in these troubled times. Some say it first stood there since the 1940s, and others say it got fixed up by the Jaycees in 1973 – but for a while, the light went out, and then last year, the cross, more than a hundred feet in height, glowed to life again over Burnsville.

Protests began, calling for that light to be extinguished, and supporters answered with a petition to Keep the Cross. Vanessa McIntosh started the petition at <https://www.change.org/p/county-commission-general-public-keep-the-burnsville-cross>

“Last year we saw the long-awaited return of the cross on top of the mountain,” Vanessa McIntosh said on the petition site. “It has been enjoyed by most and sends a testament to this amazing county. Recently there has been a group "created" to take it down. Why? Because they say it's an eyesore. Contrary, we need Jesus more than ever these days. Let’s come together and keep our cross.”

Within the first two days, the petition had 2500 signatures, and that number has grown to 3000. Many citizens are flabbergasted to think that anyone could have any objection to the cross and its message of hope and redemption.

Tasha Rigsby wrote, “The cross has been a blessing to me and my family it always makes us get on conversations about how good GOD has been to us. Please don't remove the cross. I can't even believe it is up for debate.”

Marla Robinson agreed, saying, “It's part of my hometown heritage. I love living in a town where the symbol of who and what we are still shines.”

Some of the protesters maintained that the cross caused light pollution. Burnsville is home to the largest public telescope in North Carolina at the Bare Dark Sky Observatory at Mayland Earth to Sky Park.

Mayland Community College President Dr. John C. Boyd issued a statement, saying, “During the last couple of years, we have lived in very strange times. Maybe the historic lighted cross in Burnsville will help bring a little normalcy and hope back to our community. We believe that the cross will only add to our community and are not in conflict with it.”

The protesters changed tactics then, saying that the cross ought not to be there at all. “Plain and simple this is a violation of church and state and a violation of the rights of the people of this county and state,” says the group Turn Off the Burnsville Cross that is On State Land. “The fundamental laws of this country provide us with the right to practice, or not practice any religion as we please. It also gives us the right to not have this infringed upon by county, state, and federal governments, as well as the right to speak up when we see violations as such occurring.”

In fact, the land briefly belonged to the state but reverted to ownership by C.M. Bailey. The argument got heated, but for the most part, disagreement has been civil. Some folks see it as new people coming to town and trying to change traditions or interfere with longtime Yancey County history and culture, while others say that if the cross deserves respect, then symbols of all religions need to be supported in town.

“If the county wants to have their symbols then they should include ALL that want to be included....until the rights and beliefs of all are respected, it has to be removed,” protesters contend on their Facebook site.

The 3000 petition signers in support of the cross respectfully disagree with the protesters.

Amanda Webb added her signature, and noted, “I'm signing because of what the cross represents. It brings hope and comfort. It's never been more needed in the dark days we are living in. To those who do not know Christ, it is can serve as a gateway to hearing the gospel. A conversation starter. It represents the love of God and what He did for us. To whoever is reading this, GOD LOVES YOU. He wants you to put your faith in Him. There is nothing He will not forgive. To my fellow believers, are we representing our Father as He would have us to? Remember, you cannot fight evil with hateful words. God's love reflected through us will prevail.”

Yancey County Manager Lynn Austin has stated publicly that no county funds currently go to support the cross, which is on private land. Local fundraising efforts have begun.

Michaela Woody Isaac began making t-shirts that say, “Let Your Light Shine,” and “Burnsville #Shine On,” for \$20 apiece, with \$5 going to support the maintenance of the cross, at <https://www.facebook.com/shipwreckapparelnc>. Shine On -- Burnsville also has started selling Shine On decals for \$5, with \$3 going to the fund to support the cross.

Madison Shuford, at <https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=shine%20on>, has started fundraising for maintaining the cross, and the fundraiser states, “These funds are being raised to assist with any maintenance, upgrades, tree clearing, or any other necessary needs that may arise in keeping the Burnsville, NC lighted cross on Phillips Knob lit and visible. Some trees need to be cleared, which due to the communication equipment in the area have the potential to be very difficult to remove and not damage the equipment that is in place. Because of this for the protection of the equipment and the person(s) doing the tree removal, the individuals who take on this task will need to be insured. Many have had questions about the accountability of the funds being raised. Any money will be run through an account set up by a local church We hope this cross continues to be a symbol of hope and togetherness within our community. We would appreciate it if anyone



who donates would share what the cross means to them. Thank you and God Bless.”

Supporters also take heed of Isaiah 2:2-4: 2 “And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. 3 And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. 4 And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”



Kiesa Kay, poet, and playwright, is featured on the literary maps of both Kansas and North Carolina. Her plays have been produced in five states.

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March 2022- Blue Ridge Christian News page 31

YOUR GOVERNMENT PAGES

NC Senate District 47



Sen. Ralph Hise
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919-733-3460

In February, the North Carolina General Assembly passed SB 173 – Free the Smiles Act. This bill essentially makes masks optional in K-12 schools and early childhood programs across the state, allowing parents to make their own decision to mask their children or not.

Over the past year, I have heard from parents and students all over North Carolina and these folks have all been telling their school boards the same thing, that masks should not be required anymore. I agree. The decision of whether a child will wear a mask to school should be made by the child's parents.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, we've known that school-aged children are at a lower risk for severe COVID-19, yet these children are the ones who continue to bear the brunt of the masking requirements. As Democrat-run states begin lifting mask mandates, they're still requiring young students to continue wearing masks in schools. But the truth is that many studies are beginning to show that masks are having detrimental effects on the social and emotional development of children.

Previously school boards had to vote on their masking policies every 30 days, but that requirement is repealed in this bill. The bill does not supersede any federal requirements for masking on school buses. Schools are prohibited from treating students differently – academically or otherwise – if they do not wear a mask.

I am glad that this bill received bipartisan, veto-proof majorities in both the state Senate and the state House of Representatives. But as of this update, Governor Roy Cooper has not said whether he will sign the Free the Smiles Act. While there is currently enough support to override a veto, there has been precedent in the past for Democrats to reverse their positions when the Governor issues a veto. I truly hope that Governor Cooper will take this important bill to heart and quickly sign it into law. North Carolina's children deserve better.

NC Commissioner of Labor



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

February was a busy month for the N.C. Department of Labor (NCDOL), and it's hard to believe we're already two months into this new year.

A few weeks ago, I had the pleasure of visiting with the Town of Harrisburg's Public Works Department to celebrate their recent certification as a SHARP (Safety and Health Achievement Recognition Program) site. The Town of Harrisburg, located in Cabarrus County, previously used the services provided by our Consultative Services Bureau and decided last year to seek the prestigious SHARP award for the Public Works Department. These employees are responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of town streets and sidewalks, stormwater services, sanitation, and many other critical, but potentially hazardous jobs. I commend the town for pursuing the SHARP, which indicates a collective commitment to the safety and health of town workers!

On Feb. 22, I was honored to host an event with N.C. Home Builders Educational and Charitable Foundation to officially sign the Be Pro Be Proud contract. Be Pro Be Proud is a workforce development initiative changing the perceptions around technical careers through a mobile workshop tour that features virtual reality simulations that allow students to step into a life of a technical professional. Be Pro Be Proud began in 2016 as an initiative of the Arkansas State Chamber / Associated Industries of Arkansas. The effort to bring Be Bro Be Proud to North Carolina will increase the visibility of technical careers and training in the state and will prepare our state's workforce for the future. The program will be administered by the Foundation with oversight from NCDOL.

The March calendar is filling up quickly. I look forward to attending N.C. Association of Agricultural Fair's annual convention during the first week of the month. More than 35 agricultural fairs are held throughout communities in North Carolina each year and are a beloved part of each town's culture. These fairs highlight the great agricultural heritage of our state and offer fun, affordable, and family-friendly environments. It's never too early to begin planning your trip to the fair!

The end of March will kick off our Safety Awards Banquet season. I will travel to 30 banquets across the state over the next three months and I look forward to meeting those of you who qualified for one of our workplace safety awards. Several of these banquets are scheduled in the western part of the state and I invite you to visit our website in the coming weeks to find details about the dates and locations of these banquets.

Stay safe and healthy and have a blessed March. Spring is just around the corner!

NC Senate District 46



Sen. Warren Daniel
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919-715-7823

Friends, this month I wanted to share some history and some exciting new updates on the progress of the North Carolina School of Science and Math's campus in Morganton. In 2013, the North Carolina General Assembly commissioned a feasibility study on expanding NCSSM with a western campus, directing that specific consideration be given to a location in Morganton, in Burke County. The study examined several options, including building a western school on the UNC Research Campus in Kannapolis or other locations or merely expanding the current campus in Durham. Rep. Hugh Blackwell and I worked very closely with our other western legislative delegation members--including Sen. Ralph Hise (an alum of NCSSM), Sen. Andy Wells, and Rep. Mike Hager-- as well as with local businesses and stakeholders, to convince a majority of the members of the General Assembly that Morganton should be the western campus location. We felt that it was time for the State to have an NCSSM location in western NC for several reasons, including 1) To double our student capacity and provide more educational opportunities, 2) So that students in the far western parts of the state could have a closer campus to travel to, and 3) So that students all across the eastern half of the state would have the opportunity to experience life in the foothills and mountain portions of NC.

During its 2015 legislative session, the General Assembly approved the concept of a Western NC School of Science and Math, selected the Morganton location, and included the initial funding as part of the Connect NC bond referendum. In 2016, North Carolina voters passed the Connect NC bond package which included \$58 million to build a second campus of the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics in Morganton (NCSSM-M). In the bond package, the school was originally called the Western NC School of Technology and Engineering, adding the "T" and "E" of S.T.E.M. to complete the "S" and "M" currently used in the Durham campus of the NC School of Science and Mathematics. During the planning process, other names were considered, and the name was ultimately changed to NCSSM-Morganton. I prefer to think of it as the Western NC School of Science and Mathematics because I think that name is more representative of the fact that it belongs to all of Western NC, not just to Morganton. Construction planning for the new school commenced in late 2016 with the hiring of an architectural firm, educational program design consultants, and a planning director. Even though construction and first-year timelines had to be adjusted due to construction delays and, more significantly, Governor Cooper's veto of the 2019-21 state budget, I am pleased to announce that NCSSM will open its second campus this fall with an initial enrollment of 150 students (11th graders) in the residential program, representing all parts of the state from the mountains to the coast. The inaugural class at NCSSM-Morganton will learn of their selection alongside all other NCSSM admission decisions on April 7, 2022. In some ways, the opening of NCSSM-Morganton feels like we're nearing the end of a long journey to open the doors of this state-of-the-art campus. There were times when Rep. Blackwell and I wondered if it would ever come to fruition. Now that it has, it is definitely a milestone worth celebrating, but it is only the beginning of an incredible new journey for our students, our region, and this great state.

YOUR GOVERNMENT PAGES

NC 11th Congressional District



Rep. Madison Cawthorn
828-808-2148

It's been an extremely busy couple of weeks in Washington, D.C. During the two weeks, we were in session, I introduced new legislation on term limits, wrote and signed on to multiple letters with my House colleagues, defended American greatness on the House Floor, and much more. Read about everything below!

We Must Prioritize Our Southern Border over the Ukrainian Border

I introduced a new piece of legislation last week demanding that if President Biden sends any United States troops to the Russia/Ukraine border, he must also send the same number to the U.S./Mexico Border.

The United States should be focused on our borders, not the borders of nations around the world. If Joe Biden truly cared about the wellbeing of Americans, he would prioritize the United States' national security over the affairs of nations around the world. I do not want American soldiers in Ukraine or Russia, but if this administration takes action to send troops overseas, the very least we can do to secure our nation is send the same number of troops to the U.S. Mexico border to augment the efforts of our border patrol agents working diligently to secure America despite the absence of the Biden Administration.

FAF is Expanding!

Feeding Avery Families (FAF) recently announced it has purchased land and is planning to construct a new location to assist with its already helpful hand in the Avery community.

FAF's mission is to keep the community afloat. It is because of great individuals like them that our community continues to flourish.

In 2021, FAF distributed 539,000 pounds of food (enough for 449,000 individual meals)— thanks to many hard-working volunteers and generous contributions. They provided food to thousands of families throughout the pandemic and this new facility will only help in their continued mission. Keep up the great work!

The Time has Come for Congressional Term Limits

The American people deserve a class of elected officials that aren't entrenched in Washington and owned by the system.

Once you've been here for a long time, you stop repelling the swamp and instead start to morph into it. That is why I introduced a bill last week to impose term limits on members of congress. I want to limit the time in office to six terms for House members and two terms for senators for a total of 12 years each. 12 years is a reasonable amount of time to learn the ropes, gain allies, and make an impact.

If you're not able to accomplish your goals in over a decade, I really don't want you to represent me and the American people deserve better.

Having the right information at the right time is often key to surviving a disaster. FEMA's updated texting feature allows the public to access shelter addresses when they need it most. Users can text "shelter" and their ZIP code to 43362 to get a list of nearby shelter locations. This effort is made possible through collaboration with the American Red Cross.

NC House District 86



Rep. Hugh Blackwell
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COVID, Masks, and Parents: Finally Common Sense Prevails

On Thursday, Feb 17, the House Education K-12 Committee, which I co-chair, advanced legislation introduced by Speaker Tim Moore of Cleveland County that recognizes the authority to decide whether their child should wear a mask in school resides in the parents. Under the bill, parents do not have to justify the choice not to have their child wear a mask. Further, students who choose not to wear a face mask shall not be treated differently than a student with a face covering by the public-school unit in any way.

The bill was presented on the floor of the House Thursday afternoon, February 17. The bill passed with a bipartisan vote of 76 to 42. The Senate passed the bill 28-17. It is now on the governor's desk.



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George Taylor

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.

There is little information about George Taylor, known as the “Mystery Man”. George was born into poverty in 1716 in Ireland. At age 20, he traveled to America as an indentured servant to Samuel Savage. When Mr. Savage died, George took over Savage’s furnace business and married his widow, Anne. The Warwick Furnace Company thrived in making war matériels, and the couple had two children.

Taylor was his own person, as he demonstrated when he openly censured Benjamin Franklin. Taylor believed Franklin did not rebuke Britain strongly enough at the beginning of the trans-Atlantic problems. Starting in 1764, Taylor held many public positions. George was consecutively elected to Pennsylvania's provincial assembly and helped draft the guidelines for Pennsylvania delegates to the First Continental Congress. Later, he was appointed to replace a Pennsylvania delegate who refused to support Independence, and he also served in Congress through 1777. Taylor did not arrive in time to vote for Independence; he did sign the Declaration of Independence on August 2, 1776. Later, George was voted to the Supreme Council of Pennsylvania and served only six weeks as he became ill and died in 1781.

Ironically, Mr. Taylor was one of three from Ireland to sign the Declaration of Independence and one of two Declaration signers who are hardly known. This is unfortunate, as there are historical clues that George Taylor had “one of the most interesting lives of the 56 signers”.

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 (FoundationForward.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 a 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.

CIVIL WAR AND MONUMENTS

How much do you know about the “Civil War”? Here is a short recap. (Source: Statista – Number of Military fatalities in all major wars involving United States from 1775 to 2019.)

THE WAR	DATE	NUMBER OF AMERICAN CASULTIES
THE GULF WAR	1990-1991	258
VIETNAM WAR	1965-1973	58,209
KOREAN WAR	1950-1953	36,516
WORLD WAR II	1935-1945	404,399
WORLD WAR I	1917-1918	116,516
SPANISH AMERICAN WAR	1898	2,406
AMERICAN CIVIL WAR	1861 – 1865	620,000 TOTAL CASULTIES
MEXICAN AMERICAN WAR	1846-1848	13,283
WAR OF 1812	1812-1815	20,000
AMERICAN REVOLUTIONARY	1775-1783	25,000

PLEASE TAKE NOTE. ALL THE SIX WARS COMBINED BEFORE THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR TOTALS 618,304 AMERICAN CASUALTIES. OF THESE, 20,000 WERE AFRICAN AMERICANS. THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR HAD 620,000 AMERICAN CASUALTIES WHICH IS MORE THAN THE SIX PREVIOUS WARS COMBINED. (SEVERAL HISTORICAL REPORTS LIST AN ADDITIONAL 400,000 MISSING IN ACTION WHICH WOULD PUT THE FINAL TOTAL NUMBER OVER ONE MILLION AMERICAN CAUSALTIES.) IF THIS IS THE ACCURATE NUMBER, THEN THE TOTAL NUMBER OF AMERICAN CASUALTY IN THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR IS MORE THAN ALL THE OTHER WARS COMBINED TO DATE.

THIS UNDISPUTIBLE INFORMATION DEMANDS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

1. DOES THIS GREATEST LOSS OF AMERICAN CASUALTIES OF ALL WARS NOT DESERVE OUR RESPECT, HONOR AND REMEMBRANCE?
2. IS THIS WAR NOT DESERVING AND WORTHY OF THE STATUES THAT WERE PLACED IN OUR CITIES, COUNTIES AND COMMUNITIES DECADES AGO?
3. SINCE THE CONSTITUTION AND AMMENDMENTS PROTECT SUCH HISTORICAL ARTIFACTS AND GUARANTEE THEIR CONTINUANCE, WHAT SHOULD THE PENALITY TO EACH GOVERNMENT ENTITY THAT HAS ALREADY COMMITTED A CRIME BY DESTROYING, TAKING DOWN OR REMOVING CIVIL WAR STATUES? (A STARTING POINT WOULD BE \$3,000,000.00 IN FINES AND RECONSTRUCTION TO ITS ORIGINAL STATUS.) I INVITE YOU TO READ ALL 25 PAGES OF THE “MONUMENT PROTECTION ACT”. AND ALL ITS CONSTITUENT PARTS! ALSO, SECTION 100.2.1. “THE PROTECTION OF MONMUMENTS.”
4. WHAT’S NEXT? THE STATUE OF GEORGE WASHINGTON, ABRAHAM LINCOLN, STATUE OF LIBERTY OR EVEN THE CHRISTAIN CROSS, DISPLAYED BY MANY CHURCHES?
5. WHAT SHOULD CONGRESS, SENATE, ELECTED OFFICIALS DO TO RENEW AND PROTECT OUR CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS OF “FREEDOM OF SPEECH” FOR ALL, EVERY CITIZEN, EVERY ORGANIZATION, EVERY RACE, EVERY RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION, ETC., ETC?

ONE OF MY FAVORITE QUOTES IS “IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO KNOW WHAT YOU DON’T KNOW”! YOU ARE DULY INFORMED, REMINDED AND PROVIDED A WRITTEN COPY. HE WHO HAS AN EAR, LET HIM/HER HEAR!!

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Todd's Techy Tips

Who's Leading You?

By Todd Abraham
Athens, Tennessee

Romans 8:14 *“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”* In my observations going about my everyday routine, I notice that most everyone above the age of 12 is led by their smartphone. And God has blessed me with a very keen sense of observation. This is idolatry; plain and simple. It is a lie to say you can't live without it. People did for thousands of years. I've said before that everything people do with smartphones, I do with a dumb phone and a laptop computer. I've said it before and I would strongly exhort you to take heed. God is Who put in my heart to write Todd's Techy Tips every month for over 8 years. Why? Because smartphones are leading many souls to hell.

Smartphones have built into them everything that captivates the human mind and keeps it embroiled for hours. The companies behind the design and sale of these phones want every human on this planet to be addicted to these devices and spend as much time on them every day as possible. They spend millions of dollars in design, programming, marketing, and retail space to peddle these little idols to you and your children. Why? Because, next to prescription drugs, it is most likely the most profitable business on the planet. Perhaps even more profitable than the drug industry. But more importantly, it is the most effective form of freewill mind control ever known to the devil. Parents put these wicked devices into the hands of their impressionable children at an early age exposing them to things their minds and, most importantly, their souls are not able to protect themselves against. And these parents seem to think God is just giving them a pass; not so!

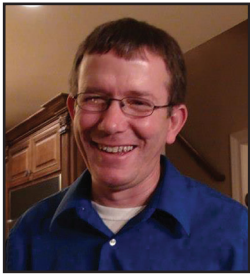
So the question again is. Who is leading you? If it's not the Spirit of God, then you are living in disobedience to the Lord. It's obedience to the faith that we are supposed to be striving for according to Jude 1:3; not religion or theology or man-made opinions or institutional doctrines. Remember that God does not accept the excuse that everyone else has them or that you can't live without them; period! Or that your child pressured you so vehemently that you couldn't give them a smartphone. Who's the parent after all? I have proven both by revelation from the Lord and scientific fact that people who possess smartphones are in a constant state of a distraction even when they aren't on them.

I call them head bobsbers as they drive along with their attention bouncing incessantly between their phones and the road. It is only by the grace of God that we don't have many more car accidents today than we do thanks to these dumb little idols. One great distinction between Christians and worldly folks is supposed to be that Christians aren't in bondage to the same things as the other. Almost every preacher I know has these smartphones so they can't preach against them without being a hypocrite. Doesn't make the fact they have them right though. There is a day of reckoning coming for this idolatry and it has already started.

I had the pleasure of connecting with Brian Barrier, publisher of Blue Ridge Christian News, which is headquartered in Morganton, NC. I am excited to announce that he is going to publish Todd's Techy Tips in that publication until further notice! Praise God for that. They dwarf Heartbeat Christian News in size in that they print 12,000 papers monthly consisting of 40 pages and covering 6 counties! You can read all about them on their site at BlueRidgeChristianNews.com.

The fear of the Lord teaches us that when God convicts you of sin in your life, He will only do so for a while regarding the same sin. After that, He will let you become addicted to it and judge you accordingly. And after all, that, is only the grace, undeserved favor, of God if you ever get the chance to be delivered from it. There is a day coming soon when these dumb little devices will be used to track your every move and will serve like electronic ankle bracelets they put on parolees. Mark my words for it shall come to pass!

My name is Todd Abraham. I'm an evangelist of the gospel of Jesus Christ and publisher of Heartbeat Christian News which has been in publication for 9 years now by the grace of God. You can read all about it at www.HBCNewsMonthly.com.





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“A Shepherd to Pastors”

Please Watch Your Step

By Steve Williams
Mitchell County



Have you ever heard these words before? Please Watch Your Step. These words can make a world of difference in our lives. The reason I say that is because we have so many people today stumbling and falling in their lives. We hear the phrase “Please Watch Your Step” many times during our life. We hear it when we are hiking, taking a walk, getting on a ride at the fair, or even getting off a bus. When you are young, Mom or Dad will tell you, you better watch your step, when your fixing to doing something. The phrase “Watch Your Step” can be words of caution that we need to pay attention to as we walk through this life in making decisions.

Now we all know that life is full of decisions and we need to be very cautious, careful, or watchful as we go through life. And when we have major decisions in life we best watch our steps. When we have major decisions to make, there are three questions we should all ask ourselves What, When, and How? If we leave out even one of these, we could make the wrong choice and have to suffer the consequences. So the smart thing to do is to come before the Lord, asking Him:

- God, what would you have me to do?
- God, how would you have me to do it?
- God, when would be the right time to do this according to your perfect will?

As we walk through this life I believe God is saying to us: Please Watch Your Step.

Now the story of Moses in Exodus 2:11-15 is an example of the importance of seeking God’s guidance before making a decision. Although Moses was a Hebrew, he was raised as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter in the palace place of Egyptian power, prominence, and prestige. We see when Moses was an adult, he saw an Egyptian beating a fellow Hebrew and made a rash, quick, impulsive decision that changed his life. He thought he was doing the right thing by killing the Egyptian, and as a result, he lost everything and became a fugitive fleeing for his life. Eventually, he settled in the desert of Midian and became a shepherd.

Now we all know that God used this experience in Moses' life to train him for his future leadership role where he would be used by God. But we see Moses made a decision without asking the three questions you should before you make a major decision.

God, what would have us do? God, how would you have me to do it? God, when would be the right time to do this according to your will? All of us have done this, and when we do this, Guess What? We get Ahead of God. Just like Moses, we sometimes jump ahead of God by making hasty decisions without considering the consequences. Many of us have bought cars and homes, and even changed jobs without asking God these questions. And many times we have regretted doing that. That is why it is so important to watch your steps as you walk through this life. Let me give you some good words of advice that will help all of us. Watch where you Get your advice. Also, be sure it is Godly advice and that it is in line with God’s Word. Make sure you are seeking to bring God Glory and not satisfying yourself or a desire that you have. As long as we allow God to walk in front of us, to lead us, and to guide us, we can be sure that our steps in life will not trip us up. So be sure you Watch Your Step today. Allow God to lead the way.

Words Of Wisdom:

- Lost Time is Never found again. Benjamin Franklin
- You may delay but time will not. Benjamin Franklin
- Life's tragedy is that we get old too soon and wise too late. Benjamin Franklin
- Whatever is begun in anger ends in shame. Benjamin Franklin

Something to think about:

- What you do today can improve all your tomorrow’s.

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

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

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Dr. Henry is a former President of the Southern Baptist Convention, a post which he held in 1994-95 and 1995-96, with over 51,000 member churches across America and the second-largest denomination in America.

He has preached on seminary and college campuses and has spoken at various state and SBC conventions, pastor’s conferences, and other special meetings, including the Billy Graham School of Evangelism.

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Luke 10:3, ESV

We would also like to extend an invitation to all Pastors and Youth Pastors in the area to join us for dinner the evening of **Saturday, April 2nd at 5:30 PM in the Fellowship Hall here at SP FBC.** Our proclaimed “Shepherd to Pastors” will be speaking and addressing his message specifically to this group. ~ NO CHARGE ~

Please call our office for reservations at (828) 765-9411. If you call after hours, please select ext. 301 and leave a message with your name, phone number, and the number of Pastors and/or Youth Pastors that will be attending. We will get back to you to confirm.

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St. Patrick
By Nancy Malik
Avery County



Patrick was an amazing man of God who I would love to tell you about this month of March.

Matthew 28:19 *“Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”*

Over 1600 years ago a sixteen-year-old shepherd in Southern England, on the coast, was kidnapped. He was taken by sheep owners from the island nation of Ireland and made a slave shepherd. There were many young men just like him having the same experience. He was so angry at his captors, but as he worked with their sheep he drew closer to God. (King David did the same thing.) He drew comfort from God’s beautiful world and its spectacular night skies! He prayed and drew closer to God during his captivity. It is believed that he fled his master, found a boat, and took other captives with him, they made their way home to England. They were starving and found a wild pig on a remote island that saved them all. He gave God the glory and his group with him was greatly touched.

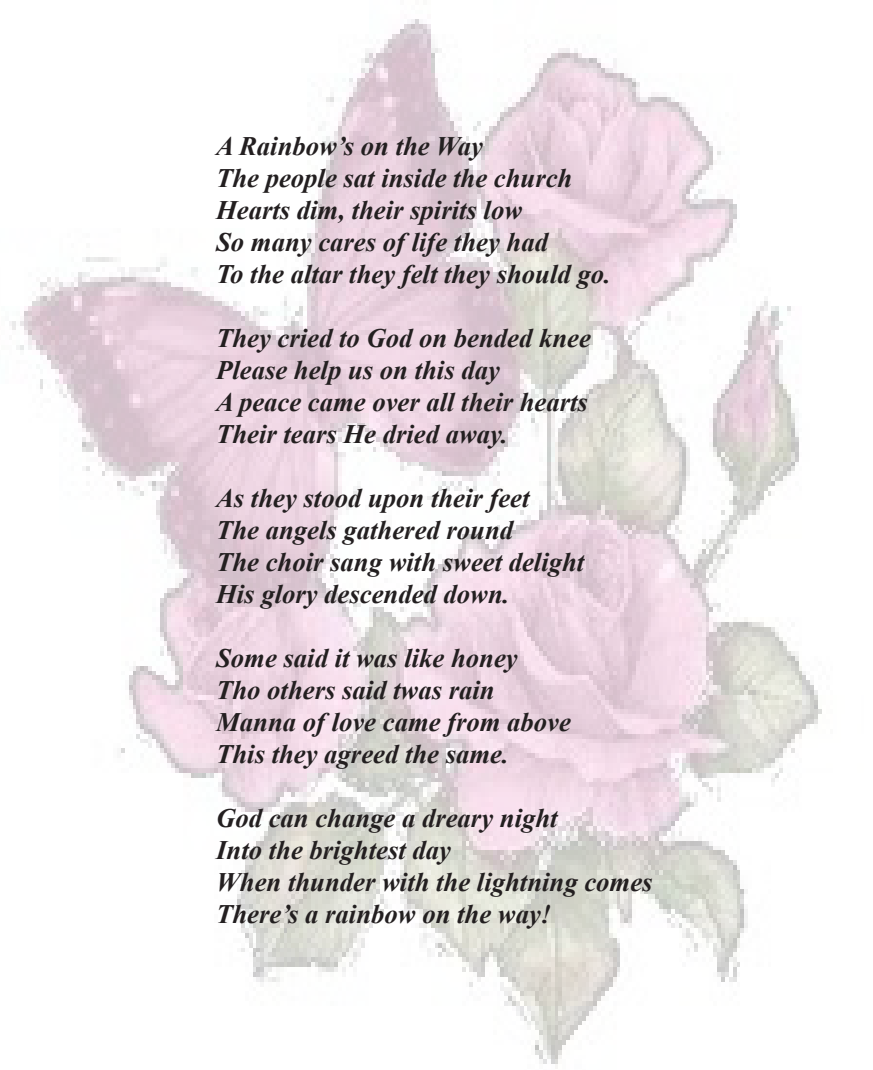
Patrick returned to his home and asked his father if he could attend college to become a priest. When he received his education and became a priest, he returned to Ireland with hope for the people there who believed in the Celtic religion to be freed through the power and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. He went as a missionary and became the first bishop of Ireland. And was recognized as the founder of Christianity in Ireland.

Six of the young men with him, who also became priests and this mighty force of believing men turned the occult side of Ireland to the living Christ. Patrick felt great love for the people of Ireland and went back to give them Living Water.

What a blessing that the power of God transformed a country into a believing nation. What a testimony that our life can be turned in an instant when in a very unstable situation and have it turned into a victory in Jesus! He and the young men who went with him changed a nation for the Lord.

Nancy Malik moved to Avery County six years ago. The past few years have been a journey of learning how to be a widow and loving the county the Lord led them to on an amazing journey for The Safe Place for the ends times many years ago. She has a precocious black cat, Midi, who always lets her know when something exciting is happening outside. She prays for the readers of the Blue Ridge Christian News to be blessed by God’s goodness.

In Memory of Joy Baldwin
Madison County



*A Rainbow’s on the Way
The people sat inside the church
Hearts dim, their spirits low
So many cares of life they had
To the altar they felt they should go.*

*They cried to God on bended knee
Please help us on this day
A peace came over all their hearts
Their tears He dried away.*

*As they stood upon their feet
The angels gathered round
The choir sang with sweet delight
His glory descended down.*

*Some said it was like honey
Tho others said twas rain
Manna of love came from above
This they agreed the same.*

*God can change a dreary night
Into the brightest day
When thunder with the lightning comes
There’s a rainbow on the way!*

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Crossword

Crossword 276

ACROSS

1 a man of understanding ____ his tongue (Prov 11:12)
6 shall have in the skin of his flesh a rising, a ____, or bright spot (Lev 13:2) KJV
10 sold your people for a pittance, gaining nothing from their ____ (Ps 44:12)
14 prevent (Jer 11:15)
15 Forgive us our debts, as we ____ have forgiven our debtors (Matt 6:12)
16 the father of all who ____ the harp and flute (Gen 4:21)
17 I ____ to those whose sin does not lead to death (1 John 5:16)

18 My people have been ____ sheep; their shepherds have (Jer 50:6)
19 Joshua son of Nun, who had been Moses' ____ (Num 11:28)
20 it ____ its roots around a pile of rocks (Job 8:17)
22 make the tabernacle with ten curtains of fine ____ linen (Ex 26:1) KJV
24 Let them praise the ____ of the LORD (Ps 148:5)
25 So Joseph bought some ____ cloth, took down the body (Mark 15:46)
26 they began to throw the ____ overboard (Acts 27:18)
29 The creatures ____ back and forth like flashes of lightning (Ezek 1:14)
32 "Don't call me Naomi," she told them. "Call me ____ (Ruth 1:20)
33 your hands ____ out violence on the earth (Ps 58:2)
35 behold, the Lion of the ____ of Juda, the Root of David (Rev 5:5) KJV
39 the place of the Skull (which in ____ is called Golgotha) (John 19:17)
41 The law is only ____ of the good things that are (1,6) (Heb 10:1)
43 God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he ____ anyone (James 1:13)
44 But if you can do anything, take pity on us and ____ us (Mark 9:22)
46 Ailments (Ps 73:5)
47 Holy Ghost fell on them, ____ us at the beginning (2,2) (Acts 11:15) KJV
49 one loaf of bread, and one cake of ____ bread (Ex 29:23) KJV
51 wheat and barley, beans and lentils, millet and ____ (Ezek 4:9)
54 to give up, cease (1 Cor 16:13) KJV
57 Let not the buyer rejoice nor the ____ grieve (Ezek 7:12)
58 the man went to the house, and the camels were ____ (Gen 24:32)

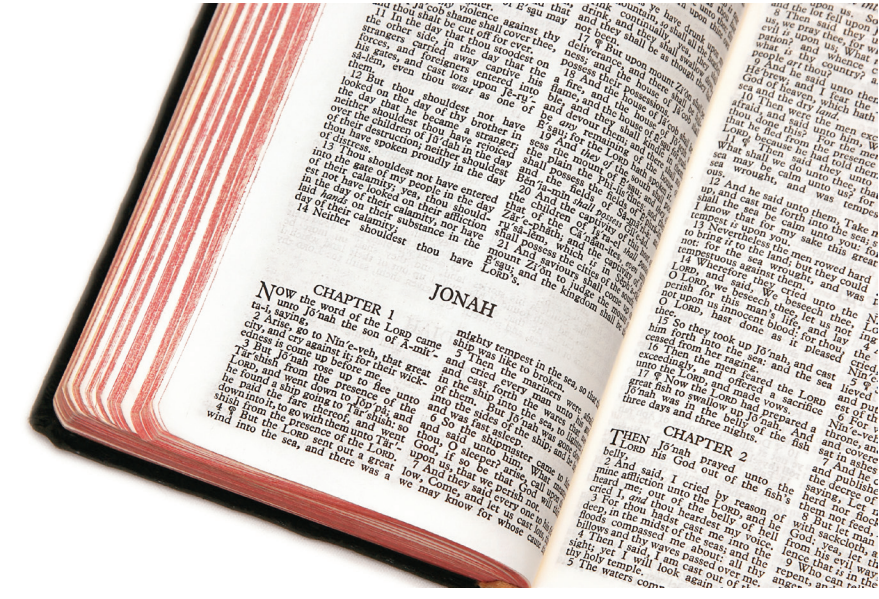
62 Nevertheless ____ saw them, and told Absalom (1,3) (2 Sam 17:18) KJV
63 away from the truth and turn ____ to myths (2 Tim 4:4)
65 you rely on the law and ____ about your relationship to God (Rom 2:18)
66 the inscription that was written: ____, MENE, TEKEL, (Dan 5:25)
67 Her Nazarites were ____ than snow, they were whiter than (Lam 4:7) KJV
68 Its posts he made of silver, its ____ of gold (Song 3:10)
69 Edom southward were Kabzeel, and ____, and Jagur (Jos 15:21)
70 The ____ will be ashamed and the diviners disgraced (Mic 3:7)
71 he has appeared once for all at the end of the ____ (Heb 9:26)
Down
1 king's palace and entrusted to Hegai, who had charge of the ____ (Est 2:8)
2 ten women shall bake your bread in one ____ (Lev 26:26)
3 do not let your ____ hand know what your right hand is doing (Matt 6:3)
4 reached for his sword, ____ it out and struck the servant (Matt 26:51)
5 he will bend and ____ his bow (Ps 7:12)
6 Melchizedek king of ____ brought forth bread and wine (Gen 14:18)
7 You have taken from me my ____ friends and have made (Ps 88:8)
8 he was riding upon his ____, and his two servants were with him (Num 22:22)
9 she went, and filled the ____ with water, and gave (Gen 21:19) KJV
10 I plan to do so when I go to ____ (Rom 15:24)
11 The carpenter measures with ____ (1,4) (Isa 44:13)
12 He brought out Israel, ____ with silver and gold (Ps 105:37)
13 Leah was tender ____; but Rachel was beautiful (Gen 29:17) KJV
21 So ____ returned from Moab accompanied by Ruth (Ruth 1:22)
23 its total length will be 25,000 cubits and its ____ 10,000 cubits (Ezek 48:13)
26 and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take ____ of it (Gen 2:15)
27 Also a bullock and ____ for peace offerings (1,3) (Lev 9:4)
28 They built a siege ____ up to the city (2 Sam 20:15)
30 the roar of rushing waters and like a loud ____ of

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thunder (Rev 14:2)
31 No one ____ a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment (Matt 9:16)
32 no one of these shall fail, none shall want her ____ (Isa 34:16)
34 Their calls will ____ through the windows (Zeph 2:14)
36 those who ____ against me use my name as a curse (Ps 102:8)
37 keep away from every brother who is ____ (2 Thess 3:6)
38 Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very ____ (2 Cor 3:12)
40 we spend our years as ____ that is told (1,4) (Ps 90:9) KJV
42 The ____ are come upon all high places (Jer 12:12) KJV
45 ask about, look into a matter
48 Make a yoke out of ____ and crossbars and put it on (Jer 27:2)
50 What have ____ do any more with idols? (1,2) (Hosea 14:8)

51 The sons of Nadab: ____ and Appaim (1 Chron 2:30)
52 branches from poplar, almond and ____ trees and made (Gen 30:37)
53 An ____ must be blameless, the husband of but one wife (Titus 1:6)
55 the holy city shall they tread ____ foot forty and two months. (Rev 11:2)
56 Priests must not shave their heads or shave off the ____ of their beards (Lev 21:5)
57 to another faith by the ____ Spirit, to another gifts of healing (1 Cor 12:9)
59 received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, ____, Father. (Rom 8:15) KJV
60 catch them in their net, and gather them in their ____ (Hab 1:15)
61 Men at ____ have contempt for misfortune (Job 12:5)
64 if someone wants to ____ you and take your tunic (Matt 5:40)

Solution on page 14



The Ultimate Winning Team

By Art Dmytriyeu
Yancey County

Have you ever seen or known a team that never loses at any competition? Does such a team exist? Yes, it does, and the most influential book in the world tells us about unity like this.

First, here is the story of Jesus.

Many years ago, about 2000, in the country of Israel, on the bank of the Jordan river special event took place. Jesus Christ, the incarnated Son of God, was baptized by prophet John in Jordan. When all of a sudden "... the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased." (Luke 3:22 KJV). It was the Holy Spirit and the voice of the Father God. After the Baptism, when the Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness, the mission of Christ on Earth began. It was a life of hardship, sacrifice, and victory. Praise the Lord! Jesus is risen and alive today.

The question is, what was it that gave the victory to our Lord and Savior? According to the Scriptures, it is the collaboration of the three-in-one Godhead. Jesus said: "I and my Father are one." (John 10:30 KJV). He was led and guided by the Holy Spirit, and right before returning to Heaven, He said: "Go...make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19, NKJV). Jesus spoke of the Trinity - His Team! What is it, and how can we understand the working of it?

The word "Trinity" is not in the Bible; however, it talks about God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

God the Father is described as the overseer of all, the source of everything. He sustains our lives and number our days (Acts 17:25); He worked through God the Son in the creation of our world (Genesis 1:26); He loved us so much that He sent Jesus to save us (John 3:16), and He loves us with an everlasting love (Jeremiah 31:3: 1 John 4:19)!

God the Son is characterized as our Savior, our Advocate, and the one who became human to relate with us and teach us to save us from the consequences of sin. He loved us so much that He paid that penalty so that we could choose to have eternal life (John 15:13); He wants to be your friend (John 15:14); He created first man and woman with His own hands (Genesis 2:7); He has existed about the creation of this world (John 1:1-3; 8:58).

God, the Holy Spirit, is described as One who will help you stay strong in your faith and make the best decisions for your life. He can become your personal guide (Isaiah 30:21; John 16:13); He works through your conscience (Mark 13:11); He works through our prayers (Romans 8:26); He works through our mind as we read the Bible (Psalms 119:105); He prepares us for Heaven (Galatians 5:22, 23; Romans 5:5)!

So, this is the team. All three members of the Trinity are working together to make it possible for you to be an heir of eternal life. There truly is the ultimate winning team ready to sustain you, guide you, and redeem you.

Jesus invites you and me to join His victorious team and be with Him forever. As he prayed to His Father: "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory..." (John 17:24 KJV). Is it your desire to join the team and surrender yourself to the Lord today? May the Lord Bless You!

Pr. Art Dmytriyeu is originally from Siberia. He has traveled the world in Evangelism and pastoral ministry. He serves as a pastor in North Carolina, holds a Master of Divinity degree, and is currently a Doctor of Ministry candidate. More information at: <https://burnsvillenc.adventistchurch.org/pastors-blog>



Morganton Baptist Church

Balances of Speech

By Don Quorollo
Burke County

Words have a unique power, the greatness of which is seldom considered. In fact, the power of words far exceeds a person's physical strength. The irony of the power of words is that the physically weakest individual is capable of the greatest damage by the words he uses and the manner in which he uses them.

At times, we read of examples in which words were chosen wisely and made a tremendous impact upon the hearers. At other times, words were not chosen wisely and made a negative impact upon the hearers. This reality is evidenced throughout biblical and secular history.

Often, a person who embraces extreme positions errors. This is true theologically as well as practically. One of the areas that must still be properly balanced is our speech. Sound speech properly balances three tensions.

To begin, sound speech balances the accuracy of content with the spirit of delivery. Titus was instructed by Paul to exemplify "sound speech, that cannot be condemned" (Titus 2:8a). In this particular verse, Paul did not address the content of the message. The focus of verse 8 is on how the message is communicated. Paul states that the word is to be sound. In other words, the method of communication is to be healthy so that it might make its desired impact.

A person can be right in the content of his message and still be ineffective in his communication of that message. Lest you think this only applies to preachers, you most likely know someone who is unsaved. You know the content of what needs to be said; but if you wish for that message to truly be effective, you must learn to communicate that content with the proper demeanor. Accuracy of content is of little value without a proper demeanor of delivery.

Sound speech also balances the graciousness of character with the perception of need. Colossians 4:6 teaches, "Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man." Since this is to be done at all times, the clear expectation is that God never permits even a single moment of speech that is ungracious. Nowhere does the Bible ever permit an individual to vent, fly off the handle, or say whatever comes to mind. Each of those exhibits a lack of self-control, something that should never characterize us. Gracious speech is to characterize us at all times.

Finally, sound speech balances the issues of the temporal with the reality of the eternal. The latter part of Colossians 4:6 establishes the reason for sound speech: "that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man." If our speech is not characterized by graciousness and is not seasoned with salt, we are a hindrance to the spread of the gospel. Our mouth contradicts what we claim to believe about Jesus Christ and the transformative power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Unfortunately, much of our speech is focused on the wrong thing. We would rather make our point than disciple a believer. We would rather be right than be certain someone is right with God. We would rather give them a piece of our minds than the message of salvation. We would rather prove our point than demonstrate God's love.

Let's determine to choose our words carefully to make the greatest impact for God.



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



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Marlene’s Meditations

Whole Body Listening

By Marlene Houk
Burke County



His steps quickened. His heart pounded. The smoke swirled around him as he approached the cause of the fire. Highly combustible and flammable, the sawdust collector at the furniture plant exploded in flames. Supervisors scurried to the scene. The plant manager bolted from his chair, darted through the door and into the smoke. And the corporate accountant, my supervisor, raced to help. Fortunately, most of the employees had left, but some remained. How many needed rescuing? How many were injured? Would more sawdust explode?

Standard operating procedures for emergencies exist for almost every company. Many employees practice scenarios and produce manuals intended to save lives, encourage working together, and promote the corporate mission.

I wonder if commerce realizes how closely they follow biblical concepts? The Bible teaches preventive procedures in great detail, and the story of Abigail offers a story of a divine drama that trains the Christian to prepare for issues that may arise. In this true story, Abigail teaches us how to defuse anger and support leaders.

Abigail, an intelligent woman is front stage in a drama of life and death played out in this biblical chapter. Using whole body listening, she prevented the future King David from allowing his anger to control him, saved dozens of lives, and gently reminded the man after God’s own heart of his place in God's will.

Abigail's husband, Nabal, owned a large sheep operation close to Carmel. David had relocated close to Nabal’s vast acreage after the prophet Samuel died. King Saul sought for nine years to kill David because he was a threat to Saul’s kingship. When David moved close to Nabal, he and his 600 soldiers protected his shepherds, shearers, and thousands of sheep for months. David instructed his men to treat them with respect and honesty. In return, the culture of that area would call for a reward for protection.

But, when David's men asked Nabal for anything that they wanted to give, he rebuffed them with scorn, accusing David of treason. David, anointed by God to become king, exploded in anger, promising to kill every male in Nabal’s clan. Abigail heard about it from one of the servants and hastily commanded her servants to load up a donkey with prepared food. She told her servants to hurry to meet David, and she would follow on another donkey.

Hidden in the drama of unfolding scenes, we discover wisdom for defusing anger. Abigail, a woman of great understanding, used a method that teachers use yet today. Called Whole Body Listening, the method is a checklist of the way students are encouraged to listen in class. Some of the questions to ask themselves are:

1. Am I making eye contact?
2. Does my body language indicate interest?
3. Are my words incendiary or peaceful?
4. Do I try to restore pre-frontal cortex thinking and a sense of perspective?

Abigail used Whole Body Listening. She used her body, soul, and spirit to respond to a potentially lethal situation with grace, courage, and wisdom. Physically, her body language indicated great concern, a plan she quickly enacted, and a path she knew would collide with David and his army. When she sees David, she hurriedly dismounts and throws herself at his feet. She used her pre-frontal cortex instead of allowing her emotions to control her.

Abigail used her soul when she met David. She accepted responsibility for the situation (reflected in today’s customer service when the company’s representative apologizes for your trouble). She empathized with him. (1 Samuel 25:25) She found something to be thankful for. (1 Samuel 25:26) She offered a gift much like a company would refund the money or give away a free meal. (1 Samuel 25: 27) She complimented him. (1 Samuel 25:28)

All of these offer support and encouragement in the heat of the battle of controlling our emotions. Abigail used her mind, her will, and her emotions, i.e., her soul, to convey to David her concern for him.

Then Abigail used her spirit to discern how best to gently guide David back to using his thinking brain rather than being controlled by his emotions. She reminded him that God had a plan for him. (1 Samuel 25:29) and he shouldn’t do something to mar that plan. (1 Samuel 25:31)

We should react to the fire of our friend’s anger with the same urgency that Abigail piled 5 dressed sheep, 2 bottles of wine, 200 loaves, 100 clusters of raisins, and 200 fig cakes on one donkey and raced away on another toward the thundering sounds of 400 soldiers determined to kill her loved ones and those in her responsibility.

Abigail used Whole Body Listening and encourages us to see amazing results when we follow her steps to defuse anger. We listen with our body language. We listen with our soul. We use our spirit, guided by the Holy Spirit, to discern what support they need to decide to release their anger. Judgment, condemnation, or harsh words add fuel to the fire. Gentleness, love, and concern pour the cooling water of the Holy Spirit on their rage.

The sawdust collector fire gradually diminished, and normalcy returned. Everyone breathed a sigh of relief, more prepared for the next time.

Use Whole Body Listening—body, soul, and spirit—when defusing the fire of anger in your friend or a leader.

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

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March 2022 - Blue Ridge Christian News page 40