




# BLUE RIDGE CHRISTIAN NEWS

## Happy Father's Day!



### The Inspiring Word

By Terry Cheek Th.D.  
McDowell County

Hello, again, I want to begin this month by saying I hope all mothers had a blessed and enjoyable Mother's Day, and likewise, I want to wish all fathers an early happy Father's Day. However, before we get into this month's article, let me encourage our fathers to man up and be the family leader God has called them to be.

I realize I have promised an exposition of Romans. I am working to deliver that to you. Unfortunately, due to health problems, I have not been able to complete the second essay in time for June. I hope you enjoy this article, and may it bless your heart reading it as much as it blessed my heart writing it.

For June, let's look at some scripture in 2 Corinthians. To begin with, let's read.

2Corinthians 4:8-9 *"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; (9) Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;"*

Are you familiar with the term "knockoff?" You know it is an imitation of an authentic product. For example, many designer clothes, handbags, and watches are copied using cheaper materials and processes; they may look authentic, but they are not. Arguably everything in our life can be imitated using cheap and unsatisfying knockoffs. Have you ever considered the infallible gospel one of those authentic pieces of work that gets cheapened by knockoffs; there are many knock-off versions of Christianity. They pop up like weeds in the human landscape. Today many are drawn into and engage in the bogus proclamation of a cheap gospel that weakly imitates the real thing. The true gospel is easily recognized when we accept the Bible as God's inerrant, inspired word. True Christians must proclaim the true gospel and allow their lives to reflect its truth as messengers of a life transformed by its truth. Then and only then can the real gospel have an authentic proclamation.

The Bible books of first and second Corinthians are two letters written by the



apostle Paul to address several things within the church at Corinth. One purpose of these letters was to address criticism of Paul's ministry. Although some, possibly many, in Corinth considered Paul bold and powerful in his letters, they also viewed Paul as a base and weak in person (2 Corinthians 10:1, 10). They preferred a powerful, eloquent, and possibly charismatic teacher (compare 11:6).

Paul's response was more than simple defense. He explained the fundamental nature of the gospel and what it means to follow Jesus. The gospel's true power is not in the skill or personality of the messenger but in the message itself. Yes, the messenger must have a personal relationship with the Lord and a deep personal commitment to proclaiming the gospel.

A personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ and commitment to that relationship will give the messenger a transformed character that reflects the true gospel and its power to lead others to a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. The identity of a genuinely born-again Christian demonstrates the grace and mercy of God through Jesus Christ and the promise of the only all-knowing, all-powerful, and ever-present God to redeem souls from the death of sin.

From our passage above, we find several ways to identify the glory of the gospel. First, Paul shows us through his words and life the glory of the gospel. Honest service is our passages' first evidence of the glory of the gospel. Our conviction to serve God has its basis in the mercy of God as a redeemer. God has not given us the punishment we deserve but forgiveness if we ask. Therefore, we serve from an obsession which is desire transformed by gratitude.

Second, Paul shows us the world's rejection is evidence of the glory of the gospel. True, many people today do not believe Jesus is Lord and Savior. Paul notes in 2 Corinthians 4:3 that the message becomes hidden from those who choose not to hear it. Neither the gospel nor the messenger is at fault, but the one hearing and refusing to heed it (compare 1 Corinthians 1:18). Watching people reject Christ is heartbreaking, but we see God glorified through his effort to offer grace and mercy through this rejection. Therefore, we witness the glory of the gospel.

Third, Paul shows us that through the light of God, there is evidence of the glory of the gospel. 2 Corinthians 4:5-6 tells us the focus of the message is not the messenger. It is Christ. When the messenger is less, Christ can be more (compare

*continued on page 6*

## What We Believe

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

### God

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

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

### Jesus

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

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

### The Holy Spirit

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

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

### The Bible

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

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

### Humanity

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

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

### Eternity & Eternal Security

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

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

### Salvation

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

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



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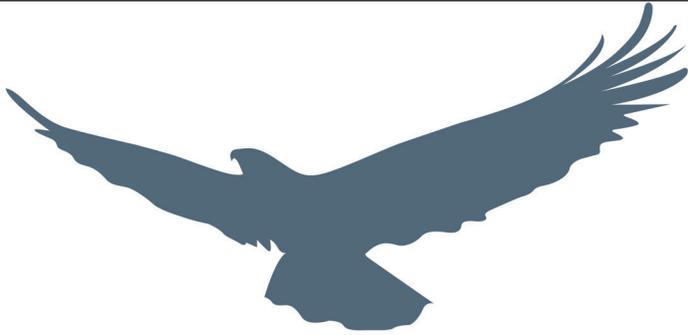
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*The Blue Ridge Christian News*

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

Isaiah 52:7 KJV



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# Church Directory



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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

opcsmikecloy@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  
www.burkemontbaptist.org

### Sr. Pastor - Dr. Luke Lane

Sunday Services  
8:30a - Early Worship  
9:45a - Sunday School  
11:00a - Worship  
Wednesday Services  
6:30p - Adult Choir & Orches-  
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## First Baptist Church of Spruce Pine

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

### Dr. Rocky Branch Senior Pastor

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

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## Pine Branch Baptist Church

48 Church Road  
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### Reverend Bobby Joe Greene

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## Marion Seventh-day Adventist Church

188 Ward Dr.  
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(828) 668-4018

### Pastor Tim Sheridan

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Bible Study - 9:15 am  
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

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# A Divinely Appointed Peacock

By Lisa Sauls  
Mitchell County



It was a year ago that God placed change on my heart. At long last, I was given the freedom to flee. To flee the West and head East where my heart truly belonged. Many years prior, due to family circumstances, I went home to Nevada to help with personal and troubling matters. Decades later, after resolving many problems and walking both my parents to the gate, it was time for me to be reunited with my heart. There was only one place my heart wished to travel to; Western North Carolina. When I was just 17 I traveled through the Blue Ridge. After a breakfast stop, I walked out to a viewpoint and the oddest thing happened to me; I felt the ground below my feet come up and into me. I can't explain it to this day, but on that day it was clear this was a place of the Living God. 46 years would elapse until I would come home but not to a home I'd never been to. I had no idea where I would live, where I would go, where I would land. I had turned my life – mind, heart, and soul – over to the Father and the ultimate tender of my life, Jesus. Like many of you reading this, I walked the board of faith. A profound and humbling walk as we each trust the board to grow under our feet as we step into thin air. For those of you who know God then you know the miracle of walking that board.

It was Sunday morning and I had been in NC for 3 days. I was staying with a friend in Ashville while I looked for a place to live. There was a little house on a creek out in the Green Mountain area and the price had just dropped. God put it on my heart to drive out and look. As I wondered and wandered to the Creek House I felt as though God was directing my steps into and around the wilderness. When I pulled up I discovered people poking about including a real estate agent and her husband. Seeing the beauty and peace of this little cup of God's glory put me in a sort of blindness. I could see but was so overwhelmed I couldn't take it all in. Consuming beauty, peace and life were exploding everywhere. I made an offer the next day.

As I waited, hopeful that this would be my home, God would deliver miracle after miracle assuring me this was to be. Finally, I moved in. It was early June and with peace flowing around me I looked out a window to see the most glorious sight; a peacock. Yes, a peacock. A peacock was walking around the creek outback. I was beyond astonished. A living glory, the bird of the divine, was strolling about.

He would make his presence known. He would strut about; spreading his wings into a rounded bow, stating his glorious presence. He would honk in the morning like a bell ringing in the day. He would look at me as if we were known to one another and yet we'd never met. I told the few people I knew and my friends across the divide, "God sent a peacock!"

While some of you may doubt what I say next, it is true. It had only been a day or two since seeing the bird when I asked the Shining Radiance of God's Glory "how do I call this bird Lord?". Like the wind blowing past me, I clearly heard his name: Harvey. I laughed and said to the Lord "Harvey? Harvey? I wouldn't name anything Harvey". Again I heard the wind blow and speak clearly: Harvey. So it was I called him as such and spelled it thus; Harvee.

As God is the greatest teacher I was inspired to look up the origin of the word and name. I was astounded to learn that it meant battle-worthy. Suddenly the finger pointed right at me. Without going into details I had survived the battle; not just of this world, not just of the failed family but of failed self who God had seen fit to revive and resuscitate. Perhaps some of you know of what I speak. There is no greater gift than God's measure of relief. A relief that is known and unknown at the same time; a mystery revealed and yet not fully understood.

Many folks who visited the property would observe Harvee strutting about, sitting atop their trucks and cars, and saying hello with his gaze. It was wonderment come alive. Everyone who saw him was astonished as I repeatedly stated "God sent a peacock".

And then it happened; he was not only divinely appointed to arrive he was divinely appointed to leave. How do I know that? I know because it was over the Easter weekend that his departure began.

I woke early, in darkness, on the darkest of all days. It was "that" Friday, the day humanity chose itself over God. As I let the dogs out I noticed a shadow in the dark.....once my eyes adjusted I realized it was Harvee. He was standing just a few feet from me, standing in the darkness, showing his divine presence in the black before morning. At the time I thought it odd but went about my business. As the day

progressed I noticed the bird seemed different; he wasn't hanging around the hens who scattered across the yard but kept to himself. Saturday was the same as well as Sunday, the holy day of the resurrection.

I last saw Harvee Easter evening. I watched him fly up to roost in the Chestnut tree out front. The next morning I sensed, quite palpably, that he was gone. I get up early and the morning after Resurrection Sunday was no different, and yet it was. I knew he was gone. Just as Jesus rose from the tomb so had Harvee risen from this world to his divine habitation.

Some may wonder about a story...what happened? What happened was God had brought me to my own deliverance. He had sent a gift and an escort, a sentry who strutted about trumpeting with honks here and there. God's living testimony was present in my life and on His appointed day He appointed that bird to his eternal glory. Of all days, a most sacred day to all those who walk the Christian path, and a personal day too as it was the one-year anniversary of my leaving the old and heading toward the new. It was special and it was personal.

Special and personal: that is God in my life and yours. There is no room for an intellectual God as God is the beat of our heart and the corrector of our thoughts. We move as His feet take us and bend as His wind wills. True Christians, few and far between, don't talk to God they show God; they demonstrate rather than discuss. Blessed be you if you are one. If you're not, repent and save your soul by placing it on the altar of the Holy Father. This world works untiringly to tire you out; it wants to entangle your heart, confuse your mind and bend you to the lie that it is sovereign. Don't let it win.

As the world walks the road of destiny, a destiny that won't be denied, each of us who finds our ground on God walks the firm road of faith, hope, and the knowledge that one day we too shall have our divine appointment. The calling home of our spirit to the divine destiny we know must be ours as we are God's children. God speed good reader.

The Anonymous Christian.

This writing is my personal testimony of God's miraculous hand in my own life. One I cannot account for but only kneel and weep that God would save and then bless a simple girl like myself. One who has, perhaps like you, had to traverse troubling seas, stormy nights and lonely encounters bearing refinement after refinement until realizing this temporary earthly life is just that; temporary. Regardless of the weather, regardless of day or night, regardless of any circumstance may you always trim your sails home to the eternal love of God's Holy Realm.

*A simple girl who grew up walking the world of a man seeking the home and heart of God. No one and nothing special except the blessings God has brought me. Just a regular gal with a love for God, gardening, humble people, good dogs, and the joy of writing since little.*



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By Bruce Cannon  
Mitchell County



Psalm 137:1,2 *“By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.”*

The nation of Judah was in captivity. Their past had caught up with them. The Lord’s mercy had waned and He allowed the enemy, Babylon, to come into the nation not once, but three times to take the Jews into captivity. Beginning in 605BC Babylon came and took the strong, the intelligent, and the best of the nation back to Babylon as captives. It happened again in 597BC and again in 587BC. After the last deportation, the enemy tore the Temple Solomon had built down and badly damaged the walls. The Lord allowed Babylon to be His right hand of judgment against Judah and took away the desire to “fight” from His people. It was His will that they are taken into captivity by Babylon.

The 137 Psalm describes the attitude of the people of Judah in captivity. They sat by the rivers with their harps hung in the willow trees. There was no joy or song in their hearts. Many of their people would never come back to Judah after the captivity was over. They made a life for themselves in Babylon. Some of the women married Babylonian men. Many of the men accepted their positions of servitude in Babylon.

How did this happen? God had given the Promised Land to His people and they entered into it during the time of Joshua. How did they get to the point of having it taken away? The simple answer is rebellion; disobedience to God. The Jews started acting like the world around them. They served other gods and allowed themselves to be overtaken by evil.

Do we understand that the Lord will only allow this to go on so long before He sends in judgment? Before that, however, the Holy Spirit of God brings conviction and chastisement in an attempt to turn His people back to Himself. If that does not work, judgment always falls.

Is that where we are in America? Have we gone so far away from God that He is allowing the enemy to come in and bring great harm? Is the Lord OK with us aborting 63+ million babies? Is He OK with us allowing pornography to go uncensored but censoring the name “Jesus” from corporate prayer in government? Is He OK with children being sent into foster homes with homosexual parents? Is He OK with marriage being redefined in our country as that of same-sex couples? What about the changing of sexes of little children from what He created them to be to the opposite sex? The answer to all of these questions is a resounding, “NO!”

Let me ask a few rhetorical questions at this point:

- 1) Can we remember a time when the power of God fell and the Spirit of God tremendously moved in our midst? Are our Churches filled with the power of the Holy Ghost of God or are we just going through the motions?
- 2) Has our rebellion as a nation caused the Lord to pull back His hand of blessing to a large degree? Check out the food shortages and terribly high gas prices as just minor examples of what is taking place.
- 3) What about the problem with the borders being secure? How many terrorists have come in among us and are waiting for the time to attack?
- 4) What about the plight of the modern-day home? Or the condition of the Church? Or the health of our government and military?
- 5) Have we learned our lesson? Do we understand the extreme need to return to Him in brokenness, repentance, and holiness?

If we fall on our knees before God, will it help? Will He run to our aid? Will He restore? Yes! Pray with me for deep cleansing of the people of God. Pray with me for brokenness, humility, conviction, and repentance among all of God’s people. Pray with me that the power of God truly falls in Washington, Raleigh, and all across our country. Pray with me that there is a tremendous move of God that truly brings a Spiritual Awakening to our land. Pray with me that we can see an overturning of Roe v. Wade! How I long to see evil stopped dead still in its tracks and the power of God turned loose in our homes and churches! How I long to see souls saved, moms and dads on fire for the Lord, and children raised in the nurture and admonition of the Lord! How I long to see the houses of God full of people, full of praise, and full of the power of God!

Pray with me, please!

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

By Chastity Anne Ogburn  
Avery County



Just a few weeks ago, I was sitting in my chair in our living room one evening when I first heard the news of the Supreme Court leak about overturning Roe v Wade. I had tears streaming down my cheeks as I thought about what this could mean. I am very passionate about defending the unborn and their mothers. If this turns out to be true, and I pray it is, many lives will be saved. Even with the decision being sent back to the states this will result in a huge victory.

In the United States, there have been over 63,000,000 lives lost to abortion since Roe v Wade in 1973. Now almost 50 years later we may see our Supreme Court take a stand in protecting life.

There will be lives saved from abortion. Many have been praying for this for years. Many states will make abortion illegal and, unfortunately, North Carolina will not be one of them. We have to keep praying for our state to become a state that defends and protects life.

Psalm 139 14-16 speaks about how we are fearfully and wonderfully made by our creator God. It also tells us that He knew us in our mother's womb and what I think is even cooler He tells us in these scriptures that He planned our days before there was even one of them. God's plans and purpose for our lives began before we were ever conceived in our mother's womb. Every life matters to God. If He creates life, He has a purpose for that life. He is the only one that should determine when life ends. He is the giver and taker of life.

*“The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy”* John 10:10  
The enemy has been using abortion for years to accomplish what he has set out to do. Abortion kills the life of the child, destroys the life of the mother, and steals the family. We know that over 63,000,000 lives have been lost to abortion and I can’t help but think also of the many women that suffer silently. Statistics tell us that 1 in 4 women will have had an abortion by the age of 45. Who are these women? They may be the cashier at the grocery store. She may be your neighbor. She may be your child's school teacher. Maybe your co-worker. She may be your best friend. She could be your sister. She could be your daughter or your mother. They are in our churches, and our families and they are in our everyday circles. These women have been deeply hurt by abortion and feel as if they never can be forgiven. That is what the enemy wants them to believe. These women have lost a child and grieve silently for that child. They have never healed and accepted God’s forgiveness in their life. Now with abortion in the news, every day and with the possible overturning of Roe v Wade many women are reliving a past abortion experience. Satan continues to keep them bound in fear, guilt, and shame. God wants to bring healing into their life. God forgives the sin of abortion. He wants them to ACCEPT His forgiveness and grace. God has shown me the post-abortive woman in the verses of Isaiah 61:1-3. Jesus came to bind up the brokenhearted, to give liberty to the captives, and open the prison door to those that have been bound. He wants to comfort all that mourn. Over 63,000,000 lives have been lost since 1973 and many are mourning those losses. It may not be just the mother, it may be a father, a grandparent, or even a medical worker. These verses go on to tell us that He gives beauty for ashes, joy for mourning, and praise for the spirit of heaviness. He wants to do all this so that He might be glorified. God can take something like a past abortion experience and turn it around for His glory.

I love the last part of the verse John 10:10 *“I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”* He has come to give us life friends! Yes, abundant life, and I believe Jesus wants that for us right now here on earth. Life for the unborn and their mothers. Life for those that are hurting and bound by sin. Let’s continue prayers for our country, the Supreme Court, the unborn, their mothers, and the many families that have been affected by the sin of abortion.

*Chastity Anne Ogburn is a follower of Jesus Christ. She is the founder and director of Anne Ministries offering pregnancy support and recovery services in Avery County. She is the author of “His Grace Covers All”, a memoir inspired by God. Chastity and her husband Jay attend Emmanuel Baptist Church in Newland. They have six children and two grandsons. For more information or to contact Chastity visit [anneministries.com](http://anneministries.com) or email [anneministries@gmail.com](mailto:anneministries@gmail.com)*

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# Morganton Baptist Church

## Finish with Joy

By Dan Quorollo  
Burke County

In the 1968 Olympics held in Mexico City, a runner named John Akhwari represented the small country of Tanzania. The marathon was an already difficult race since he was unable to train at such a high altitude. Nearly halfway through the marathon, he was hit as runners vied for position, causing him to fall. As he fell, he dislocated his knee and injured his shoulder. While many would have perhaps given up, John Akhwari pressed on. Over an hour after the winner had crossed the finish line, John slowly crossed the finish line. The sun had already set, and the crowd had mostly dissipated. A television crew was sent out from the medal ceremony as word came that one more runner was about to finish. A reporter asked him why he continued running. His answer was quite insightful: "My country did not send me 5,000 miles to start the race; they sent me 5,000 miles to finish the race."

Difficulties abound along our race in life. At times, the course seems to be so full of obstacles and challenges that finishing seems to be little more than an elusive dream. But we are not merely called to start a race; God has left us here to finish the race He has for us.

Paul faced tremendous challenges throughout his earthly ministry. He describes many of them in 2 Corinthians 11:22-33. Despite all his challenges, Paul was determined to finish the course God had for him. Each of us is called to run our own race, not the race of someone else. We must resolve to finish our race. Paul expressed it perfectly when he wrote, "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24). At the end of his life, he looked back and said, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7).

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



# Snow Hill Baptist Church

## I Am A Sinner No Regrets

By Dean Honeycutt  
Mitchell County



I am saddened by recent news reports about pastors and church leaders who have sinned by sexual misconduct. Some of these reports are almost unbelievable. How could some of these well-known men who preached the word of God fall into such tragic sin?

I am reminded that I am not above sin. I am a sinner and the moment I let my guard down I become susceptible to sin. When any Christian lets their guard down, they are vulnerable to falling into sin. No one is above sin or temptation to sin. The Bible says, "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." We "come short" because we are born in sin and our actions no matter how reverend or good do not satisfy God's holy standard. (Romans 3:23) "If we say that we have not sinned we make God a liar, and his word is not in us." 1 John 1:10.

The Bible says a person is tempted when he is drawn away by his lust and enticed. (James 1:14) Our sinful desires drag us away from what is righteous. If we do not stop and turn our hearts and minds back to God; then the sinful desire brings forth sin. Sin is the willful breaking of God's commands. God is saddened when I disobey Him, and my sin breaks my fellowship with God. As a born-again believer washed in the blood of Jesus, God does not kick me out of the family. He does not forfeit my salvation. He did not forfeit Moses' salvation, He did not forfeit David's salvation, nor did He forfeit Peter's salvation. He wants me to repent of my sin and turn my heart back towards Him. Repentance restores my fellowship with the Father.

An example of this is King David a man after God's own heart. When David should have gone off to battle, he stayed home. (Men, there are places we should not go, there are sites on the internet we never need to view). While walking on his roof he saw a woman who was bathing. Seeing the woman bathing was not a sin. David could have looked away. However, David looked, lingered, and lost control. Instead of bringing his thoughts and desires under control, his desires drug his heart and mind into lust. That lust led to inviting Bathsheba to his home where he committed adultery. David was not above sin, and neither are we. However, the sweet psalmist did not remain in a backslidden condition when confronted with his sin, David repented. Psalm fifty-one is David's prayer of repentance and restoration. Psalm 51:1-4; 10-12.

"I Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness:  
According unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

2 Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity,  
And cleanse me from my sin.

3 For I acknowledge my transgressions:  
And my sin is ever before me.

4 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned,  
And done this evil in thy sight:

That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, And be clear when thou judgest.

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God;  
And renew a right spirit within me.

11 Cast me not away from thy presence;  
And take not thy holy spirit from me.

12 Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation;  
And uphold me with thy free spirit."

We must guard our hearts and mind against sin. The following are some ways we can guard our life against sin. First, the Bible says to set our minds on things of heaven and not on things of the earth. (Col. 3:2). An idle mind is the devil's advocate. When my mind is on Jesus then my thoughts and actions will please Him.

Second, the Bible says, "thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against God." (Psalm 119:11) Sin will keep us from the Bible, or the Bible will keep us from sin. Memorizing scripture is a deterrent from sin.

Third "walk in the Spirit, and you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh." (Gal. 5:16) To "walk in the Spirit" means to be filled with the Holy Spirit and allow Him to conduct a lifestyle in you that is pleasing to God.

And fourth the Bible says to resist the devil and He will flee from you. Do not give place to the devil and his evil tricks. When a wicked thought comes into your mind resist it, do not give place to it. Do not allow or give room to those desires that would drag your heart and mind away from God.

I am a sinner saved by grace and washed in the blood, I am not perfect, but I serve a sinless and gracious Savior. Thank you, Lord, for saving a sinner like me.

Addendum: Considering the school shooting in Texas. We spend billions of dollars overseas. Protecting our children should be the highest priority. I am an advocate of metal detectors and checkpoints much like they do in airports. I realize it is not an easy fix but if we can do this in airports and before I go into a concert or Mountain state fair we can do more to protect our most vulnerable children.

Pastor Dean Honeycutt shepherds Snow Hill Baptist Church in Bakersville, NC. He may be reached at 828-385-0213, [snowhillbaptist@gmail.com](mailto:snowhillbaptist@gmail.com), or visit their website at [www.snowhillbaptist.com](http://www.snowhillbaptist.com).

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By Doug Harrell  
Mitchell County



As I sit down to write this article I am watching the rain fall gently on soil that needs moisture. I am thinking about how great our God is, and how blessed we are to live in a country where up until now we have enjoyed being able to worship and give thanks without fear of retribution or prosecution. I am wondering what will take place in the lifetime of my grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Will they have the same opportunity that I have had to build a life and raise a family, to be able to provide and care for them? I know that throughout time things have changed, sometimes for good and others not so good.

I have lived through times of inflation, high-interest rates, and gasoline shortages in the past and we survived, I feel sure we will again. Even though I have confidence in making it through, I wonder if we will pass the point of no return, past the point of our great country recovering. I did not live through the great depression but I remember well my parents talking about what they went through. Have we headed that way again? It seems as though we are entering a perfect storm with wars, food shortages, fuel shortages, and more. I think back on the biblical scriptures that tell us that there will be wars and rumors of wars.

*“And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another; and shall hate one another.”* Matthew 24:6-10 KJV

As I read this scripture I am thinking about Ukraine, Russia, and China on the world front and the division in our nation on the local front. We are seeing a great turning away from the Christian foundation this nation was built on. We are calling wrong right. We are demanding that women be allowed to kill their unborn children in the womb. We are claiming that people can be gender fluid and that God can ordain two people of the same sex to be united in holy matrimony. I could write about the corruptness of this mess for many pages but I won't. I want to write about what we need to do to turn the tide.

The turning point is in our homes, around our kitchen tables with our children, we MUST do a better job in the home if our nation is to survive. I wrote a daily devotion this morning and I am going to post it here in Life Lessons for each of you that read this to think about!

If we don't teach our children to follow the word of God the world will teach them not to! Think about this for a few minutes, and let the thoughts of the world picture that is ever in our faces and our children's face! Are you putting a priority on making sure that you are building a base and a foundation in the minds of your children and the minds of the children around you that will enable them to stand up against the world?

It has often been said that our future is our children and this is true. What we don't think about is that our children's future depends on the teaching they receive as a child in almost all situations

*“and thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.”* Deuteronomy 6:5-9 KJV

As the scripture tells us, our days here are but a vapor, here today and gone tomorrow, and I know that this is a dismal thought, but it should impart upon each of us how critical it is to invest in the future generations. The only lasting legacy we leave is the teachings we impart to our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. These teachings also need to include something that in today's woke world is looked down upon but is truly so critical to their wellbeing!

*“Train up a child in the way he should go: And when he is old, he will not depart from it.”* Proverbs 22:6 KJV

*“Withhold not correction from the child: For if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, And shalt deliver his soul from hell.”* Proverbs 23:13-14KJV

*“The rod and reproof give wisdom: But a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame. Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; Yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul.”* Proverbs 29:15, 17 KJV

If we truly love and care for our children and our families, we must first understand that our first responsibility to them is to teach by example, the old saying "monkey see, monkey do" is true. Children are great imitators, and they will imitate whatever they observe. Yes, mothers and dads, they will want to be just like you! Is it a pretty picture?

*“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”* Matthew 5:16 KJV

Make sure you are shining a light that lights the correct path for your family and all those around you, first and foremost those in your own family!

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

## “Lord, Teach Us”

By Toby Crowder  
Mitchell County



*Luke 11:1 “And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.”*

This verse stands out in Scripture because it is a specific request from the disciples to learn something from Christ. For some time, it has interested me that of all the miracles that the disciples witnessed Christ perform and all the sights that they beheld, what they asked Him to teach them ... was simply how to pray. This request I believe was made by a sincere heart; one who wanted a deeper relationship with their Lord. While this verse leads into a wonderful passage on prayer, I want to discuss the attitude of the disciple who made this request of Christ. I believe that he had a teachable spirit, which is something that is becoming less and less prevalent in the days in which we live.

Being teachable speaks of learning. What are the things that we are interested in learning? Some choose to learn a sport, an instrument, or perhaps a second language... But how many of us determine in our hearts to learn more of our Savior? We are instructed to learn of Him in Matt 11:29 *“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”* We also remember Paul's statement in 1 Cor 2:2 *“For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”* A heart that remains teachable will be tender to the voice of the Lord and receptive to the Word of God. These disciples sincerely wanted to learn from the Lord, and so may we “learn of Him” when our heart is inclined to some things:

Firstly, we must have a heart that is inclined to LEARN. These disciples, though unnamed, show us that they wanted to be teachable. Many Christians believe that they know enough... and do not want anymore! In the verse above, we see that these disciples had noticed that others were learning (John's disciples), and they recognized their desire. A heart that is inclined to learn will look for opportunities to do so. Sunday School is a great opportunity to learn, as are small group studies, prayer meetings, and other ministries that are usually offered through the local church. As we see attendance at these gatherings diminish across our churches, it bears the question “Do we really want to learn more of Him... or are we comfortable with what we have?” To be inclined to learn... We must have a heart that is desirous of a deeper relationship with Christ.

Secondly, our hearts must be inclined to GROW. I believe that a desire to learn of Him is a desire to grow in Christ... they go hand in hand. We are exhorted throughout the Scriptures to grow!

2 Peter 3:18 – *“But grow in grace, and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.”*

Eph 4:14-15 *“But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:”*

1 Pet 2:2 *“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:”*

It is important that we grow in our walk with Him, and not remain in the same place or become stagnant. We look for growth in all things as a sign of health... and this should apply to our Christian life as well.

Lastly, I believe that we must have a heart that is inclined to SERVE. Sadly, we are living in a day where servanthood is almost unheard of. Many churches struggle to operate because of a lack of willingness to serve, but when we have a servant's heart, it affects every area of our lives. It does not show itself in activities, but rather in an attitude. Wherever we are serving the Lord, my prayer is that He will foster in us a heart that is inclined to learn, inclined to grow... and inclined to serve Him for He alone is worthy!

*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 [MCfamilyforChrist.org](http://MCfamilyforChrist.org) or [mtcarmelsprucepine@gmail.com](mailto:mtcarmelsprucepine@gmail.com)*

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By Lawrence Traynor  
Jacksonville Beach, Fla.

“She told me to follow her and come to the edge  
I said, ‘No, I am afraid.’  
She told me again to come to the edge  
I said, ‘No, I am afraid I will fall.’  
I went to the edge, and she pushed me  
and I flew....”  
Anonymous



Why do we Christians long for control, knowing it is only when we “let go” (fly), abdicating all certainty, that we overcome our need to control our innermost fears?

I am a Stage III throat cancer survivor and recovering alcoholic with thirty years (10,954 days) of recovery. It is surrendering control, not drinking, which terrifies us, Christian alcoholics. I loved escaping my problems through alcohol, but as my drinking progressed, it felt like it had just started to rain, and I was the third monkey desperately running to get aboard the Ark.

Based on my disease’s bias and penchant for denial, stopping was the last thing I wanted to do. I always thought denial (“deNile”) was a river flowing through Egypt!

Why is it so difficult for Christians to surrender, let go and trust God? The paradoxical irony of “winning” in life (sobriety) necessitates letting go through unconditional surrender.

Like me, any Christian reading this battling cancer or alcoholism knows that reaching out to God for help is what we should do. But we do not. Surrender to anything flies in the face of everything we have been taught since early childhood. My recovery teaches me that my alcohol dependence is chronic, progressive, a mental disease characterized by an impaired ability to control my alcohol consumption despite incurring certainty of adverse social, occupational, and physical health-related consequences.

Alcoholism, similar to my cancer, is a family disease and, like other mental and physical disorders, passed genetically among generations’ extended family members. The fruit (grape) rarely falls far from the tree (vine).

One “letting go” metaphor that provides comfort places me alone, stranded in the middle of the ocean and on the verge of exhaustion; I am relentless in surviving, frantically treading water, convinced that no alternative to drowning exists. It is at this point of vulnerability that surrender takes place. It is not until I realize that by surrendering, trusting God, becoming perfectly still, lying on my back, and looking toward the sky, I become able to float and be at peace, knowing I will survive.

No matter how hard I denied it to myself, family loved ones, and friends, I knew I no longer was in control of either my drinking or cancer prognosis. This peace in knowing brought me closer to my surrender.

Often, alcoholics and people surviving cancer seek help only when they become willing to discover the art of letting go.

*Lawrence (Laurie) Traylor lives in Jacksonville Beach, Florida — a member of the recovery community and volunteers his time free of charge in helping addicts and alcoholics, their loved ones and their families locate drug and alcohol assistance resources, (904) 553-1600*

## Spoiler Alert

By Tracy Jessup



“Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city...And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.” (Revelation 22:1-2, 5)

My wife and I record the Carolina Panthers games during football season on Sunday afternoons because it is rare that we can sit down before kick-off to watch the game live. Our son will text me to see if we have caught up to “real-time” so we can discuss the game via text. I make sure the notifications on my phone are silenced so I do not get updates from ESPN. My wife’s mother knows our routine since she used to call to celebrate every touchdown or lament every turnover. It did not seem to matter to her that she was spoiling it for us. Or was she?

A recent article in Psychology Today suggests that spoiling a story can actually increase the fun. In a series of three experiments, more than 800 participants were presented with short stories of up to 4,200 words. “Each experiment tested a different type of literary genre including ironic-twist stories, mysteries, and more evocative literary stories. Within that genre, participants were given different stories to read, some of which were preceded by spoilers and some of which were ‘unspoiled.’ Afterward, they were asked to rate how much they had enjoyed their reading experience.”

Surprisingly, the research participants gave high ratings to stories that had been “spoiled” in advance. However, in follow-up research, the opposite effect of spoilers revealed participants enjoyed “spoiled” stories considerably less than those where the ending had not been expected. Researchers attributed this to the use of different stories and different kinds of spoilers, along with the importance of individual differences. The article concludes, “Even though the experimental findings aren’t clear-cut, it appears that giving away the ending of a story, competition, or sports game might not be as detrimental to enjoyment as previously believed” (Eva Krockow, “Spoiler Alert: Why Some People Need to Know How It Ends,” 7/2/21).

The Bible reaches its climax in the Book of Revelation as God completes the good work he began from the moment of creation. Spoiler alerts appear throughout the pages of Scripture. Specifically, those prophesied by the Old Testament prophets come to mind as we read about the river of the water of life flowing from the throne of God (cf. Joel 3:18; Ezekiel 47:1-9; Zechariah 14:8). Jesus also uses the image of the water of life with the Samaritan woman (cf. John 4:14). The mention of the night, as well as the sun in today’s text, takes us back to the beginning where “God made two great lights – the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night – and the stars (Genesis 1:16). However, in another spoiler alert, Isaiah prophesies of a time in which “The sun shall no longer be your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give light to you by night; but the Lord will be your everlasting light and your God will be your glory...and your days of mourning shall be ended.” (Isaiah 60:19-20).

Michael Wilcock writes, “the new creation will eventually be what it was meant to be: the throne at the centre [sic] of all, and the people of God seeing him, serving him, sealed by his name, and reigning with him in everlasting day” (The Message of Revelation, p. 212). And with that, we echo the words of John, “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!” (Revelation 22:20).

Prayer: Lord, thank you for spoiler alerts and for your promise to complete the good work you have begun.

*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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**Roger Sherman**

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.

Roger Sherman is not as famous as other Founding Fathers, but he was the most unique. He possessed strange body and hand motions, and he talked with a strong New England accent. Additionally, he did not dress or wear his hair like his peers, but they did listen when he spoke due to his insight and wisdom.

Sherman was born into a poor home but had access to a library and a tutor. With only a grammar school education, he became an apprentice cobbler. At the same time, he read books propped on his cobbler's bench as he made shoes. When Roger was 19, his father died. He then walked over 100 miles to New Milford, Connecticut, to be near his older brother.

Sherman worked as a surveyor and storekeeper and later became a lawyer in Connecticut. He also worked as a town clerk and published an almanac that contained information about finance, weather, stargazing, and other needed topics. In addition, Sherman pursued other interests in government while he was the treasurer of Yale College.

Over the years, Sherman held many positions, sometimes two or more at the same time. Several of his more notable roles were superior court judge, congressman, and senator. Two of his accomplishments rightfully stand out. The Great Compromise was his idea: all states would have the same number of senators. Most notably, Sherman was only one of two people to sign all four founding documents: The Articles of Association, the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, and the United States Constitution. We must agree that Sherman "spent most of his life defending and defining," and as noted by Congressman Fisher Ames, "I always felt safe voting as Mr. Sherman, for he always voted right."

It is evident that Mr. Sherman was a true Founding Father. His involvement and foresight not only helped create our Charters of Freedom; his forethought also enshrined our liberties and freedoms.

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.*

***"Heal me, O lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise." Jeremiah 17:14***

**Trusting God In Trying Times**

By Dennis Love  
McDowell County



The words from the prophet Habakkuk are very fitting for the times in which we live today. He says these words in Habakkuk 3:17-19; *"Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength, and He will make my feet like hinds' feet, and He will make me to walk upon mine high places."*

Habakkuk was simply saying if everything he had trusted in and relied on failed and if everything that gave stability to his life crumbled, still he would trust the Lord. What was it that sustained Habakkuk when he was confronted with evil, suffering, and hardships? It was his FAITH. It was his steadfast FAITH in God.

If Habakkuk were speaking to us today he would have said it this way. "Even though the stock market is losing me money. Even though the banks are not paying me any interest on my savings account. Even though the oil companies are getting rich and I'm having to pay way too much for gas and diesel fuel. Even though inflation is costing me more and more of my hard-earned money. And, even though I don't understand how our nation has drifted so far from our rich Christian heritage----still I will trust in the Lord. My confidence in Him and my faith in Him will not waiver!"

That's the kind of faith we need today for the evils, the trials, and the troubles of life. Corrie Ten Boom said, "The older I get the less I question and the more I trust." That is a great statement for us to lay hold of right now in our lives. Habakkuk hit the nail on the head when he said in Habakkuk 2:4; *"The just shall live by his faith."*

Charles Haddon Spurgeon expressed the kind of steadfast faith we need when he said:

God is too kind to be cruel;  
God is too wise to make a mistake:  
When we cannot trace the hand of God,  
we must trust the heart of God.

We need the faith of Job who said from the depths of sorrow, *"Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."* (Job 13:15)

We need the faith of Jesus who prayed in the garden; *"Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as You will."* (Matthew 26:39) Jesus prayed for deliverance, but if His prayer was not answered and deliverance did not come, He would stay committed. He would keep trusting God. My prayer is that God will give to me and you the heart of Habakkuk as we navigate through this evil, tough and trying days in which we live!

*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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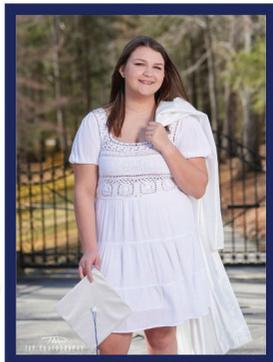


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### His Sense of Humor

By Christy Lowman  
Burke County



Everyone has a calling, a special task that the Lord assigns you. Sometimes the Lord gives us multiple callings and talents.

A few months ago, Thomas, our pet cat got run over. We only had him for three years and loved him so much. He had the best personality.

Thomas, who started out as a stray, was a half-starved kitten when he came to our home and quickly won our hearts. I have no clue where he came from. He just showed up one late night meowing, asking for permission to approach us. He needed help. He needed food and water, wormer and vaccines, and most importantly love and a home.

He is just one of the many animals that have come to me throughout my life needing my help.

Sometimes I wonder if there is a blinking light above my house that flashes, "Come Here for Refuge, and Anything You Need." Or maybe the sign says "Pet Hotel." Or lastly "These People are Friendly to Animals. Stop Here" is A sign that only the animal world can see.

I honestly don't know what it is. All I can tell you is that I don't go out looking for these animals but they end up finding me wherever I am at. I didn't ask for this calling and many times I have said "No" to more animals. But the fact of the matter is, this is my calling from the Lord. It will always be on my shoulders no matter how far I run away from it. No matter how many times I say "No." No matter if I try to make it not my calling, it will always be. I will always have a heart for every animal. I will try to the very best of my being to help any animal that needs it. Part of it is my heart for animals the other is my Momma's heart. I love being a momma and I love mothering children and animals, showering them with love and protection.

There are many amazing, crazy, and interesting stories I have had with animals but they are for another time.

This calling the Lord has given me is not always easy. It comes with a whirlwind of emotions. Sometimes it's rewarding, sometimes it's worrisome, and sometimes it breaks my heart. For whatever reason, sometimes no matter your effort, the animals won't make it.

So let me tell you how the Lord works. I always call it "His Sense of Humor." Since Thomas died, there has been a black hole of sadness. I have missed him more than any other cat I have owned. In fact, the whole family has missed him including our dogs, especially Dug, our beagle mix. Thomas was his best friend and he has mourned the most, even more than me.

I've gone back and forth about getting another cat but quickly talked myself out of it because no cat can ever fill the shoes of Thomas. I also didn't want the worries I had with him like "Where is Thomas?" "I hope he is ok." Along with many other worries I created when he was out exploring. Thomas was not a full-time inside cat, and I would never have forced him to be. He would have never been happy inside all the time. He was an explorer and loved making friends with other people and animals.

About a week after Thomas was run over we started seeing another cat in the yard, and around the house. My husband told me several times to put food out for it but I refused. Honestly, I think I just wasn't ready for another cat. My heart still hurts from the last one.

But the Lord saw differently.

Yesterday, my husband noticed while he was working that there were kittens under our building. Three of them! This thrilled my momma's heart but also I was like, "Oh no."

I see on social media every day how the shelters and rescue sites are popping at the scenes with strays, orphans, and owner surrenders so I knew that that was not an option.

My husband and I decided that if we could catch them, tame them, (momma too), and find a place where we could get them fixed for cheap they could stay here.

I left immediately to get kitten chow. They were very hungry and decided to lie on our building steps after they got their bellies full.

Then my worry and momma's heart set in. "Will they be okay?" "Will something eat them or hurt them?" "Will the pair of six-foot-long king snakes I just saw a few days ago make a meal out of them?" "What about hawks, and owls?" We have both....

I was so excited to see them today but they haven't come out to play or eat. I don't know if this is because of the rainy, cool weather or if the mother has moved them. Or if something got them....

It just gets to a point where you have to give all your worries to God and let Him take care of them. You can't handle everything yourself. Once you cast those worries to God, He will fill you with peace.

You cannot run away from the calling that the Lord has laid on you no matter what. It is your calling so you might as well accept it and embrace it, and you will be blessed by it. Most importantly be thankful and honored that the Lord chose you! The Lord gives each one of us a heart and compassion for something and if you turn down your calling then who is going to step up to the plate in your place? P.S. I do love my calling, even when it hurts my heart and I am very thankful the Lord chose me!

*"Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." 1 Peter 5:7 KJV*

*continued on page 34*

## Authors of New Study Say People Who Disbelieve Evolution More Bigoted, Racist

By Rev. Mark Creech



The unbelievable title was plastered across the top of MSN (Microsoft Network). It read People Who Reject the Theory of Human Evolution Tend to Have More Bigoted Attitudes. My interest peaked.

According to recent research published in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, people who embrace the theory of human evolution show reduced levels of prejudice. As MSN reported, “The study indicates that disbelief in evolution predicts racism and prejudice around the world and in various cultural contexts.”

Study author Stylianos Syropoulos, a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, told PsyPost: “Our findings were consistent across cultural, religious, and national contexts, for the majority and minority groups, and even towards groups that were fictional (i.e., created by the research team). These findings are correlational, meaning we cannot make a causal argument about this relationship, but importantly, this relationship was consistent and remained significant after adjusting for key psychological variables such as ideology or religiosity.”

Co-author of the study Bernard Leidner said that some had cited evolution for perpetuating various forms of prejudice and racism. “It was exciting for us to show that this actually is not the case, that the opposite is true, and that belief in evolution seems to have pretty positive effects,” said Leidner.

A couple of quotes come to mind here. To paraphrase Andrew Lang, the Scottish writer, “Some use their research as a drunken man uses a lamp post – for support rather than illumination.” And of course, Nate Silver argued, “The story the data tells us is often the one we’d like to hear, and we usually make sure that it has a happy ending.”

But what more robust data could be relied upon than decades of human history? History speaks much louder than any so-called study, and history reveals nothing has done more to exacerbate and advance racism than evolution.

Robert J. Hutchinson, writer, essayist, and author of popular history, has noted that if we embrace evolution and its core assertions – if we believe as Marquis de Sade said, that we are little more than “[m]iserable creatures thrown for a moment on the surface of this pile of mud” – if we believe we are nothing more than a “chemical accident – random, effervescent bubbles of consciousness in a cold, indifferent universe” – then it becomes incredibly difficult to believe human life is inherently sacred or that human beings have rights which are anything more than social convention.

Hutchinson adds that the early champions of scientific evolution extended their theories into social and political realms. The “social Darwinism” of the 19th century led to eugenics, the belief in “survival of the fittest,” and ultimately led to the anti-humanitarian degradations of the Nazis.

Moreover, what about what Darwin himself said about race? Darwin unquestionably argued that evolution was progressive – that the white races – Europeans were evolutionarily more advanced than the people of black races. Darwin argued for a racial hierarchy.

Stephen J. Gould, at one time the most influential evolutionist in America, a professor at Harvard for twenty years, once stated:

“Biological arguments for racism may have been common before 1859, but they increased by orders of magnitude following the acceptance of the evolutionary theory.”

Darwin’s Deadly Legacy is a remarkable documentary hosted by the late Dr. D. James Kennedy, former pastor of the renowned Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. The documentary features numerous scholars, scientists, and authors, who accurately connect the dots between Darwin and the dastardly deeds of the maniacal German dictator, Adolph Hitler.

In one of his devotional writings, Kennedy explained that “Adolf Hitler and the Nazis were committed Darwinists. They were trying to speed up evolution by creating a master race. They exterminated millions of ‘undesirables’ because they viewed them as genetically inferior—this included Jews (the largest sub-group of victims of the holocaust), Gypsies, Slavs, and others. The holocaust was ‘Darwinism on steroids.’”

Kennedy has also noted, “that the founder of Planned Parenthood, [now the nation’s primary provider of abortions] set out to get rid of ‘the human weeds,’ as she called them so that the superior stock might prevail.”

Syropoulos said his team of researchers has demonstrated that “when people believe in evolution, they are more likely to believe that they are similar to other people, as we all have a common ancestor...people are less defensive of their cultural world-views and more accepting of others...people who believe in evolution potentially expand their circle to include animals, as they perceive them and animals to originate from a common ancestor.”

The Bible also says that all humanity comes from a common ancestor, Adam. However, evolution dismisses the Creator, his Sovereignty over the creation, the fact that everyone is made in God’s image, and therefore not equal with animals but far above them with the ability to have a relationship with him. God and his moral law are not a part of the evolutionary equation. And history is abundantly clear that evolutionary contentions have been the culprit of untold atrocities of humankind against his own kind: Nazism, Communism, etc. Each in some way has its roots in Darwinism.

Sir Winston Churchill said, “Those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it.”

Indeed, history is the most profound data and not some study.

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

## Trees Available At The Orchard

By Kate Groff  
Mitchell County



The Orchard at Altapass is offering two tree programs this season—Adopt-A-Tree and Sapling Sales. The Adopt-A-Tree program returns for the third year with 22 Arkansas Black trees up for adoption. Believed to be cultivated in Bentonville, Arkansas, back in the mid-1800s, the Arkansas Black apple is said to be a variety of the Winesap apple and turns a dark ruby-like black when stored before eating. Adoptions are \$100 per tree and will be planted with a small plaque of “ownership” in a designated area of the Orchard.

And for the first time, the Orchard will be selling a limited number of saplings at \$40 each. Varieties range from early to late-ripening, sweet to tart, red and yellow—all heirlooms. Seventy-eight trees are available. For a listing of the apples, please email [information@altapassorchard.org](mailto:information@altapassorchard.org) or call the office, at 828-765-9531, and leave a message.

Hours are 10 AM to 5 PM, Saturday-Sunday through May 31; Wednesday-Sunday, June through October 31. The Orchard at Altapass is a not-for-profit working orchard, educational center, and traditional music venue. Pet friendly. Wheelchair accessible. The Orchard at Altapass is located at 1025 Orchard Road, mm 328.3, just north of Spruce Pine on the Blue Ridge Parkway. For more information, visit [altapassorchard.org](http://altapassorchard.org).

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



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**Volunteer of the Year**

By Caroline Holbert  
Burke County

Burke United Christian Ministries names Diane Schuller, a long-serving BUCM volunteer, "Volunteer of the Year" for 2021-2022. Originally from Pennsylvania, Schuller and her family moved to Burke County nearly eight years ago to start a new life adventure. Schuller became interested in volunteering over 20 years ago when she was working in a large church in Pennsylvania as an office manager. Her interaction with volunteers throughout the church is what inspired her to volunteer once she settled in Burke County. "We had a lot of volunteers there that we used all the time for everything," Schuller said. "That's probably why I started volunteering at BUCM as soon as I arrived here [Burke County] because I know how important it is and how important volunteers are. Without volunteers, things wouldn't work." Schuller volunteers in the front office at the BUCM Mission Station located at 305-B W Union St. in Morganton. Throughout her eight years of service to BUCM, her passion for people and love for BUCM have brightened the lives of many throughout Burke County. Her dedication to volunteering is what won her the title "Volunteer of the Year." "When I wake up on Wednesdays, I'm always in a good mood because I know I'm coming here [BUCM]," Schuller said. "It's a place that makes me feel good when I'm here. When I leave, I feel like maybe I made a difference, even if it's just for one person."



Diane Schuller

**The Divine Helper**

By Art Dmytriyeu  
Yancey County



Once upon a time, at night, the conversation between the incarnated King of the Universe and a teacher of the Law Nicodemus took place in the country of Israel. During the conversation, Nicodemus was told that he must be born again to enter the Kingdom of God. Then a teacher became a student when he asked the question: "How can these things be?" (John 3:9 KJV). More than two thousand years later, the vast majority of theologians still have the same question unanswered. However, some minority students of God have received their answers already. They obtained it by studying the subject of the Holy Spirit - the third person of the Godhead.

Many people today desire to have a strong relationship with God and receive Eternal life as a reward. Different religions teach different things about how to live forever. The Christians, however, discovered through the words of Jesus the only way to Heaven: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6 KJV). So, Jesus came to this world, lived as a human, served the people by leading them on the way to salvation, and was crucified as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He is risen and interceding on our behalf in Heaven now. Knowing this, how can a person find the way of salvation today when Christ is not in the world? The answer is simple. It can be done only through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Right before Jesus departed from this world, He assured His disciples: "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter; that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." (John 14:16-17 KJV). He also said: "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." (John 14:26 KJV). So, the Comforter, or Helper, is the Holy Ghost promised by Jesus Christ Himself for our salvation.

Imagine how powerful it is! The Holy Spirit is a part of the Trinity(Matthew 28:19), He plays the most significant role in forming the Scripture by being Its Author (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20,21), and the Holy Spirit sustained Jesus in His earthly ministry (John 5:30; Luke 4:14), and He works with us today! The Holy Spirit is given to all Christ's followers; He convicts us of sin and righteousness; leads us to all truth; leads us to peace through repentance and forgiveness of our sins; inspires us to pray; writes God's Holy Law in our hearts, and gives the courage to testify about Christ.

Dear Reader, have you received the Holy Spirit in your life? Have you been baptized by the Holy Spirit? If not, then do not delay any longer. Come to the Father in prayer and ask for the Holy Spirit. God desires for you to receive the Holy Spirit. He is actually eager to give it! (Luke 11:13). May your sincere prayer be precious and acceptable to our loving Heavenly Father! Amen.

*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>*





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**Sudoku Solution**

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

## Only Not to be Lonely

By Tim Tron  
Burke County



A petite young boy, barely four years old, stood just within the entrance to the pasture. His tiny frame had easily crawled between the bars of the tube gate that was shut to keep the herd of cattle confined within. The firmament overhead was an azure blue, clear as far as the eye could see. Before him stood stalks of green, as tall as trees. The sun felt warm on his demure frame. He was smaller than most children his age. To know him, one would understand why. He was lucky to be alive.

For two years, at the tender age of one and then again, at two, he had contracted double pneumonia. Each time, he barely survived extended stays in the hospital, camping beneath a clear plastic tent as oxygen was pumped into its confines. Many prayed for and over the child. Most feared that he would succumb to the illness, but God had other plans. Like the countless stalks before him, a multitude of prayers had been lifted up in his name, supporting, strengthening, and abiding in one another until they found their mark. He eventually healed, but his body suffered the ravages, growing more slowly than other children his age. So, as the sap began to flow in the trees, he felt a renewed strength start to flow through his veins. There seemed to be something that beckoned him to leave the old farmhouse and to wander out behind the tractor shed. Something beyond those palisades of fencing and outbuildings – an openness that smelled of freedom from the bondage of death.

The white cotton shirt beneath the little overalls wasn't enough to remove the chill of the breeze that wafted the tops of the grasses that swayed before him. A deep, rich aroma permeated the air – it spoke of earth and nature. Earlier that morning, he heard his grandmother speak of prayers being answered for him and how God was great. She went on to share how millions of prayers were being lifted up for their country, seeing as something called the "Vi-et-nam" conflict was being fought. He also didn't understand the words "prayer" or "war" or what a "world away" meant. It sounded scary. She saw his countenance drop and quickly comforting saying, "nothing to be bothered with, my son. It's far, far away." She explained that prayers were people's way of speaking to God, "like you and I talking now." But the word "million" made no sense at all. Like the blades of grass before him, too numerous to count, a million was a number that was beyond his comprehension. It was only an entity unto itself, like a living organism, something through which he could only understand if it was tactile. The boy wandered deeper into the tall grass.

A childlike faith, dread of nothing, guided his path as he made his way through the forest of green. Cows making their way had unknowingly prepared his path. A baby cannot know sin, just as there is no reason to Baptize such. So, it is with fear. The child only felt the hand of the comforter. It wasn't a stranger to him. One could say that the child knew God even without even knowing he knew Him. He had been with him before - like the long empty days when he was held captive in the hospital bed. There were times when he would look to the foot of his bed and see the shadow of one that watched over him, and those suffocating feelings of abandonment would drift away – a love unseen would flood his soul, and sleep would come once more. He was there now, the comforter, walking, holding his hand, watching over him once more. They continued on. The boy followed wherever the trail of grasses led. Surviving the illness had instilled in him a sense of hope, knowing that with each new day, each fresh breath of life, there was always something to look forward to. The Apostle Paul put it like this, "And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us."

To understand a faith like this, one must erase all the preconceived notions that cling to us as we traverse through life. It takes an unfettered faith, one that clings to God as a drowning man does to the one trying to save him. As Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." This faith, the belief in something unknown, but yet, it was known, guided the little child. For each new turn, every new wrinkle of light gave hope, a tantalizing offer of something else to come. For a child, heaven is as believable as the friend that talks to them when no one is there. Anything is possible when you can dispense with what we come to know as the natural realm of reality. Matthew describes Jesus calling the little children unto him, saying, "He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. And he said: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." This faith, this pure belief, guided the little farm boy past the herd of gentle Herefords to the small brook that ran past the farm.

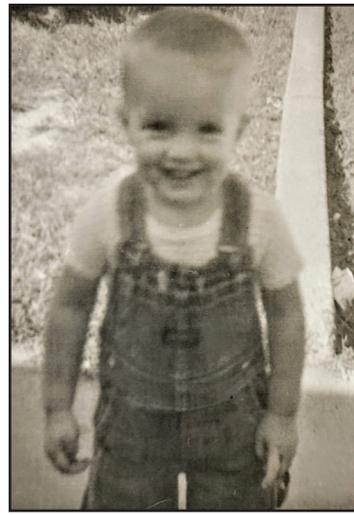
The breeze gently blew the leaves overhead, the light flickered upon his brow as the little he found his way to the gurgling waters. Before him flowed a small tree-lined creek. Large river birches and pin oaks shaded the oasis below. The bank was worn away where the cows had trod to reach the life-giving sustenance. The little boy sat down on a rock, resting as he wondered about the beasts that soon followed him to the watering hole. He was at home with the herd of cattle as he was with being alone. The animals sensed a purity, a being so gentle, they couldn't help to wonder. They didn't speak but gathered, at first hesitantly, realizing the child wasn't a threat. Then, one by one, they meandered on down to the water and began to drink. Soft guttural bellows told their babies that it was safe to come. The scene was likening unto another place and time, "And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such

is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them."

Sensing the Christ-like faith, their calves followed their mothers, some sniffing at the little boy, their muzzles tickling his neck, causing him to laugh aloud with a cherub-like voice. The voice would cause them to jump, skittering a step away, but continuing on as accepting the tiny human's presence. He did not know how long they gathered or why they began to leave, only that as they departed, he followed like one of the herd. A rumble within his tummy soon reminded him that the grass that the cows were eating wouldn't suffice, that he needed to return to grandma's kitchen where the pleasant aroma of something good cooking surely awaited.

Like an old friend, he motioned goodbye to his newfound friends, the cows, and climbed back through the gate's bars. Somewhere off in the distance, a Redwing chirped as it headed to the pond nearby. A tiny puff of a cloud whisked past as the little boy kicked at a dirt clod in the trail leading back to the house. The dust drifted onward, like his feelings, from one happy sugar cube of thought to the next. His days were filled with what some might call loneliness, but to him, it was just another day in the life he had been given. It was there, alone in those oceans of grass that loneliness and isolation were supplanted by imagination. It would become a voice within that would carry him through all the days of his life. There was nothing for which to compare, and as it was, he was glad to be alive.

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](mailto:trontw@appstate.edu) You can visit his website at <http://www.timothywtron.com/> or see more of his writings [HERE](#).

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## "What Charles Blondin Has to Do with Salvation"

By Russell McKinney  
Mitchell County

"...Even the demons believe — and tremble!" (James 2:19, N.K.J.V.)

Charles Blondin, whose real name was Jean Francois Gravelet, was a French acrobat who became world-renowned as a tightrope walker during the latter half of the 1800s. He began his career at the incredibly young age of five and first won fame in his home country of France and other parts of Europe before coming to America in 1855. Four years later, on June 30, 1859, he walked a tightrope across Niagara Falls, a feat he would perform many more times during his career.

To keep the public's interest piqued, Blondin frequently added new twists to his act. For example, he performed the trick blindfolded. He performed it on stilts. He performed it while pushing a wheelbarrow in front of him. Once, he paused at the midway point of the trick, sat down on the wire, and ate an omelet. Blondin's exploits became so well known that Abraham Lincoln referenced the wheelbarrow version in his Presidential campaign in 1864. Lincoln said that he was "Blondin on the tightrope" in that he had all that was valuable to America in the wheelbarrow he was pushing that carried his political agenda.

More than once Blondin walked across the Falls while carrying his manager, Harry Colcord, on his back. After one of those trips, shortly after Blondin and Colcord had reached the other side safely, Blondin asked a man in the crowd of onlookers, "Do you believe I could do that with you?" The man answered, "Yes." "Then hop on," said Blondin, "and I'll carry you across." But to that, the fellow replied, "Not on your life!"

You see, that onlooker had a general belief in Blondin's ability to live up to his end of the offer, but he didn't have the type of belief that would lead him to climb onto Blondin's back. No, that would have required a whole other type of belief. That type of belief, needless to say, is much rarer.

Our text passage from the book of James shows us that there is a type of belief that isn't a saving belief. Whereas demons (fallen angels) have enough belief to know that God exists and that Jesus is God the Son (see also Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-17; and Luke 8:26-37), demons are still destined to spend eternity in the lake of fire (Matthew 25:41). And, unfortunately, literally billions of people will join them there throughout eternity even though many of these people not only believe in the existence of God but actually believe that Jesus was God in human flesh.

As for how someone who believes that Jesus was God in human flesh can be lost, that answer goes back to the story from the life of Charles Blondin. Just as that onlooker believing that Blondin could get him to the other side of Niagara Falls wasn't enough to literally transport the onlooker to the other side, anyone who doesn't have enough belief to go "all in" 100% for Jesus by figuratively climbing onto His back and letting Him transport that person to heaven will never get there. That's why each of us should examine the supposed belief we claim to have in Jesus and make sure that it is a saving belief rather than a damning belief. Even a belief that gets you into the church, causes you to pray and leads you to read your Bible might not be the kind required for salvation. To sum up, the matter, being impressed by Jesus and learning about His life and ministry is a good start, but it isn't the same thing as climbing onto His back and trusting in Him and Him alone 100% for salvation.

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



## Is the Gospel Still Relevant in America?

By Rev. John B. Sorensen



Quite a bit has changed since Jesus walked on the earth more than two millennia ago. Even during our lifetime, we have seen our culture in America shift seemingly further and further away from the Gospel. But does that mean that the Gospel is no longer relevant in today's modern world?

Not at all. If anything, the Gospel is even more relevant today. People are desperate for some good news. They need a message of hope more than ever before. Yet, few Christians seem to be sharing it. Many believers simply don't think people in America want to hear it, so they stay quiet about their faith.

But people want to talk about it. This year, LifeWay Research Group released the results of a study conducted in partnership with Evangelism Explosion International to gain insight into how open people in America are to the Gospel. The study confirmed what we (at EE) have seen through our Equip America program. People are interested in having spiritual conversations.

LifeWay found that half of Americans were curious about why some people were so devoted to their faith. Most (66%) were open to having spiritual conversations with a friend. Just over half said they would even be open to having that conversation with a stranger. But many (40%) also said that they would never bring it up unless a friend or family member mentions it first. The problem is that most people (60%) said that their friends who are Christians rarely talk about their faith (LifeWay Research Group, February 2022).

This is a huge missed opportunity that we have to reach our friends and family with the Gospel. Most people (88%) are searching for hope, peace, and meaning in their lives. These needs are universal and are certainly still true today in America. Many people recognize they are missing something, but they simply don't know what it is or what to do about it. We can meet them where they are by sharing our own experiences about how the Gospel has met our needs through a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Scott McConnell, executive director of LifeWay Research, said it well. "While some Americans have reached a firm conclusion that they are not interested in faith, most are open to hearing about faith when someone can show it matters or when it is shared by someone who matters to them."

So, what are you waiting for? Ask someone what they think about the results of this study. Share what you think, and begin the conversation. They might just be waiting for the opportunity to hear how they can find the hope that they have been looking for — the hope that you have already found in Jesus.

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

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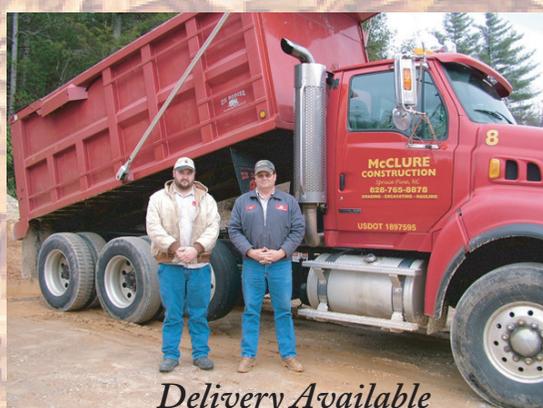
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# Berry Chapel Baptist Church

## Father's Day

By Steve Williams  
Mitchell County



Father's Day is here again. I am so thankful to still have my father around. His name is Floyd Williams, he is 88 years old and doing great at this time in his life. Each day is an adventure for him, to see what he can do and get into. This just blows me away to see how active he is at this age of his life. He is constantly on the go in the community visiting others and seeing what he can do to help others. He enjoys going to the senior center, walking, fellowship, eating with the other seniors and most of all he love's the Bible Studies that Daniel Whetstine shares each Tuesday at the senior center.

As I look back on my life some of the greatest things I ever did in my younger life were with my dad. He would take me out selling Raleigh Products and other things. He took me squirrel hunting, and rabbit hunting. We would go fishing and he taught me how to clean them. Each year we would get calves from his uncle at a dairy and raise them from a bottle to the time you would have them butchered. It was sad to see the cows go. but that is the way you were able to eat in my days. My dad took time to teach me how to build things as small as rabbit boxes to small sheds to barns to put our tractor in. Some of the greatest times in my life as a child was when dad would take the whole family to Lake Wylie for a vacation. There would be fishing, swimming, horseshoes, and all kinds of great cooking. The great thing about these lake vacations was that I got to also share them with my wife Beverly, son Tommy, and daughters Jessica and Sharon.

My dad was retired Army & Air Force. He loves this country and was proud to serve in its ranks. But the greatest thing that stands out to me about my dad is this. He is a Christian, and he loves serving the Lord with His life. I've seen my dad become stronger and stronger in his faith in Christ as he has grown older. I don't mean to seem like I am bragging but my dad has been a blessing to many people over the years. He sat with my mom for several years at the Brian Center till she died, from 7:30 am to most nights at 8 pm when they would put her to bed. I wonder why my mom had to go there. I found out that is where God would use my dad in a great way. He would walk the halls visiting and helping other people. This was told to me by the staff members there, and also the family members who had their loved ones there. He witnessed to many people about Jesus Christ and also many came to know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. Each Wednesday dad would push people up to the lunchroom where he would join up with the Golden Age Singers, sing to the people about God, and would share with them the love of God. Since mom's passing, I have seen my dad even become stronger in his faith. He will share Jesus with anybody at the drop of a hat. He loves to stand in the church that I have the privilege of pastoring, Berry Chapel, and testify about how Wonderful and Great his God Is. I'd like to thank God for the dad I have. No, he's not perfect but there is one thing I know, and that is he loves the Lord with all his heart and without a shadow of a doubt, one day he will be in Heaven with his Lord and Savior forevermore. Dad, I Love You. Happy Father's Day.

### Word of Wisdom:

- Lives of great dad's all remind us, that we can make our lives sublime, and, departing, leave behind us, footprints on the sands of time. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
- Great Dad's are like eagles, and build their nest in some lofty solitude. Arthur Schopenhauer
- In reading the lives of great dads, I found that the first victory they won was over themselves. N/A
- Great dads produce families that follow in their footsteps. (most of the time) N/A
- When fathers come home after a tough day at work, they should come home to serve, like my father did, teaching lessons around the dinner table and leading the family in worship and prayer. Tony Evans

### Words of Humor:

One summer evening during a violent thunderstorm a mother was tucking her small boy into bed. She was about to turn off the light when he asked with a tremor in his voice, "Mommy, will you sleep with me tonight?" The mother smiled and gave him a reassuring hug. "I can't, dear," she said. "I have to sleep with Daddy."

A long silence was broken at last by his shaky little voice: "Dad's a big sissy isn't he."

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

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By Steve Parker

*“Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.”*

How many times have we prayed the Lord’s prayer and these words have come out of our mouths? But have we really thought about them and what they really mean?

They evidently are a very important part of the prayer. Because immediately after closing, Jesus elaborates on them: *“For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”*

That’s pretty serious. At first glance, it sounds like what the Lord is saying is that God’s forgiveness of our sins is conditional. That is, if we don’t forgive those who have sinned against us, then we can’t be forgiven and receive eternal life.

That’s not the case though. Salvation is based on repentance from sin and turning one’s life over to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Good works will flow out of a redeemed life, but the New Testament is clear that our salvation is not contingent upon those works.

So what is the Lord talking about here? How can it be that we do not receive God’s forgiveness for our sins if we don’t forgive those who have sinned against us?

In my view, what Jesus is pointing us to in this passage is how we can EXPERIENCE the forgiveness that Christ has made available to us. From a legal standpoint, if we are in Him, our sins are forgiven. But unless we are practicing that same forgiveness toward others, then the awesome peace that we can experience knowing that our sins are forgiven eludes us.

When we have been sinned against, when another person offends us or hurts us, sometimes seriously, we have a choice to make. We have two options. One is to embrace the way of Christ, let go of the offense or wound, and forgive the other person. If we do this, we align ourselves with Jesus on the cross who, when He is being crucified, turns to God and says, “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.”

When we choose the Christ-like option, we open ourselves up to the presence of Christ and the power of God that gave Him the ability to make that choice on the cross. We experience His life in a new and fresh way. And, seemingly, the deeper the hurt or wound, the more powerful the presence of the Lord we experience when we choose to forgive. This is because when an offense goes deep into our being, the Lord gains access to those deep parts of our soul when we choose to forgive. A major offense opens us up to experience Jesus in a major way.

The other option we face when we have been sinned against is to not forgive. Instead, we hold on to the offense. Perhaps we dwell on it, replaying it over and over in our minds, becoming more hurt, angry, and/or resentful. Or maybe we tuck it away, just bringing it to the surface whenever we happen to think about the offender. Either way, this unforgiveness is the exact opposite of the forgiveness that Christ gave on the cross. Rather than allowing Him to go deeper into our lives, the unforgiveness becomes a blockage, keeping Him at bay.

In light of this, is it any wonder, given the degree of unforgiveness we see in the church today, that God’s people often don’t experience His presence? Many say that God seems distant, or they just don’t seem to feel as passionate about Christ as they used to. Maybe it’s because their failure to forgive has pushed Him away.

In Matthew 18, Jesus is again speaking about forgiveness. Most of us are familiar with the parable of the unforgiving servant, who owes his master an immense sum of money. His master takes pity on him and forgives him. The servant then goes and finds someone who owes him a small sum of money and demands immediate payment. Failing to get it, he has his fellow servant thrown into prison until the debt is paid.

Upon learning of this, the master is angry and has the servant he had previously forgiven arrested. We are told that *“in his anger, his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured until he should repay all that he owed.”* (Matt. 18: 34 ESV)

The lesson to be learned here is not only that we who have been forgiven of much should be quick to forgive others, but that a failure to do so results in torment. Again, when we choose unforgiveness, we are opening our lives to spiritual darkness. Indeed, allowing unforgiveness to remain in our lives is to invite a piece of hell into our being, a place that not only creates torment for us but allows the enemy of our souls to abide and expand his kingdom of misery and pain into other areas of our existence.

But the good news is that, if unforgiveness opens the door to hell, then forgiveness provides a place for us to experience heaven! God has so much that He wants to reveal of Himself to us. Opening the depths of our lives through accepting and releasing the forgiveness of Jesus is one of the primary ways He does this!

How about you? Is there someone (or several someones) that you’ve been holding resentment toward? As you’ve been reading this article, has someone’s name or face been coming to your mind? My friend, that’s the prompting of the Holy Spirit, telling you that you and God have a business to take care of. Don’t delay. Now is the time. If you’re a visual person, you may want to picture yourself in front of an altar, placing your heart on it and offering it up to God. As you do this, pray a prayer of forgiveness for yourself. Ask God to forgive you for holding on to bitterness and resentment.

Then, after you have received forgiveness for holding onto offenses, tell God you are choosing to forgive the person with whom you’ve been angry or hurt. Yes, forgiveness is a choice, not an emotion. You may not feel like forgiving them, but you are choosing to elevate obedience to God’s word over your feelings.

Now, whenever that person springs to mind and those old feelings rise up, you take charge. You tell those feelings that you’ve forgiven that person and you’re not going to dwell on that matter anymore. Then, pray a blessing over that person. Pray that God will bless them with whatever they need for Him to have His way in their

life right now. And don’t think you know what that is supposed to be. You just do the blessing and leave it to God to sort it out.

As you continue to do this, reminding yourself that the person is forgiven, blessing them in the name of Jesus, and then setting the matter out of your mind, you will find that your feelings will begin to change. The pain and anger connected with the offense will start to fade away and over time you will actually want to see that other person blessed! As you do this, (here’s the best part), you will start to see the Lord more actively working in your life and your character being shaped to become more and more like Him!

There is a lot more to say on this subject, and I will be addressing some of the different elements of forgiveness in the coming months. This will include

- Don’t I have to forget to forgive?
- You don’t know how badly they hurt me.
- They don’t deserve forgiveness.
- If I forgive someone, do I have to let them back into my life
- Forgive them! They need to be asking my forgiveness.
- And much more.

But for right now, I’d just like to encourage you to embrace forgiveness with all your heart. As someone who used to be eaten up with unforgiveness, bitterness, and a desire for revenge, I cannot tell you how much better I feel being filled with love and mercy instead. And if God did that for me, He will do it for you!

*Steve Parker is the founder of Blue Ridge Christian News*

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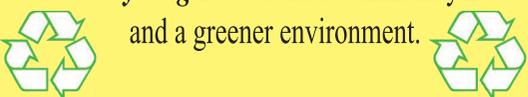


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By Steve Carter  
 Tupelo, Mississippi



With much difficulty, I crawled out of my warm sleeping bag into an early Idaho morning. Looking around I saw other cross-country bicyclists stumbling around and moving slowly while packing up wet tents and speaking through frosty breath.

Following a breakfast of around 5000 calories, the click of shoes locking into pedals signaled the start of an 88-mile day. I had always admired the classic Montana scenery, thus far only seen in movies, and looked forward to getting there. Without the burden of headwinds, I easily pedaled over 30 miles of low hills to have my efforts rewarded with a group picture under a sign welcoming all to, "Big Sky Country." After the usual "get one with me in it," and a careful check of traffic, we pulled back onto the narrow road and into our third state. Hello Montana!

On improved roads and in light Sunday traffic, I pedaled along in relative comfort for about 10 miles, before noticing a small rustic, "roadside cafe" sitting about 30 yards off to the right side of the road. Leaning against the building and its fence, rested about 20 bicycles along with several motorcycles.

An early lunch called out, so I whipped in and parked against a tree. After the usual tossing of gloves into my helmet, I sauntered toward the building and drew up short after reading a sign nailed to the door! This notice featured a revolver pointing at me which read "We don't call 911 in Montana." I could tell from the general look of the place that these folks weren't kidding and would make me "past tense" at the first sign of trouble! So, walking softly and with a smile on my face, I stepped in and checked the place out.

Being careful to do nothing that would offend anyone, I closed the door while looking around in four directions at once. With the background filled with the sight and sound of some very large people (most of which had more tattoos than teeth) playing pool, I asked a couple of fellow travelers to fill me in on the details. They told me the food was ok, the service was slow, and the prices were high.

Call it "scaredy-cat" if you want, but along with the report from my friends, I suddenly had a vision of a barroom brawl (you know like we've all seen on TV) that included broken pool cues, and bicyclist being thrown through the picture window. With my appetite now completely gone, I walked quietly back across the sawdust floor, leaving quickly by the same door I came in.

Back on the road, I pedaled East while enjoying the beauty of Montana and the excitement of several Westbound motorcycles roaring by. Peanut butter sandwiches from our support van and energy bars got me through the hot afternoon, and into camp at Thompson Falls. After setting up my tent, I showered off before grabbing some supper (that's dinner for my northern friends.)

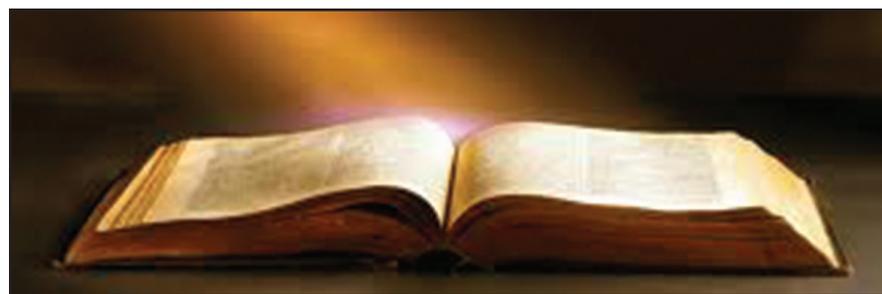
With everything else squared away, I talked to the mechanic while he took another run at fixing my never-ending gear shifting problems. When cycling in Mississippi changing gears never presented much of a challenge. I often went several weeks and never used more than half a dozen of the twenty-one available gearing combinations. The Cascade mountains were a different story. With my lightning-quick intellect, (that's a joke) I soon found out I needed every gear I had, every day. The options were few; either find a gear low enough to get through the mountains or push the bike. My ego decided I would ride the bike all the way, so I kept working those shifters!

To get the most out of your bicycle and legs, a lot of advance planning is involved. Anyone thinking about charging up a mountain like Teddy Roosevelt running up San Juan Hill will run out of options double-quick! The only way to stay upright and ride is to use the highest gear your legs can stand. Just before the bike gets too hard to pedal, it's time to shift to a lower one. Nothing good ever happens if your timing is off or the gear shifter is not working properly. These mishaps often lead to sliding down the road, face first, before getting hit by another cyclist. If that's not enough, a real crowd pleaser is when, after bouncing off the bicycle center bar, you and your bike slam into the guard rail before tumbling over each other down a mountainside. Everyone doesn't need a cross-country bicycle ride to learn life-changing lessons. While trying to ignore all that pain involved with riding three-thousand miles, I picked up on the importance of listening to God when He comes to us in that quiet voice He prefers. That still whisper of His is what encourages us to leave our warm comfort zones and venture forth where He would have us go. Once we learn to pay attention, there won't be as many pool-cues up-side our head and fewer mountains we must tumble down.

God will teach His followers. It's up to us to pick the easy road by listening or we can always be wayward children and learn the hard way by choosing our own path.

I recommend listening.

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



## Maybe We Should Go Back To Smoke Signal Communications

By Dr. James L. Snyder  
Ocala, Florida



I must admit that communication is an essential part of my life today. The longer I live, the more sophisticated those communications become, and it's challenging for me.

Recently, I was working on my latest book using my latest computer and its programs. As I was working, I remembered that I did not always use a computer for writing. I used one of those archaic machines called the "typewriter." Does anybody today know what a typewriter is?

I still remember my first typewriter. My mother got it for me for Christmas one year and I couldn't have been happier with any Christmas gift than that one.

I hammered out many articles and even poems. I wished I had copies of those, but I'm glad I lost them. I'm sure those were the worst poems ever hammered out on a typewriter.

I got an electric typewriter after graduating from high school and thought I had died and gone to heaven. I've never been able to type faster than on that electric typewriter.

The problem I've had with those typewriters was, that if I made a mistake, I had to throw out that page and start all over again. Yes, I had carbon copies, but I still had to start all over again. How frustrating that was in many regards.

While I was writing my first book, I thought maybe I should upgrade to a computer. I had to think long and hard about that because I loved my typewriter. Eventually, I succumbed to the times and bought a computer.

Those first computers did not have any internal hard drives and everything had to be done on a 5.5-inch floppy disk. When I got my computer and learned how to use it, I was ecstatic. I didn't mind putting in the floppy disk and taking it out and replacing it with another floppy disk. That seemed to be easy work at the time. I never had to throw away a sheet of paper and start over again.

Over the years, I kept climbing the ladder of technology and got the latest computer technology and was quite happy with it.

Now I can sit in front of my computer screen and dictate what I'm writing. There's a keyboard there, and I only use it when I have an emergency. But now, I can talk everything into my computer, which has become a great experience for me.

When I first used this dictating program, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage was in the other room listening. Finally, she said, "Who are you talking to? There's no phone in your room."

It took a while to explain to her that I was talking to my computer while writing an article. She never heard of that before, and I never did either. Finally, I was able to convince her that it was the computer I was talking to. Who else would listen to me?

Things have developed over the years that are beyond my imagination. In our home, we have the latest media service, TV, telephone, and Internet service.

I never knew how much I appreciated all of this service until one day this week.

I had just finished my latest book manuscript and was ready to email it to my publisher. My deadline was crunching down, and I used every minute to work on the book. I finally finished it, got to my deadline, and was now ready to email it.

Nothing is more satisfying than getting the project done and sending it to the publisher. As I set it up to email it, I suddenly realized that everything was down. So I could not send my manuscript out.

Just a half-hour before this, everything was closed: the TV, cell phone, and the Internet. So there is no way I could get this out on time.

The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage called the company and finally got through and was told it would be up and running by 7 p.m.

I can't explain how frustrated I was. I checked my temper, and it was boiling over with heat. Probably there was some steam coming out of my ears. I wanted to give them a piece of my mind, but there was no way I could get it to them. Everything was down.

It was then that I realized how important all of this modern technology is. I didn't know that I had built my life on technology, but, it seems like I have done just that.

Technology is wonderful when it works. When it doesn't work, it is the most annoying thing in the world.

I began thinking about the days when communication was done with smoke signals. I'm not sure how that worked, but they were able to convey their message across the country with smoke signals from one mountain to the next. But it got through, which was all that matters.

Maybe we should go back to the good old smoke signal communication days. I had a few moments to think about this. When thinking about communication a certain verse of Scripture came to my mind. "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man" (Colossians 4:6).

Sometimes it's very important to think before you speak and I have discovered if I do think, I sometimes don't speak.

---

*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](mailto:jamesnyder2@att.net). The church web site is [www.whatafel-lowship.com](http://www.whatafel-lowship.com)*

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## It's Summertime

By Caron Cline  
Burke County



'It's summertime, and the livin' is easy'...is the first line of an old 1934 tune written by George Gershwin for the musical Porgy and Bess. The lazy, hazy days of summer are anticipated during the bleak, cold days of winter. Students look forward to time away from school, families anticipate vacations at the beach and everyone enjoys those evenings sitting on the patio or around the pool sipping iced tea and lemonade. The days of summer offer more time to visit with neighbors and friends and attitudes seem to improve along with the weather. However, the summer of 2022 could include some of the most challenging circumstances ever faced in this nation. Gasoline prices continue to skyrocket, food prices are increasing daily, lack of labor continues to cause supply chain issues, and new pestilences continue to rear their ugly heads. So much for a summer of easy living! When the world in which we currently reside is in emergency mode, what should be our response? As ambassadors of the Kingdom of God, we have a responsibility to extend an invitation for citizenship to all who are weary and burdened. The King, Himself, bore those sins which produced the evil effects currently surrounding us. His sacrificial blood on the cross was sufficient to release all those held in bondage to the devil. Any person who accepts Jesus' sacrifice for their sin, repents of that sin, and commits their life to follow Him, is granted automatic citizenship. The benefits offered to citizens of God's Kingdom completely relieve the stress of high prices, lack of supply, and mysterious diseases. Philippians 4:19 promises that 'My God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus'. Matthew 6:32-33 are the words of Jesus, assuring His followers that worry is unnecessary because our Heavenly Father knows exactly what we need and will provide it. He commands us to 'Seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you'. Exodus 15:26 is the Voice of God, saying to His people, 'I, the Lord, Am your Healer'. Psalm 103:3-5 lists several amazing benefits for Kingdom citizens: "...Who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases; Who redeems your life from the pit, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion; Who satisfies your years with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagles". The promises of God are never dependent on this world's economy. "His mercies are new every morning; great is His faithfulness". The Kingdom of God is always advancing and never suffers lack. Our mandate from heaven is to spread this good news to those who are quickly losing hope; to those who are weighed down by fear and hopelessness. Our words and our lives should be so winsome and abundant that others will desire citizenship in this Kingdom of grace. May we lift our eyes above the present circumstances and set our minds on the things above. After all, we have died and our lives are hidden with Christ in God!

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

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## National Day of Prayer

By Monica Kritz  
Mitchell County



Thursday, May 5th was a beautiful and sunny day for the National Day of Prayer in Spruce Pine! The LORD truly blessed in every way, and we praise Him! There were 2 different times scheduled to gather and pray for our nation. At the noon gathering, Preacher Mike Brown, the Mitchell Baptist Associational Director, opened in prayer. Alexis Buchanan, a senior from Tri-County Christian School, and daughter of Jim and Ranac Buchanan sang "Less Like Me". She has been a student there since 2nd grade. Even though Alexis had a class at 12:30 because she is dual-enrolled at Mayland Community College, she had the heart to be a part of this special day. We appreciate her and all of Tri-County Christian School being a part of this event every year and being so willing to give back to our community...for The LORD. Then, I spoke and shared this thought from the President of the National Day of Prayer..." Imagine what our nation would look like if God's people were NOT praying." Bentley Orr, also a student at Tri-County Christian School wanted to lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance to the American flag, and he did a superb job.

We were blessed to have Senator Ralph Hise with us. He led in the 2022 National Prayer, as we prayed with him. This same prayer was prayed all over our nation! He then spoke to those gathered and shared some thoughts on his heart...his concern for our country and encouragement to keep praying. Afterward, the middle schoolers from Tri-County Christian School had memorized Matthew 5:1-16 and shared that with us, as they repeated it in unison. What a treasure for these young people to have GOD's Word hidden in their hearts! Our area is richer because of this school, which is constantly reaching out to our community. May GOD bless their efforts! We are thankful for Mrs. Teresa Young and all of the teachers and staff for tirelessly giving of themselves as servants of The LORD. Maddy Westbrook sang "Amazing Grace" acapella style, and we all joined her on the "Praise GOD" chorus...a wonderful sound of lifting up our voices to our sweet LORD in praise!



There was such a large crowd present to gather and pray. Pastor Jason Kritz, pastor of Crabtree Chapel Baptist Church, and my husband, made closing remarks and led in prayer, as everyone made a huge circle around the bleachers...with arms linked, we prayed together, asking The LORD to help our nation. All around the park, 7 different stations were set up, where we could stop and pray. The 7 areas of influence were prayed for...media, government, church, family, business, education, and military.

At the 6:30 p.m. prayer gathering, we were again blessed with beautiful weather. Charles Allen, choir director at Crabtree Chapel Baptist Church, opened in prayer and sang "How Great Thou Art" acapella. This was so touching and moved our hearts toward praise to our SAVIOUR and LORD. Again, I spoke and shared the theme and theme Scripture, Colossians 2:6-7. Mrs. Darla Harding, the Mayor of Spruce Pine, led us in the 2022 National Prayer and shared a few comments. We were so pleased to have her join us on this special day. Caleb Forbes then shared a song, "He Took My Place", as he played his guitar and sang with a heartfelt voice. Our guest speaker was Doug Harrell, the former editor of the Blue Ridge Christian News. Taking the book of 2 Chronicles from The Bible, he read and focused on Chapter 7, verse 14, encouraging us to stay in The Bible, be close to The LORD every day, and share the love of JESUS. Pastor Jason closed in prayer, and there was another prayer walk.

We thank The LORD for the freedom to have a National Day of Prayer and to be able to gather and pray together!!! Now is the time to pray...now is the time to pray...now is the time to pray for our nation. GOD bless.

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

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By Jim Smith  
McDowell County



Freedom Life held a community introduction on Saturday, May 7, at the YMCA's Hugh Chapman Center with a BBQ dinner, gospel music, client stories, and panel discussion with clients and staff.

After meeting with Avery County leadership in 2021, it was agreed that our reentry services were needed. We began to work on funding efforts to make this vision be a reality. In late 2021, our agency received grant funding from Dogwood Health Trust to expand into Avery County. This grant would allow for planning and training in 2022 to start pre-and post-release client care with justice-involved individuals in early 2023. The goal is to mirror the program and success that is currently happening in McDowell County.

Our main focus here at Freedom Life is to help men and women who have faced or are facing incarceration. Several of the resources we offer are: helping individuals with a positive transition back into the community, providing resourcing, job training support, housing assistance, life direction development, education direction, transportation assistance, personal and spiritual life coaching, and growth support groups. Many times, we also will work with recovery agencies to get clients into the facilities they need to successfully come through recovery.



During the event, guests were welcomed and served a wonderful fellowship meal of BBQ and all the fixings. After the meal, Heart Cry – the music ministry of Freedom Life – shared inspirational music interwoven with current client stories about their current journey to a successful reentry experience. A highlight was a time when clients shared through cardboard testimonies. On one side of the poster was the struggle the client had faced and on the backside was the positive place they have reached by coming through the Freedom Life Program.



There was a question-and-answer session after the program for Avery County individuals and leaders to ask further questions about moving forward. Danny Hampton, Executive Director, shared that there would be a need for volunteers, church support, and community and business support. It takes many revenue streams to happen for the budget to be met for the program to be sustainable. We ask our Freedom Life Family and supporters to continue in prayer as we continue to work in 2022 for a successful 2023 launch!



At Freedom Life, our commitment to Christ, His love, and His Word is an integral part of who we are. As we work with current and formerly incarcerated men and women, we seek to help them step into and sustain the commitment required for them to know the true potential of their lives and fulfillment of all the needs that God can meet amid all the challenges they face. We believe we have been called to be for justice-involved individuals what Christ was for us when it comes to living out what true commitment is, the cost that it requires, and the amazing new life capacity that it can bring.

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

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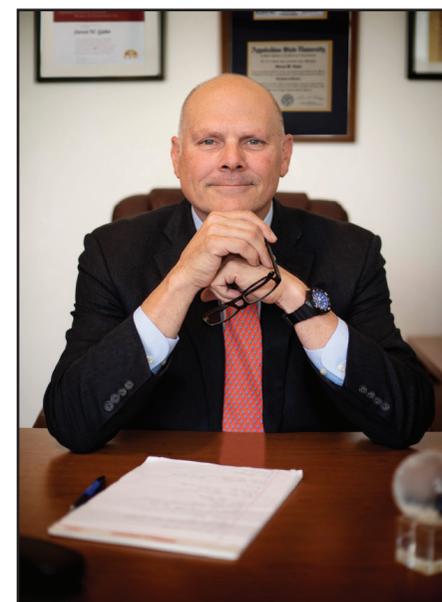
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## A Grateful Girl

### WNC Christian Blog Makes Top List

By Patti Jensen  
Mitchell County



A WNC Christian blogger has been named to the Top 200 Inspiring Christian Influencers to Follow. Patti Jensen, founder of A Grateful Girl Blog was featured on the list among other Christian bloggers and influencers including well-known blogs and influencers such as Proverbs31Girl and Sadie Robertson Huff.

"I was shocked to find my name on the list," said Patti Jensen, who lives in Spruce Pine, NC. "To find myself on the list among such amazing women with large followings and reach was humbling." "Of course, I am in no way in the same league as those Christian influencers and blogs, but it was nice to see my little blog on the list.

Jensen said she began her blog many years ago for a simple reason. "I began the blog to begin to document life happenings, save recipes for my daughters and friends, and share devotions and encouragement," said Jensen. "I never "optimized" the site as a business or focused on gaining followers," said Jensen. "I am just so surprised when I see someone and they tell me they read my blog and enjoy it." "That means the world to me and just shows that if we step out in faith to share God's love, He will use it to reach and impact people."

A Grateful Girl blog ([agratefulgirl.com](http://agratefulgirl.com)) is filled with devotionals written by Jensen, recipes, DIYs, and entertaining ideas. "The blog is a place where someone can find a little bit of everything," said Jensen. The tagline of the blog is "Celebrating the good things. That includes faith, food, family, and a little bit of home too."

A Grateful Girl also features an online and brick and mortar shop with clothing, gifts, and home décor. The shop is a small boutique space located in Treasures in the Pines marketplace in downtown Spruce Pine and the online shop can be found on the blog at [www.agratefulgirl.com](http://www.agratefulgirl.com).

In 2021, Patti stepped out into a calling she felt from God to begin a new women's conference called A Grateful Girl Gathering. "I felt God calling me to begin this women's conference to meet the need that so many of us have to connect with one another, to develop new friendships while spending time in God's word and amazing worship," said Jensen. The 2021 year was a hard time to launch the event with the effects of Covid still going on, but the planning team moved forward with the event and had over 100 women from across WNC attend. "It was an amazing day," said Jensen. "We had women from different churches helping to plan the event and then on the day of the event we had women from all across WNC come together to hear amazing speakers, do fun DIY projects and experience an incredible worship team comprised of area musicians." The 2022 Grateful Girl Gathering is being planned now and everyone is encouraged to follow along on Instagram and Facebook for all of the updates at [@agratefulgirlgathering](https://www.instagram.com/agratefulgirlgathering). Conference details can be found at [www.gratefulgirlgathering.com](http://www.gratefulgirlgathering.com)

Want to check out the Grateful Girl blog and follow along with all of the new posts? Visit [www.agratefulgirl.com](http://www.agratefulgirl.com) and follow on social media at [@agratefulgirlblog](https://www.instagram.com/agratefulgirlblog).

*Patti Jensen is a contributor to Blue Ridge Christian News. She lives in Spruce Pine, NC with her husband Jack. She has two daughters and sons in law and three grandchildren who call her Lovie.*



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# New Writer

By Joe Sturz  
Shenandoah, Virginia



What are my priorities in life? What is truly important to me? What do I value the most? On what do I spend the majority of my money? Who do I live for mammon or God? (Matthew 6:24) This is revealed by whether I:

- spend most of my money on me or give generously to the Lord's work (Proverbs 3:9; 11:25; Luke 6:38; 12:34; I Timothy 6:10),
- work hard to get ahead and be successful as my goal in this life or be diligent in the Lord's work that will result in a crown in heaven (Mark 4:19; I Timothy 6:10, 17-19),
- seek fame and fortune or take up my cross and follow Christ (Matt. 6:31-33; 16:23-26).

So let us examine ourselves (Psalm 139:23-24). At the end of our life as we look back over it, what will it show? Did we live for God or mammon? (Luke 12:15-34; 16:13).

So which way are you going now, the right way of Jesus Christ or the wrong way of your own selfish choosing (Deuteronomy 30:19-20; Matthew 11:28)? Are you walking the straight and narrow way of obeying the Lord and His Word or the crooked and broad way of disobedience and destruction (Matthew 7:13-14)? If you are on the crooked and broad way that so many are on then I ask you to repent of your sins and trust in Christ and follow His way (I John 1:9).

Brother Joe "God is my master, not mammon" Sturz (Thursday, May 19, 2022) I am praying in the name of Jesus (John 16:24) that the Good News that Jesus Christ died on the cross for sinners (I Corinthians 15:3-4) will reach your heart and those of you that read this will surrender all to follow Christ by repenting of your sin, receiving His forgiveness (I John 1:9), and trusting all Christ (Romans 10:9-10). The Holy Spirit enables you to change your ways (Titus 3:5-6; Acts 1:8; Romans 8:11) and live for Him if you have not done so already.

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



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By Todd Abraham  
Athens, Tennessee



The people of the world today are fixated on images. When you consider television, social media, and even retail outlets, you are submerged in imagery. And if still photos weren't enough, now practically everyone is a director of their own video productions. Since TikTok exploded onto the scene, every other social media site is scrambling to implement its own version of the same types of mini-video offering.

Based on some research I did for this particular article, many are facing image overload. In 2015, the average smartphone owner had at least 630 pictures stored on their phone. The average person spends 145 minutes per day on social media. On Facebook alone, 71.2% of posts are of images. The inundation of imagery in our society worldwide is astronomical! When you consider smartphones, computers, digital billboards, television (even on gas pumps!), and the like, it's almost the equivalent of subliminal hypnosis. But what Christians forget is the spiritual ramifications of it all. My former pastor was a true prophet of God and he prophesied years ago about how, in today's world, it would be a battle for the mind. And most people's minds today, including Christians, are already gone almost! The best thing that could happen spiritually is an extended power outage. Sound crazy? Not as crazy as going to hell for eternity with the regret of all that digital idolatry that kept your mind and soul consumed for hours on end.

The devil knows the power of all this imagery and how closely related idolatry is to it. If I've told you once, it feels like I've told you 100 times, that the human mind is voracious in its hunger for new and different things. And if you aren't transformed by the renewing of your mind in Christ Jesus like His Word teaches us, friend you stand a very good chance of missing God and dying and going to Hell for eternity. If this information steps on your toes then praise God because THE truth is supposed to offend your flesh; meaning your carnal thinking. The word of God, rightly divided, will cause your fleshly pride to swell up in you and what you do from that point is critical. Romans 12:2 *"And be NOT conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."*

It takes time to grow a tree friend. All this imagery is a fulfilling of the scriptures and how the devil plans on controlling mankind before God cuts him off. Revelation 13:14-15 *"And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an IMAGE to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give life unto the IMAGE of the beast, that the IMAGE of the beast should both speak, and CAUSE that as many as would NOT worship the IMAGE of the beast should be KILLED."* According to more of the same research aforementioned, image overload is a common problem resulting from all this technology. Remember the old days when you had to carry a camera, snap the pictures and wait for them to be developed? Much easier on the mind it was indeed.

Too much of any one thing is never a good thing; even for the Lord. Now before you rise up consider that, yes, God should be your first love and what you have the most of every day. But if you are too spiritual, you are no help in the work of the Lord and if you are too carnal, you are no help to God. In fact, God's Word is the perfect balance and, if taught and learned properly, will help you to become properly balanced; with Him first and always in your life. Proverbs 11:1 *"A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a JUST weight is his delight."*

## The Fear of God

By Todd Abraham

*The fear of God is in my soul,  
Guarding me against sin which could write a sad story.  
The power of God protects me; I'm His son,  
Bound and determined to do everything I can for His glory.  
The fear of God says to stay away from that My son,  
The master deceiver is lurking just out of sight to fool you.  
If the world is in it at all then best stay clear,  
Or should you step in that direction the consequences you will rue?  
The fear of God says never take for granted what He has given me,  
Or else wind up like Esau who for all his tears couldn't get back.  
Buy the truth and sell it not His Word declares to us,  
Because it's your birthright, your blessing that will never lack.  
The fear of God says watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation,  
Knowing this flesh is weak indeed and we have no strength of our own.  
Wisdom cries to us that in Him we live and move and have our being,  
And if we don't do all we can do first then in a moment, we could be gone.  
The fear of God shows me how mighty men of valor have fallen and gone astray,  
Solomon the richest, wisest man history ever did record.  
If he didn't have the strength to resist the devil and all his wiles,  
Who do we think we are and what self-willed assumption do we think we can afford.  
The fear of God is total respect knowing Who we should trust and depend on,  
Always, like soldiers, taking heed with keen, ever diligent vigilance.  
Being prudent according to the scripture which means watchful on all sides,  
Realizing eternal life is the greatest gift of all if we'll stay His course the distance.  
The fear of God instructs me His love is such He'll let us choose life or death,  
Disobedience to His commandment which is His Word automatically bringing the latter.  
As the Lord Himself so kindly showed us that the path to life is strait and narrow,  
Should we fail, the flames of hell is eternal regret; oh what disaster.  
The fear of God says to be presumptuous is near-certain destruction,  
Never, my friend, take for granted that God owes you or me anything.  
He's already given His all on Calvary saying "It is finished" meaning the plan of salvation.  
The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge; it is understanding.*

*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](http://www.HBCNewsMonthly.com).*

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## Buffalo mass shooting leaves 10 dead: Why ideas like "replacement theory" are so dangerous

By Jim Denison



NOTE: Thank you to Dr. Ryan Denison for writing today's Daily Article. He is the Denison Forum Senior Editor for Theology and has written more than four hundred articles for Denison Forum.

Fans of the Dallas Mavericks and Boston Celtics are celebrating this morning as each team won their Game 7 matchups to advance to their respective Conference Finals. Fans of the favored Phoenix Suns and defending champion Milwaukee Bucks are experiencing the morning-after agony of defeat.

And how I wish that could be our main topic today.

Tragically, in the span of the last three days, five news-making shootings across the US have resulted in eleven dead and twenty-nine injured.

### Five mass shootings in three days

On Sunday afternoon in Laguna Woods, California, a shooter killed one person and wounded five others at Geneva Presbyterian Church. Parishioners hog-tied the suspect with an extension cord, an act of "exceptional heroism and bravery" according to a sheriff's official.

Late Friday night, a series of three shootings occurred outside of the Milwaukee Bucks home arena following their Game 6 loss to the Boston Celtics. In total, twenty-one people were injured, though fortunately none of them died.

Less than twenty-four hours after the Milwaukee mass shootings, an eighteen-year-old man pulled into the parking lot of Tops supermarket in the Masten Park neighborhood of Buffalo. While wearing body armor and carrying an assault rifle, he opened fire on four people in the parking lot, killing three.

Upon entering the store, a security guard—former police lieutenant Aaron Salter—shot the gunman, but the shooter's body armor shielded him from the bullets. Salter was not as fortunate and died when the gunman returned fire. The shooter then proceeded to attack the store's shoppers and employees.

In total, ten people were killed and three were injured.

The gunman then surrendered to police outside the building and has since pled not guilty. He is due back in court on Thursday and faces first-degree murder charges that carry the penalty of life in prison.

### Why did the Buffalo shooting happen?

The shooter—who I will not name in this article—was not from anywhere near Buffalo, NY. Rather, it appears that he chose the area because it is a predominately black neighborhood in an otherwise majority white part of the state.

Buffalo Police Commissioner Joseph Gramaglia said that the shooter had been in town "at least the day before" and that he had likely "come here to scope out the area, to do a little reconnaissance work on the area before he carried out his just evil, sickening act."

That the attack was racially motivated is further supported by the racial epithet that the shooter wrote on the barrel of his gun, as well as extensive searches on the 2019 mosque shootings in Christchurch, New Zealand.

Most damning, however, is a 180-page manifesto that—as of this writing—is believed, but not confirmed, to be the work of the shooter.

In it, he calls himself a white supremacist and argues for core tenets of the "great replacement" theory, which contends that white people are being systematically replaced by non-white people, especially through immigration. Twenty-eight percent of the document is plagiarized directly from the declaration left by the Christchurch shooter in 2019, who also cited this theory as a motivation for his atrocities. The connection demonstrates the power of ideas to warp reason and incite abominable actions when put to the service of nefarious purposes.

### Caution for Christians

The senseless violence in Milwaukee was tragic and stupid. The targeted murder of innocents because of their skin color and the shooter's disturbing understanding of society is evil.

The latter sticks with us more because evil often feels like a more daunting foe than the idiotic, and that is especially true when it comes to what a person believes.

But where inane ideas used to remain, for the most part, locked away in the minds of those who held them, today it is relatively easy to find a corner of the internet in which they can be fostered and grow unchecked by the bounds of reason and reality. As such, any kernels of truth that may exist within an otherwise deranged idea provide all that's required for that idea to spread.

And Christians are not immune to this tendency.

That's why it's so important for us to recognize that most people, even those who end up defending truly outlandish ideas, do not start out looking for something false to believe.

Rather, they are caught by a concept that resonates with them and then proceeds to follow it further and further without ever stopping to question its veracity. They want it to be true so badly that they eventually convince themselves that it is. However, even the most seemingly innocuous falsehoods can deal great damage to our witness and God's kingdom.

We don't have to look hard to see the kind of damage that can happen when followers of the one who called himself "the truth" begin to traffic in lies (John 14:6).

One reason the church has lost much of its prophetic voice in our culture today is that we have compromised our standards of faith to make room for unbiblical beliefs. Christian nationalism, for example, has led many to see the gospel as a political tool rather than the path to salvation because that is how far too many professed Christians have used it.

At the same time, denominations that have compromised biblical truth on issues of sexuality and the sanctity of life for the sake of appearing more loving and com-

passionate—by the culture's standards—have also lost their voice by preaching a message in the name of Jesus that Jesus could never preach himself.

Ultimately, it doesn't matter where along the ideological spectrum you start your descent into heresy. The end result will be largely the same: a life and witness that stands firmly beyond the bounds of God's blessing.

Far too many Christians find themselves stuck in that barren wasteland, looking around bewildered at how they got there.

Fortunately, the path back to God is never really gone, even if we lose sight of it from time to time. It just takes the humility and self-awareness to admit where we've gone wrong and then allow the Lord to help us make the necessary corrections.

As C. S. Lewis described it, "If you are on the wrong road, progress means doing an about-turn and walking back to the right road . . . Going back is the quickest way on."

Where might you need to do an about-turn today?

*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](http://www.denisonforum.org). Copyrighted and printed by permission from Denison Forum.*

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## Just Like Father

By Steve Bietz  
Burke County



Another June has arrived, which means that another Father's Day is upon us. Paul Harvey was an American radio broadcaster for ABC News Radio. He broadcast 'News and Comment' on the mornings and mid-days on weekdays, and at noon on Saturdays. He also shared his famous 'Rest of the Story' segments. From 1951 till 2008, his programs reached close to 25 million people per week.

I remember a story Paul Harvey told about a dad named Grey Baker. When Grey Baker goes golfing there in Jackson Mississippi, he would often take his young son with him. The boy has been learning the game of golf by watching his dad play the game. Mr. Baker decided to purchase his young son a set of play golf clubs for his birthday. On the next weekend, the Bakers had a family cookout in the backyard. Grey's son had his plastic golf clubs and suddenly announced, "Dad watch me as I play golf just like you." With that, the boy swung the golf club and then proceeded to say a couple of curse words as he let go of the club and threw it into the pear tree. Yes, unfortunately just like dad. Like father like son is usually a pretty good bet.

In John's Gospel, Jesus claims to be the spitting image of the Father God. The term 'spitting image' is not biblical. We first come across it in a play by George Farquhar in his 1689 production 'Love and a Bottle' where we hear the line, "Poor Child! He's as like his own daddy as if he spat out of his mouth." In the Gospel of John, chapter 14, we come across an incident when one of the Lord's disciples, Philip, asked Jesus to show him and the other disciples what the Father God was like. Jesus shared His disappointment with Philip's inquiry and replied "You mean I've been with you all this time and you still don't know Me? When you're looking at Me, the Son, you're looking at the Father God."

In other words, Jesus claims to be the spitting image of the Father God. I believe one of the greatest compliments we could ever get is when a person might say about us, wow, you sure can tell he spends a lot of time with the Father God, he's beginning to look like Him. That would be high praise indeed, but unfortunately, we don't often live up to it. In Acts chapter 4, we see that the Jewish leadership, as they saw the boldness of Peter and John and knew them to be uneducated and ignorant, at least in their eyes, they marveled. The Jewish leaders must admit that Peter and John looked a lot like Jesus. (Acts 4:13)

I think we should all want that for our lives, that we don't just resemble our dads on another Father's Day, but that we resemble our Heavenly Father to the point that people say, wow, you can surely tell that they have been walking with their Father, the God of Heaven. May we all in our daily walk, grow more and more like the Father God as we allow the Holy Spirit to transform our lives.

Steve Bietz, Pastor, Morganton Seventh day Adventist Church.



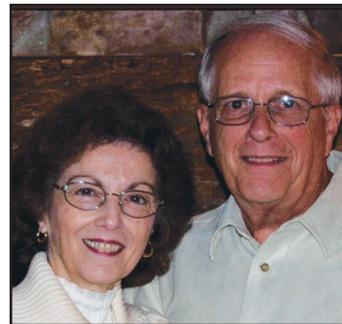
## Sudoku

Solution on page 14

5					1		6	
	4			5		7		9
	2						8	
			2	4	3	5		
4	3						9	7
		5	6	9	7			
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9		2		3			7	
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## Gentle Stillness

By Ken and Jan Merop  
Cleveland, Tennessee



A chain saw is buzzing in the near distance. In the aftermath of winter, branches have fallen off trees. Some trees have lost ground and fallen over. And the grass begins to grow again. Lawnmowers, weed whackers, and leaf blowers join the cacophony of sounds that disturb the lilt-ing birdsong I relish.

The intrusion of machinery can easily drown out the gentler sounds produced by mountain breezes that coax the trees to sing...sometimes in soothing whispers and other times bellowing in my ears with hang-onto-your-hat intensity.

The Bible is clear that God speaks with many voices. He gets our attention in Psalm 29: 1-11 NLT where his voice is said to echo above the sea.

When at the ocean, think about that echo. Especially if there aren't too many other voices shouting and conversing. If it is quiet, the salt air, the ever-moving waves, and crashes on the shore create an atmosphere that resembles the sounds of speech.

Sitting on shore with eyes closed can be a soulful time of reflection and communication with God.

In fact, in Revelation 1: 15, John describes what he heard... *"and his voice thundered like mighty ocean waves."*

Back to Psalm 29 we also come to realize that his voice is powerful and majestic and can shake the earth.

But in other passages, we learn how diversified the Lord's voice is. If you are putting a child to bed, what voice do you use? Are you loud and commanding, or soothing and comforting?

Hopefully the latter. And it is that voice that draws me close to the Lord's side. He says in Psalm 46: 10, *"Be still, and know that I am God!"*

That speaks to me because if he is asking me for stillness, I'll catch his whispers.

In John 10:27 Jesus says, *"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me."*

It is in our most quiet moments that our spirit will be in tune to that still, small voice that Oswald Chambers once described as "a sound of gentle stillness."

This description comes from 1 Kings 19: 11 - 12 when the Lord speaks to Elijah. As he stands on the mountain the Lord passed by and a windstorm beats on the mountain. But the Lord wasn't in the wind. Later an earthquake and fire. But he wasn't in either.

And then the Word says in verse 12b... *"And after the fire, there was the sound of a gentle whisper."*

So, listen for his voice in the gentle promptings of your heart. Selah

## Quiet Grazing By Jan Merop

*To come upon these beautiful horses  
is a treat in itself.  
Quietly, they graze oblivious to us...focused.  
We, too, should keep our eyes fixed on God and His ways.  
He is our nourishment.  
"Be still, and know that I am God."  
Psalm 46:10*



Ken and Jan love residing in the mountains of Avery County. Visit Jan's new blog @[pauseandconsider.net](http://pauseandconsider.net), *Journeying with Jan*. Ken's photos can be seen at [kenmeropphotography.com](http://kenmeropphotography.com).

## The Forever Intercessor

By Christopher L. Scott  
Moses Lake, Washington



Do you remember incandescent light bulbs? Those that use to burn out every few months. Now we have high-tech LED light bulbs that literally if used in the correct conditions, last for decades. In fact, there are some light fixtures where multiple LEDs are built into the fixture and the manufacturer provides a guarantee that those won't burn out.

The priests in the Old Testament were like those incandescent bulbs: often being replaced. When Aaron died (Numbers 20:28) he was replaced by his son, Eleazar. But later Eleazar died (Joshua 24:33) so his son, Phinehas took over the priesthood. And so the cycle continued for centuries. The Jewish historian Josephus estimates that 83 different high priests officiated Judaism from Aaron to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 (Antiquities, 20.227).

But Jesus replaced the Old Testament priest system. He is now our priest forever. Hebrews 7:22-25 tells us, "so much the more also Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant. The former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing, but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently. Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (NASB).

There are a few important words in this passage we need to notice. Jesus is part of a "better" covenant than was used in the Old Testament. While the Old Testament priests regularly died and were replaced, Jesus continues "forever" and he holds the position of the priest "permanently." He saves us "forever" because we have placed our faith in him for salvation. This means that Christ "always" makes intercession for us.

But what does it mean for Christ to intercede for us?

First, Christ atones for our sins and strengthens us in temptation. Hebrews 2:17 says, "He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people."

Second, Christ sympathizes with our weaknesses, gives us mercy, and helps us when we need it. Hebrews 4:14-16 says, "We have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Jesus intercedes for us. He is our intercessor forever.

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

## Taxes In Retirement. An Unknown Risk For Most People

By Steve Gaito  
McDowell County



"There are two systems of taxation in our country: one for the informed and one for the uninformed" Judge Learned Hand U.S Court of Appeals, 2nd Circuit. Truer words have not been spoken about retirement savings. For most of our working careers, people are encouraged to save money in what is known as a qualified retirement plan. Most recognize these as a 401(k) or 403(b) plan but they also include IRA's and 401(a) plans that are where companies contribute money on your behalf. They all have the same challenge. The money in them has not been taxed. This obligation is a huge risk in retirement and one that can mean hundreds of thousands of dollars in additional taxes should you not understand how to withdraw in a tax-efficient way. The reality is that there is a minimum tax that you will pay for the deferral of taxes. This is mandatory, but what most fail to understand is that the rest is a voluntary tax that you are choosing to pay. This voluntary tax is what you pay when you leave your qualified money in the accounts and do not take advantage of the historically low marginal tax brackets. If you want to see the difference between your mandatory tax and voluntary tax, I have a simple calculator on my website that with answers to a couple of simple questions will give you this information. With the Trump Tax laws sunseting in 2026, there is a window to take advantage of lower brackets for most people. So, what happens in 2026? The tax brackets revert to the older, higher tax brackets. This is known as legislative risk. The risk that all qualified retirement plans face. The risk is that the government will raise tax taxes in the future. With over 30 trillion in debt and with our current inflation this is undoubtedly a risk that all will face. So how do you address this risk? It is simple. You must choose to pay more taxes now to pay significantly less later. Instead of thinking of paying more taxes now think of it as paying your taxes now while they are on sale instead of waiting for them to go back up to the full price. The change for most is around a 30% difference with the change of brackets and rates. If you want to pay 30% or more in taxes just wait and you will pay significantly more in the future. With proper planning we can help you address income that will not be impacted by the market, create tax-free income for the future, minimize the risk of a long-term care event and reduce the impact taxes will have on your retirement. For most these strategies help them create a retirement plan that is easy to understand and one that gives them peace in retirement. I have many free resources on my website [www.retirement.com](http://www.retirement.com) such as books, videos, and calculators. They are all free and there for one reason. To help you make informed decisions about your retirement. I also offer a free initial consultation to make sure that the services I provide match what you need for your future. I love helping people pay fewer taxes and get more out of their retirement.

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

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# Evergreen Church

## From Persecution to Proclamation

By John McCoury  
Roan Mountain, Tennessee



“And Saul approved of their killing him. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison. Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.”  
Acts 8:1-4

It was by means of the persecution that arose over Stephen that these early Christians were pressed out of Jerusalem, spurted out into the areas around, into Judea and Samaria, and began to preach the word, all according to the program of God. God used Saul of Tarsus, even before he became a Christian to accomplish this. God works to use the very obstacles thrown in the path of Christians to advance his cause. You can picture young Saul, enraged over what he regarded as a heresy, trying to stamp it out with all the energy of his flesh, entering house after house, dragging off men and women and committing them to prison. This is the rage of a tortured conscience, which tries, by zealous activity, to cover up its anxiety, emptiness, and hurt. Yet God uses this as an instrument to accomplish his purpose.

God does two things with this rage of Saul's: He forces the church out of Jerusalem into Judea and Samaria to fulfill the divine program as he had outlined, and he makes the early church depend not upon the apostles but upon the gifts of the Spirit distributed to everyone — for these who were scattered abroad were not the apostles. Dr. Luke is careful to tell us that. These were ordinary, plain-vanilla Christians like you and me. And yet they had gifts of the Spirit. But they would never have discovered their gifts if they had not been pushed out, and put to work. So God used this pressure to place them in circumstances where they began to develop the gifts of evangelism, of witnessing, of help, wisdom, knowledge, teaching, prophecy, and all the other gifts of the Spirit that had been made available to them.

Sometimes I think that God will have to do this in our day before people will begin to believe that they have spiritual gifts and put them to work. He may have to bring persecution upon us so that there cannot be dependence upon a central ministry, but each one will begin to utilize the gifts that God has given him.

Are you going through some kind of pressure today? Well, it is not punishment for our sins — Jesus took our punishment fully, on the Cross. The pressure, the trials, and the problems that come are by no means always the result of sin in our lives. Sometimes they are, but it may be God's way of moving you, of pressuring you into a new experience, into a new understanding of his truth and of his equipment in your life, and giving you a new opportunity to put it to work.

Thank you, Lord, that you are completely sovereign over my life and I can trust you to use me wherever you see fit to do so

Jesus said, *'In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world!'* (Jn.16:33) *Our 'cheer' (contentment) is not with our trials, but with God who is at work, causing 'all things to work together for His good.'* (Rom.8:28) Will you rest in God as He works within your difficulties to make you more like His Son?

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

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# Obedient Heart Fellowship

## Words and Pictures

By Jim Huskins  
McDowell County



Ancient wisdom establishes word-to-picture equivalence at an astonishing one thousand to one. Most of us assume that the famous adage represents the unassailable victory of pictures over words. In fact, the opposite is true. The reason that a picture may provoke a thousand words is that pictures are woefully inefficient at conveying specifics. A masterfully executed picture may inspire powerful feelings, but pictures are lousy conduits of certain details. Part of the blame for a general decline in the mastery of the English language is widespread abuse of the word-to-picture ratio.

Late in the last millennium, my wife and I decided that if we wanted to keep in touch with our children, we had to learn to text. They seldom made phone calls, email was already passé, and postal mail was a relic of the murky past. I am a competent typist, but I text at a speed slightly slower than “plod.” Despite my text-speed deficiency, I have never been tempted to replace words with little pictures. Those who do so invoke a conundrum inherent in the word-to-picture ratio—no two people have an identical understanding of most pictures.

This situation can be verified by consulting published definitions of “emoticons.” So-called experts in this field cannot even agree on the subset of little pictures which represent facial expressions. If those in the know do not know, then how are the rest of us supposed to understand what someone is trying to say with a little picture?

One ubiquitous image in texting is that of a hand with four closed fingers and a thumb extended upward. Apparently, this can mean “I agree,” “I feel good about that,” “I’ll be there soon,” “that’s a good course of action,” “that is going to happen,” or “it’s already in process” and more. How am I supposed to know what the sender intends? This picture is further complicated by the fact that many cultures view that hand position as an insulting, obscene gesture. It also refers to a procedure for which we use toilet paper. When I trained for an African mission trip, we were told to never make that gesture.

Since humans are unable to convey thoughts directly, we have no choice but to communicate through symbols. Any symbol, including words, can be misunderstood. The difference between words and pictures, however, is that entire cultures tend to agree on the definitions of words and record those definitions in readily-available format. Pictures are seldom endowed with equivalent shared understanding. One can choose to communicate with pictures, but in so doing, one also chooses to be misunderstood.

Only God is capable of direct communication. The inspired, prophetic utterance is the source of that marvelous collection of symbols that we call the Bible. God’s Word is echad. This Hebrew term refers to an inseparable unity. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are echad. The Bible is one story delivered by the One True God through the one group of people that He chose to be His one holy possession—the Nation of Israel. We do violence to the Bible when we rip it out of its Hebrew context and attempt to force it through the filter of modern, Western culture. The only way to understand that remarkable stream of powerful symbols delivered through the Hebrew Prophets is to approach the book through their worldview.

Soon after I began the process of attempting to better understand the Bible’s context, I was delighted to learn that the ancient Hebrew alphabet is made up of—wait for it—little pictures! The first letter, aleph, is the head of an ox. The second letter, bet, is a picture of a tent or house. Gimel is a stick figure of a camel. Dalet is a picture of a door. All 22 of the Ancient Hebrew alphabet characters are simple but profound pictures. Those little pictures are delightful because, unlike the modern plague of emoticons, each picture in the Hebrew alphabet is well defined and clearly understood. The ox represents strength and leadership. A tent is both a dwelling and the family that lives within it. The camel represents something being lifted up as a rider when his mount rises from its knees. The door symbolizes a path or a way of life.

Our Father understands that we can only connect to truth through symbols that our brains can accurately process. That’s why the building blocks of His Holy Word are simple, powerful symbols. The pictures which make up the conduit through which God communicates His marvelous love do not bog down in thousands of words. Each of them rests firmly on a few, well-chosen words that are easy to understand.

Too many Christians have too long been fed the lies that God changed, that all the “old testament stuff” is no longer relevant, and that the “grace of Jesus” gives us a license to live any way we like. The big picture presented in Scripture is fundamentally at odds with the pinhole perspective of modern theology. Hebrew world view recognizes that God never changes, that His instructions for living are for all times, places, and people, and that we will all be judged in the end based on what we have done rather than what we claim to “believe.” God is holy, and we can only approach Him by respecting and imitating His holiness. “*You shall be holy for I am holy.*” (1 Peter 1:16)

God expects—and is entitled to—more from us than merely walking an aisle and repeating a made-up prayer. The only way to know and love Him on His terms is to lay aside the false images we have been taught, pick up His Book, and read from the beginning with an open mind and a tender heart. The Bible is many thousands of words, but they all point to the One picture of Him who still proclaims, “*Behold, I stand at the dalet and knock.*”

*Jim & Beverly Huskins are members of Obedient Heart Fellowship.*



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# YOUR GOVERNMENT PAGES

## NC Senate District 47



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

On May 17th, voters across the state went to the polls to decide who will be on the ballot in November. I am excited to report that my message of balanced budgets, protecting the unborn, and lowering taxes resonated with voters.

Just as any family must balance their budget, I believe the government must do the same. We cannot allow North Carolina to kick the can down the road to future generations. Smart, fiscally conservative budgets are the cornerstone of a healthy and functioning government. That is why I believe that by strategically investing in our state's infrastructure and broadband capabilities we can improve the lives of all North Carolinians.

I also believe that protecting the lives of the unborn is critical. Even now, with uncertainty in the Courts, you can be sure I remain 100% pro-life. I believe we should push forward in our fight to ban abortion in the state of North Carolina and put an end to the tens of thousands of unborn children killed every year in this state alone.

After the state of North Carolina collected a record amount of taxes during the pandemic, Republicans in the General Assembly aimed to lower the personal and corporate income tax rates for everyone. I truly believe these reforms will allow North Carolinians more flexibility to plan and save for their families while also making our state attractive to additional investment.

The fight in North Carolina is far from over. Come November, I believe it's important that everyone turn out to the polls. I have pledged to continue fighting for the people of Western North Carolina. And I will continue to do so. Thank you for your support.

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

## NC Commissioner of Labor



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

Though summer doesn't officially begin until June 21, most of us consider Memorial Day as the true kick-off of the season. With summer comes heat and humidity, even for the western part of the state. If you're spending time outdoors, whether, for work or play, it's important to recognize the signs and symptoms of heat-related illness.

Each summer, our staff at the Department of Labor promotes a heat illness prevention campaign to educate employers and employees on the dangers of heat stress and best practices for avoiding heat-related hazards. When you're working outside, please remember to wear light-colored, loose-fitting clothes, drink plenty of water, take frequent breaks and monitor how you feel. More information, including training resources and guidance, is available on the safety and health page of our website, [labor.nc.gov/safety](http://labor.nc.gov/safety), and health.

I'm pleased to announce that Mitchell County native James "Beau" Thomas was named the new chief of the Mine and Quarry Bureau on May 10. Beau worked for several years in a feldspar mine in Spruce Pine and has extensive experience in workplace safety and health. Beau joined the Mine and Quarry Bureau in 2015 as a mine safety and health consultant. He graduated from the University of North Carolina Asheville and served four years in the United States Air Force. Beau's prior work experience has gained him a wealth of knowledge about safety and health in the mining industry which will serve him well in his new position.

On May 24, I was honored to host Western Carolina University Chancellor Dr. Kelli Brown and several WCU staff members at the Labor Building in Raleigh. As the westernmost school in the University of North Carolina System, Western Carolina University plays a key role in the area's academic, economic, and community development. I am encouraged to hear about Dr. Brown's continuing commitment to university excellence and a quality learning environment.

In June, I'll continue traveling the state as we wrap up this year's safety awards banquets. I look forward to attending the Asheville Safety Awards Banquet on June 21 and hope to see some of your businesses represented at that event.

The summer months typically signal a more relaxed, less busy time. I hope you find an opportunity to rest and relax with your family and friends. Happy Father's Day – Sunday, June 19 – to all dads, grandfathers, and other father figures!

## NC Senate District 46



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

It is hard for me to believe but when this month is over, we will be halfway through 2022. Primaries are completed, our legislative "short" session has just started, and my colleagues and I anticipate a productive time of legislative business in the coming

weeks. First off, the General Assembly recently received some VERY positive news about our state revenues. A joint revenue forecast released last month by our legislative staff and the Office of State Budget and Management predicts fiscal year tax collections will exceed 2021 estimates by \$4.24 billion in 2022 and \$1.9 billion in 2023. That is 10.8% higher than expected! This is remarkable because 2 years ago, at the onset of the pandemic, there were grave concerns that state revenues would drop substantially, perhaps leading to future budget deficits. Even though inflation under the Biden administration reached a 40-year high in March 2022 at 8.5%, tax reforms, balanced budgets, and a strong savings reserve funded by our Republican-led General Assembly over the past decade have placed our state in a strong position to weather another economic storm or natural disaster. We have kept a steady hand on state spending. And when times have come with budget surpluses, we have given part of that money back to taxpayers in the form of tax cuts – because after all – it's the taxpayers' money to start with.

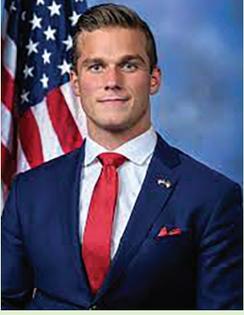
As a reminder, at the start of the 2021 biennium, I was appointed by Senate leadership as Co-Chair of the Finance Committee, Redistricting and Elections Committee, and Appropriations Subcommittee on Justice and Public Safety (JPS). I continue to serve as a member of several other committees, including the Appropriations/Base Budget Committee, Judiciary Committee, Rules Committee, Transportation Committee, and the Select Committee on Prison Safety. In future columns, I will share about the major policy issues we are working on in those committees. In closing, I am honored and humbled by the tremendous responsibility the people of the 46th district have given me. Our state continues to face great challenges, as well as many opportunities for positive change, and I continue to work diligently to represent the people of Avery, Burke, and Caldwell counties to continue making North Carolina a better place to live, work, and raise a family.



**God Bless America**

# YOUR GOVERNMENT PAGES

## NC 11th Congressional District



Rep. Madison Cawthorn  
828-808-2148

Throughout my time in Congress, I have fought against Joe Biden's systematic dismantling of President Trump's America. The people of NC-11 deserve better than the Democrats' failed legislative agenda. I will always advocate for policies that will make life less expensive, make our communities safer, and put NC-11 first.

### My Trip to Haywood County

It was great to see Chief Sutton who was a true leader in getting the forest fire in Haywood County under control a few weeks ago. Haywood County, the Forest Service, the volunteers, and all the departments that came to help should be very proud of the work they did in protecting this great county. It could have been a much much worse disaster had it not been for their quick and decisive actions.

### The Candace Owens Act

The Progressive war on free speech intensifies daily. The Left in this country has repeatedly proven that they will mobilize to deny employment, stifle speech, and employ threats of violence to ensure that dissenting voices are not heard. One of the more egregious recent examples of this was Aspen Laboratories' decision to deny Conservative Commentator Candace Owens a COVID-19 test based solely on her political beliefs. To combat this rising tide of liberalism I am introducing "The Candace Owens Act".

This bill will:

- Amend the Social Security Act to ban providers from discriminating against healthcare seekers on the basis of political affiliation. Providers that discriminate based on political affiliation and free speech will be barred from accepting Federal funds.
- Impose strong consequences on any action by providers that render the consumer in violation of public health laws during a declared Public Health Emergency
- Direct the Secretary of HHS to determine the best means for adjudicating conflicting claims.

This legislation represents a conservative, federalist solution to a progressive assault on our free speech culture. No system that relies on federal dollars should be allowed to punish and ostracize citizens for their political beliefs.

### The United States was born out of Disobedience, Let's do it Again With Vaccine Mandates

I recently took to the house floor to demand an end to unconstitutional mask and vaccine mandates. It is time for our heroes, nurses, police officers, and members of the military alike to be returned to their lines of work after authoritarian policies put them on the unemployment line. Here is an excerpt from my speech:

"Unconstitutional mandates sacrifice freedom on the altar of safety. Mask mandates are dying because patriots have fought back... This is not a matter of health, it's a matter of liberty. These heroes will not go away quietly."

### Our Immigration System Needs REFORM

Our immigration system is broken. Under current law, aliens, including criminals, must be released inside of the United States borders after 6 months of detainment if their home country doesn't accept or want them back. The Secretary of State can place visa sanctions on countries reluctant to bring back their own people, but the sanctions are often not used to their full potential. My REFORM Act will change this heinous practice.

This legislation adds a 30-day requirement for the Secretary of State to place visa sanctions on countries that have at least 10 nationals in the United States with final orders of removal and are reluctant to take them back.

If a recalcitrant country is uncooperative to the point where 2,000 or more aliens with final orders of removal are in the US from that country, the DHS must put visa sanctions on either all immigrant visas, all non-immigrant visas, or both within 30 days. These will be put in place until the DHS has certified that half of the aliens have been returned to their country and that the country demonstrates cooperation for further removal of aliens.

This legislation will make our country safer.

### Big Tech is Silencing Conservatives. It's Time to Hold Them Accountable.

The Big Tech industry has sought to tamp down the rise of President Donald Trump and his followers. Yet as they attack Americans, Big Tech leaders allow international terrorists to recruit and communicate via their platforms.

Big Tech is scared to death of an America First reemergence in America. They know they won't win the argument on policy or politics, so they have moved to silence, deplatform, and ban prominent conservative voices. One of the largest contradictions in Big Tech policy is while proclaiming Trump and his supporters are a public threat, foreign despots are permitted to access and use their platforms.

The bias is outrageous. My proposed bill will be the first step toward holding Big Tech gurus like Mark Zuckerberg accountable for their traitorous behavior and will hold them accountable for their assault on conservatives and exposes their outrageous double standard.

### Honor Flights Are Back!

In a previous newsletter, I mentioned a letter I sent with Congressman Chip Roy and over 70 other Republicans calling for the resumption of honor flight vehicular escort services to honor our veterans.

Our letter called on Department of Interior Secretary Deb Haaland to instruct the United States Park Police to continue these tours for veterans which have been discontinued in recent years.

We received a fantastic response last week from U.S. Park Police Acting Chief Christopher Stock, National Mall & Memorial Parks Superintendent Jeff Reinbold, Honor Flight Network Chief Executive Officer Meredith Rosenbeck, and Chairman of Board of Directors Matthew Shuman. They said, "The National Park Service (NPS) and the Honor Flight Network will resume NPS and USPP support of Honor Flight visits to begin again on June 1. Since 2005, our organizations have had the honor of partnering to provide memorable experiences for our nation's veterans who visit the World War II, Korean War Veterans, and Vietnam Veterans memorials on the National Mall."



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“For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.” Romans 11:29  
 “He will call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him.” Psalms 91:15

Dear Lord, help each one of us recognize our calling early in life so we call fulfill it. Help us not see it as a burden but as a blessing instead. I pray that each one of us will rise up and do what you have called us to do no matter how hard it is. In Jesus’s name, I pray, Amen.

Christy Lowman is a Christian author and illustrator that lives in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains with her husband and two children. She enjoys writing and illustrating books for all ages. Some of her short stories are published with Guideposts and HCI. Christy gives all the glory to God in everything she does. A portion of every book sold from the Small Bible Character Series will be donated to battle human trafficking. You can buy her books at [https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=dp\\_byline\\_sr\\_book\\_1?ie=UTF8&field-author=Christy+Lowman&search-alias=books&text=Christy+Lowman&sort=relevancerank](https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=dp_byline_sr_book_1?ie=UTF8&field-author=Christy+Lowman&search-alias=books&text=Christy+Lowman&sort=relevancerank). You can reach her at <https://www.facebook.com/authorChristyLowman/> or [christyssoaps@yahoo.com](mailto:christyssoaps@yahoo.com).

In Memory of Joy Baldwin  
 Madison County

**GOD**  
 Often in the still of the night  
 I wonder what God’s doing  
 Is He pondering on the day  
 Or tomorrow’s plans pursuing.

Have I made Him laugh or smile  
 Or broke His heart in sorrow  
 Did I say I love you, Lord  
 Or promise more tomorrow.

While I slumber in my bed  
 God’s angels watching, keeping  
 He’s done everything for me  
 So now His face I’m seeking.

He is the great and mighty one  
 Worthy of all heavens praise  
 I’ll honor Him throughout my life  
 To Him my voice I’ll raise.



## Bits 'n Pieces

### Avery County

1st Annual Avery County Summer Fest June 11 & 12, 2022  
 Location: NC Cooperative Extension Center of Avery County  
 Home of the Avery County Fair  
 661 Vale Road, Newland, NC 28657  
 Hours: Saturday & Sunday: 9 am – 5 pm

### Mitchell County

Spruce Pine - June 4th – Troutacular – Riverside Park

### VBS at Liberty Hill Baptist Church

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 Meal will be served each night

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# Grand View Baptist Church

## Church Membership Responsibility 1 Corinthians 12:12-14

By Glenda Ward  
McDowell County



How fortunate we are to be a part of our church through Church Membership. As a Church Member, we bear significant responsibilities. Responsibility and church membership go hand-in-hand. You simply can't have one without the other. A local church is not a building or a place. A church is the people in the congregation. More specifically a church is born-again, Spirit-filled people who gather regularly in the name of the Lord Jesus and under the authority of God's Word to profess the true gospel and affirm each other's citizenship in the Kingdom of God. Church membership shows two important things about the church: the church has a unique identity and the church has a unique authority.

Our membership in our church of Spirit-filled people creates its identity. No longer spiritually dead. We have been made alive in Christ Jesus. We are a new creation, forgiven of our sins, and adopted as God's sons and daughters (Jeremiah 33:31-34; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 1:7, 13, 22; Romans 8:15). Each church member bears a responsibility to become who we already are in Christ by walking in a manner worthy of the gospel (Ephesians 4:1). Being leads to doing. God has also entrusted our church with a unique authority to render decisions on earth on behalf of the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 18:18). Local churches are embassies of God's Kingdom.

### RESPONSIBILITIES OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

In light of the church's identity and authority these six points summarize the Bible's teaching on the responsibilities of membership.

#### Assemble Together

If church members don't assemble, then there's no church. Our gathering together in the name of the Lord Jesus is part of what makes a church a church. (Hebrews 10:25). Every church member should prioritize the Lord's Day worshiping with the people of God. Church members may need to assemble for other reasons other than regular church services on Sundays and Wednesday evenings, then church members have a responsibility to gather at those meetings as well.

#### Protect The Gospel

Entrusting fidelity to the gospel isn't the responsibility of pastors alone. Every church member is responsible to uphold and affirm the gospel. In Galatians 1:2, 6-7 Paul held the congregation of church members accountable for allowing error to creep in and distort the gospel. Every church member should be able to articulate and defend the substance of the gospel. Christian believers should mature in Christ's teachings, enabling them to discern true and false doctrine (Ephesians 4:13-14; Philippians 1:9-10; 1 John 4:1-6). When every member accepts the responsibility to protect the gospel, the whole church benefits. Together, we mature in the truth and build ourselves up in the knowledge of the Son of God (Ephesians 4:13).

#### Define Your Church's Membership

Together, we as church members are responsible to define our membership. By receiving new members through baptism, transfer by a letter from another church, or by personal statement; a local church tells the watching world, "this person is a member of God's Kingdom" (Matthew 16:18-19; 18:17-20; 28:16-20). By regularly fellowshiping around the Lord's table, the members partake of the ongoing sign of church membership, while affirming each other's status as members of the new covenant (1 Corinthians 10:17; 11:23-26).

#### Love One Another

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples. If ye love one to another" (John 13:35). Affection for God's people defines our new identity in Christ Jesus (1 John 4:7). In the New Testament, love is tangible, active, and expressed through service. Every church member is responsible to fulfill the "one another" passages of the New Testament.

If we take responsibility to love one another, then we will actively seek to be discipled and disciple others. We won't be passive about the church's unity, but eager to maintain and promote a spirit of unity in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3). We will take prayer seriously (1 Thessalonians 5:16; Ephesians 6:18), bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2), show hospitality (Romans 12:13), and put others' interests ahead of our own (Philippians 2:4), and seek to develop meaningful relationships.

#### Evangelize For The Lord

The Great Commission is for every Christian. Jesus has commissioned every church member to make disciples (Matthew 28:18-20). As a people reconciled to God, we have a responsibility to announce the message of reconciliation to people separated from Christ, without God, and without hope in the world.

#### Sick And Shut-In

If you are being physically hindered from attending the church of which you are a member, you too still have a Christian responsibility to participate in the uplifting of the church. Be a prayer warrior for your church praying for the members, specifically those who voiced prayer concerns that are requested by fellow church members. Pray also for your church leadership, for God's guidance in their church leadership responsibilities as called of God.

Church membership provides you with a number of benefits, such as providing spiritual accountability, connecting you more intimately with the body of Christ, and opening up greater opportunities to serve and be served.

Living out a commitment to your church involves many responsibilities: exemplifying a godly lifestyle in the community, exercising your spiritual gifts in diligent service, contributing financially to the work of the church ministry, giving

and receiving correction with meekness and in love, and faithfully participating in congregational worship. Much is expected, but much is at stake. For only when every believer is faithful to this kind of commitment is the church able to live up to its calling as Christ's representative here on earth. Your membership matters.

Joining a church is not only about what you will gain. Church membership also brings with it several important responsibilities and expectations.

These are common ways in which church members contribute to the life of their church:

Attend Church Services Regularly  
Pray Consistently  
Submit Humbly  
Read and Study Scripture on a Daily Basis

Give Generously  
Serve Faithfully  
Pursue Holiness  
Preserve Unity

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

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## How Do We Begin to Stand?

By Dr. Tom Walker  
McDowell County



Ephesians 6:14 states, "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness."

The Apostle Paul has already emphasized the importance of standing as a Christian. Too many today find it easier to go with the flow rather than stand for what is right. We are living in a compromising world. In a marriage relationship, there is room for compromise between a husband and a wife. There must be give and take in the connection between a husband and a wife. Because there is a difference of opinion in some matters, for a husband and wife to be in concord, at times there must be some negotiation and concession between both parties involved.

The question is this, how can we stand? Paul begins to deal with the armor we have available that will enable us to not retreat in the spiritual battle in which we find ourselves. Whether we succeed in our spiritual struggle will depend upon if we take the spiritual weapons that are available to us.

I believe the Apostle Paul is saying to resist every attack that comes upon us as we battle spiritually. We are to act as a soldier in the middle of a conflict. From what we see in this passage, he gives preference to the attire that a Roman soldier would adorn as he went into battle.

It takes tremendous courage to be a soldier and resist evil. This reminds me of several related Scriptures in God's Word:

Joshua 1:7, "Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest."

Joshua 23:6, "Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left."

2 Chronicles 32:7, "Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: for there be more with us than with him."

Psalms 31:24, "Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord."

Courage, as a soldier in God's army, can be defined as: "the ability to do something you know is right or good, even though it is dangerous, frightening, or very difficult." It could also be defined as, "the ability to be brave when you are in great pain."

As we enter into the description of the Christian armor, we discover there are seven things mentioned and can be divided into three categories. There is the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, shoes of the Gospel, shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit, and prayer. Lord willing, we will deal with these one at a time. In this study we will consider the girdle of truth.

### The Description of the Warrior's Girdle

How can the girdle referred to in this verse be understood? A belt or sash could well describe what it is. The girdle functioned for the soldier as a belt that held the other parts of the armor together, so it might not hinder the soldier as he fought his battles. If you are going to fight a battle, you do not want anything that will hinder you from being successful in the conflict.

The girdle also held the sword. If we do not practice God's truth, we cannot use the Word of God properly and effectively.

### The Importance of the Girdle of Truth

The only way to defeat Satan is by the truth. That is why truth is so vitally important. It helps us to see how significant the truth is when we examined how Christ handled Satan in the wilderness. If you recall Jesus was driven by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan for forty days (Mark 1:12-13). If you consider Matthew 4:1-11, it will give you a more detailed description of that forty-day temptation. Jesus was tempted in three main areas: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. Christ drove back Satan and handled each temptation by quoting an Old Testament reference to disarm the Devil.

Satan is our main adversary or opponent in this spiritual battle we face each

day. Since the twists and distorts the Bible, it is difficult for him to handle the Word of God rightly divided. The truth is an effective weapon against Satan and his strongholds.

The only way to maintain your character is by truth. Either the Bible will keep you out of sin, or sin will keep you out of the Bible. Psalms 119:11 says, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." If we lose a good reputation and a testimony of good character, then what will we attempt to do for Christ will fall on deaf ears. The way truth will be exhibited through our lives is to absorb our lives with it. Jesus said in Jn.17:17, "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy Word is truth." When Christians lie it is obvious their lives are not being absorbed with the truth.

We cannot please God without having the right relationship to the truth. One of the ten commandments tells us that we are not to bear false witness against our neighbor. Here is the command found in Exodus 20:16, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour." When we follow the Word of God, the Lord is pleased with our obedience to His demands. Bearing false witness is a form of lying through misrepresentation. The only way your life can bring the proper glory to God and please Him is to be rightly related to truth.

### The Effects of Wearing the Girdle of Truth

We can face the enemy with confidence. When you spend enough time in the truth, you will realize how great, powerful, and dominating God is. We know we cannot face the world, the flesh, and the devil in our own power, but if we are walking in the truth and its power, victory is on the horizon for God's people. It is only through the working of God's truth in us that we are fully effective in God's work.

We can lie down at night and sleep well. A person who lives with integrity, thus having a clear conscience, can face the enemy fearlessly. All it takes to bring defeat into our lives is to live one lie in your life, and everything seems to come apart, thus defeat from the enemy will be our portion. Why live an overthrown life when you can live a spiritually, victorious life?

We can prove the truth is so. When we welcome God's truth to work in and through us, we exemplify in our walk the dependability of the Word of the Lord. Our lives should be lived with the goal of putting God's truth into shoe leather, in other words through our daily walk.

In 3rd John verse 4, John said, "I have no greater joy than to hear my children walk in truth."

1 John 3:19 says, "And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him."

Always know the truth, live according to the truth, and cherish the truth. It is then you will be successful in your spiritual warfare.

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

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## The Key to Having Real Confidence

By Joyce Meyer



Do you need more confidence in your life? In this world, we often get the message that we need more self-confidence, but God tells us in His Word that being confident in ourselves is actually a dangerous way to live. Instead, we need to be confident in Him. And as born-again Christians, we have everything in us—through Christ—that we need to do everything we need to do.

Philippians 3:3 (AMP) says, “For we [who are born-again...] are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory and take pride and exult in Christ Jesus and place no confidence [in what we have or who we are] in the flesh.”

This means our confidence shouldn't come from what we can do in our own effort or strength, who we know, a professional title, or what we look like. This is how the world operates, but God doesn't see us that way. God sees our hearts!

First Samuel 16:7 (AMP) says, “...For the Lord sees not as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” God is not impressed with our good works, nice clothes, the kind of car we drive, or anything else that has to do with our outward appearance. The only thing that impresses God is a good heart—a heart that sincerely loves Him, that desires to be obedient to Him and that loves people. When our heart is right with God, we have all the confidence we need to be and do everything He has created us to be and do.

Confidence is a belief that you can do a thing; it's faith in God that He has equipped you to do it. When you're confident in who you are in Christ, you can relax, and you won't be caught up or controlled by fear, worry, or anxiety. The key to living with this kind of confidence is understanding that apart from Jesus, you can do nothing of eternal value, but you can do all things through Christ who gives you strength! (See John 15:5; Philippians 4:13.)

I heard someone say once that a Christian with no confidence is like a jumbo jet sitting on the runway with no fuel. In other words, you have all the equipment but no fuel to go anywhere. That's a frustrating way to live!

We desperately need the wisdom of God if we're going to accomplish the things He's planned for us to do. The best thing we can do is be constantly dependent on Jesus. John 15:5 (AMP) says, “I am the Vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in Me and I in him bears much fruit, for [otherwise] apart from Me [that is, cut off from vital union with Me] you can do nothing.”

Here's a good illustration to demonstrate what this verse is talking about: A flower is attached to a vine that gives it life. As long as that flower stays connected to the vine, it is connected to its life source. But once it's detached, it can't continue to thrive.

In the same way, we are dependent on Christ to be our source of life. When we accept Him as our Savior and we're born again, He comes to live in us and He gives us life deep within our spirit. We need to really get this because as long as we're “hanging on the Vine,” looking to God as our vital necessity, then we will be confident we can do whatever we need to do in life.

Jeremiah 29:13 (AMP) says, “Then [with a deep longing] you will seek Me and require Me [as a vital necessity] and [you will] find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.” I love that! And I often pray, “God, I'm nothing without You. I need You. You have to help me or things just won't work right.”

God must be our top priority—our vital necessity—every day of our life! There's nothing more important than having a personal relationship with Him, spending time with Him in prayer, and studying His Word. If you will keep Him first, then everything else in your life will fall into place and you'll have the wisdom, grace, and strength to face every challenging situation that comes against you.

I want to encourage you to remember that being self-confident is foolish. It's rooted in pride and only leads to frustration and dissatisfaction. When you get up each day, before you get busy with your daily responsibilities, take a few minutes to pray.

Tell God, “I need You, Lord. I'm nothing without You, and I know that whatever I do today, it won't work out right if You don't help me. Forgive me of my sins and cleanse me of everything that's not right in me—every thought, word, and deed. Help me to treat people right today and to be a blessing everywhere that I go. And help me to never forget that I'm blessed because YOU are good, not because I'm good. Help me to keep You first in my life, Lord. Thank You for helping me. Amen!”

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

## How to be Filled with Understanding

By Marlene Houk  
Burke County



1 Samuel 25: 17 “Now therefore know and consider what thou wilt do...”

Abigail takes her place in divine scripture as Nabal's wife and later King David's wife. Her first husband, Nabal, named for his manipulative and mocking attitude, rejected everyone with degrading and mean comments. Abigail gained valuable experience in soothing angry reactions to Nabal's rude and ill-tempered ways of treating others. The Bible calls her a woman of good understanding. (1 Samuel 25:3)

In 1 Samuel chapter 25, David, the future king, had guarded Nabal's huge flock of sheep and goats from predators, the southern Bedouin tribes, and other dangers. Customs of the day dictated that the owner would reward the protectors at sheepshearing time for their services. When David sent his young men to humbly request anything that Nabal wanted to send, he treated the future king of Israel churlishly and with great disrespect. He rejected the reasonable request, and this enraged David who led 600 hungry soldiers. Abigail intervened and saved the lives of her husband and her people.

### Listening to Abigail's Wisdom:

Abigail knew how to prepare her pantry with emergency supplies. She hurried to meet them because David and his hungry army were rushing to kill Nabal and his men for refusing their simple request. David had requested anything they wanted to give, so she grabbed food from her pantry already prepared and directed the servants most efficiently to load the donkeys. But these food gifts simply introduced the greatest gift that Abigail gave David—helping him to defuse his anger.

Abigail's words to David align with the best methods used over 3,000 years later in our customer service protocols as described in Forbes magazine:

1. Apologize
2. Review
3. Fix
4. Document

Before Abigail calmed David's rage, she acquired the skill from her many encounters with other people whom Nabal had insulted. With 316 words, about 2 minutes to say in the English language, Abigail's honed ability to defuse David's anger worked. She apologized profusely, accepting blame personally. Similarly, customer service calls begin by saying, “I'm sorry that happened to you.” Abigail reviewed what happened in 1 Samuel 25:25, inviting David to disagree or add to the story. Her gifts of food and generous advice from her well of wisdom fixed the problem. By giving David what he had requested, she fulfilled his needs. (Compare 1 Samuel 25:8 with 1 Samuel 25:27.) By appealing to God's greater plan for his life, she helped him to release the grip of emotions and return to his thinking brain. Finally, she documented and sealed her intervention by asking him to remember her—a powerful reminder that relationships rule circumstances.

Remember the wisdom and understanding you've gained from God in past troubles. Abigail lived with Nabal's narcissistic and selfish ways. When Nabal angered yet another person, David, she knew how to intervene. What God leads you through gives understanding for your current situation, and, often, the answer to calm others rests in our prior experiences.

Locate the four steps listed above on the shelves of understanding in your pantry of wisdom. Like Abigail, apply the ways that God taught you in the past to your current situation. Then, you can open the sacks of God's bountiful plan for your life and enjoy His guidance while helping others.

The evidence of knowing something is to teach the steps to others. We see Abigail knew how to dispel her own anger from her words to David. She understood that she needed to:

1. Calm herself
2. Articulate her rejection rather than seething inside
3. Behold her current situation from the future
4. Learn that God fulfills His plan for her regardless of others' criticism.
5. Expect God to provide others to help her see truth as she was doing for David

How do we prepare for the pit of being blindsided by evil? Emotions explode at our enemy's unmitigated gall to attack. Like a chain reaction, their Nabal-like evil extends in all directions. Logic leaves. Unexpected and velvet-covered barbs sting our souls, and we hesitate in our service to the Lord. We drown in our emotions. Counselors help us cope with reactions after rejection. But Abigail offers a framework for preparing our emotions before harsh treatment. Her wise words reveal a transforming template we can use. As she defuses David's anger, she opens a door of truth for us. Start now to develop a plan to defuse your emotional reactions and return your brain to God-focused thinking. Practice the five viewpoints above. Like Abigail, God can use your new understanding to defuse someone's anger at being blindsided by the Nabals of this world.

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

**“The lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.” Psalms 41:3**



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# Crossword

Crossword 279

**ACROSS**

- 1 the One who \_\_\_ enthroned on high (Ps 113:5)
- 5 If the \_\_\_ wishes to redeem the animal, he must add (Lev 27:13)
- 10 husband of Jezebel (1King 19:1)
- 14 Terah became the father of \_\_\_, Nahor and Haran (Gen 11:27)
- 16 "We have \_\_\_ only five loaves of bread and two fish" (Matt 14:17)
- 17 before me was a \_\_\_ horse! Its rider was named Death (Rev 6:8)
- 18 They hatch cockatrice' eggs, and \_\_\_ the spider's web (Isaiah 59:5)
- 19 Two men \_\_\_ money to a certain moneylender (Luke 7:41)
- 20 Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth \_\_\_ (Josh 7:2)
- 21 But the Pharisees and \_\_\_ in the law rejected God's purpose (Luke 7:30)
- 23 together with her royal \_\_\_ and her father (Dan 11:6)
- 25 Peter denied it, at that moment a rooster began to \_\_\_ (John 18:27)
- 27 in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the \_\_\_ angels (1 Tim 5:21)
- 28 Persia, Ethiopia, and \_\_\_ with them (Ezek 38:5)
- 31 Then he said unto him, Come \_\_\_ with me, and eat bread (1 King 13:15)
- 34 the inscription that was written: MENE, \_\_\_, TEKEL, PARSIN (Dan 5:25)
- 35 abbr. for the 20th book of the O.T
- 37 branches from poplar, almond and \_\_\_ trees and made (Gen 30:37)
- 41 They were seared by the \_\_\_ heat and they cursed the name (Rev 16:9)
- 43 He \_\_\_ the temple area and began driving out (Luke 19:45)
- 45 The \_\_\_ the builders rejected has become the capstone (Matt 21:42)
- 46 went to war against \_\_\_ king of Sodom, Birsha king of Gomorrah (Gen 14:2)
- 48 I cast my \_\_\_ against them (Acts 26:10)
- 49 shall have in the skin of his flesh a rising, a \_\_\_, or bright spot (Lev 13:2) KJV
- 51 Esther's \_\_\_ and her chamberlains came and told it her (Esth 4:4)
- 53 Flee, save your lives, and be like the \_\_\_ in the wilderness. (Jer 48:6) KJV
- 56 I have not been drinking wine or \_\_\_; I was pouring out my soul (1 Sam 1:15)
- 59 Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or \_\_\_ joking (Eph 5:4)
- 60 therefore now make ye \_\_\_ with us (1,6) (Josh 9:11) KJV

- 64 and it vomited Jonah \_\_\_ dry land (Jonah 2:10)
- 65 returned to their place and ran at flood \_\_\_ as before (Josh 4:18)
- 68 I will measure into their \_\_\_ the full payment (Isa 65:7)
- 69 things full of marrow, of wines on the \_\_\_ well refined (Isa 25:6) KJV
- 70 does man gain from all his labor at which he \_\_\_ under the sun? (Eccl 1:3)
- 71 They cooked it in \_\_\_ or made it into cakes (1,3) (Num 11:8)
- 72 from Jerusalem, and from the coast of \_\_\_ and Sidon (Luke 6:17)
- 73 with tumors, festering \_\_\_ and the itch (Deut 28:27)
- 74 Then the beasts go into \_\_\_, and remain (Job 37:8)

**DOWN**

- 1 hewed stones, \_\_\_ with saws, within and without (1 King 7:9)
- 2 the gazelle, the roe deer, the wild goat, the \_\_\_ (Deut 14:5)
- 3 You hypocrites, why are you trying to \_\_\_ me? (Matt 22:18)
- 4 You are my God; \_\_\_ your servant who trusts in you (Ps 86:2)
- 6 \_\_\_ loveth instruction loveth knowledge (Prov 12:1) KJV
- 7 A \_\_\_ command I give you: Love one another (John 13:34)
- 8 Sir, come down \_\_\_ my child die (John 4:49) KJV
- 9 To \_\_\_ them that were under the law (Gal 4:5)
- 10 their mighty ones are beaten down, and are fled \_\_\_ (Jer 46:5) KJV
- 11 Isn't he the man who raised \_\_\_ in Jerusalem (Acts 9:21)
- 12 be \_\_\_ and always keep on praying for all the saints (Eph 6:18)
- 13 As she wept, she \_\_\_ over to look into the tomb (John 20:11-12)
- 15 Do not withhold your \_\_\_ from me, O LORD (Ps 40:11)
- 22 they will become snares and \_\_\_ for you (Josh 23:13)
- 24 I \_\_\_ but my heart was awake (Song 5:2)
- 26 to see if there are any \_\_\_ understand, any who seek God (Ps 14:2)
- 28 I have neither \_\_\_ on usury, nor men have lent to me (Jer 15:10)
- 29 the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go \_\_\_ Damascus (Acts 22:10)
- 30 for I have \_\_\_ a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb (Judges 16:17)
- 32 and gave them power \_\_\_ unclean spirits (Mark 6:7)
- 33 Darius the \_\_\_ took over the kingdom, at the age of sixtytwo (Dan 5:31)
- 34 But there went up a \_\_\_ from the earth, and watered (Gen 2:6)

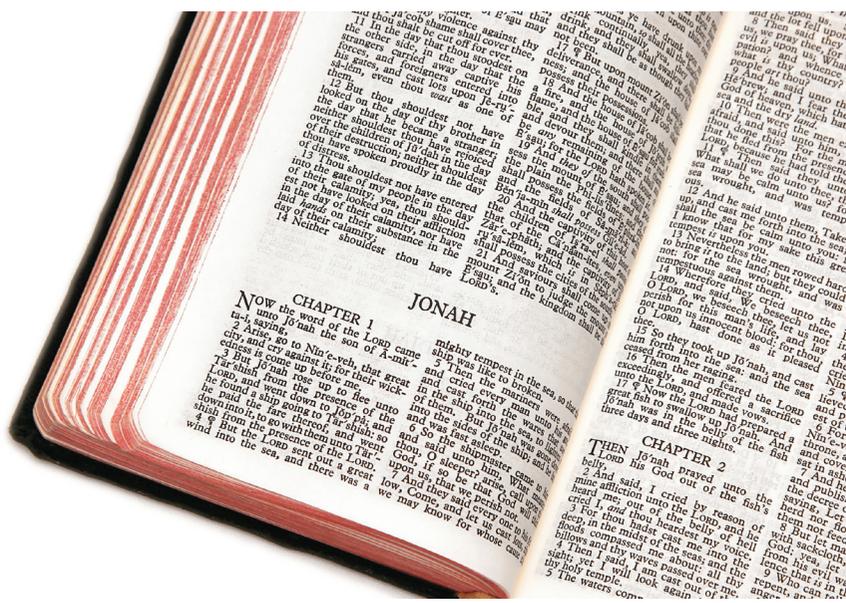
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- 36 Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur and \_\_\_ the five kings of Midian (Num 31:8)
- 38 one of the tribes of Israel
- 39 Thou shalt break them with \_\_\_ of iron (1,3) (Ps 2:9) KJV
- 40 John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their \_\_\_. (Mark 1:19)
- 42 Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have \_\_\_ (Matt 8:20)
- 44 A base and \_\_\_ brood, they were driven out of the land (Job 30:8)
- 47 as their lives \_\_\_ away in their mothers' arms (Lam 2:12)
- 50 and wore golden sashes around their \_\_\_ (Rev 15:6-7)
- 52 Their feet \_\_\_ swift to shed blood (Romans 3:15)
- 53 So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as \_\_\_ in my mouth (Ezek 3:3)
- 54 He replied, "Out of the \_\_\_, something to eat; out of the strong (Judg 14:14)
- 55 Early the next morning they \_\_\_ and worshiped before the LORD (1 Sam 1:19)
- 57 soar like the \_\_\_ and make

- your nest among the stars (Obad 1:4)
- 58 As for men, God \_\_\_ them so that they may see that they (Eccl 3:18)
- 59 brought the ass, and the \_\_\_, and put on them (Matt 21:7) KJV
- 61 Nevertheless \_\_\_ saw them, and told Absalom (1,3) (2 Sam 17:18) KJV
- 62 They \_\_\_ at me and say, "Aha! Aha! (Ps 35:21)
- 63 The Holy Spirit will come \_\_\_ you (Luke 1:35)
- 66 Such knowledge is \_\_\_ wonderful for me (Ps 139:6)
- 67 over the fowl of the \_\_\_, and over the cattle (Gen 1:26)

Solution on page 14



## A Challenge for Fathers

By Kurt Bomar  
Avery County

Nobody wants to think about dying. That's why so many people don't make a will. But what do you want to leave for your loved ones when the inevitable happens?

No, I'm not talking about estate planning, although we have a responsibility to take care of our family:

1 Timothy 5:8 KJV 8 *"But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."*

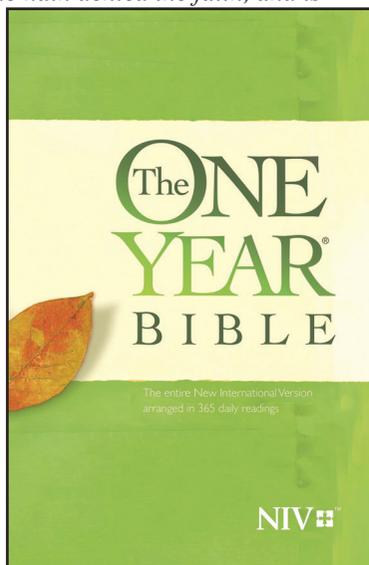
We also need to provide for them spiritually. Let me give you fathers one suggestion. Get yourself a "One Year Bible". That particular version has a program to help you read through the Bible with a section of the OT, NT, Psalms, and Proverbs for every day. When you read it through for a year, you will have read the whole Bible! This has been a great discipline for me but it has also turned into an opportunity to leave a legacy.

I bought one of these Bibles and as I read it every day, I would underline a little section of scripture and leave a note for my oldest child. My thinking was that if I died unexpectedly, she would have 365 notes of love and encouragement even though I was gone. One for every day of the year. When I finished it, I realized that I needed to do the same for my next child, and the next ... and so on. Five years later I finished that project and as each turned 18 I presented them with the Bible. I know it means a lot to them because I know how much I would treasure such a gift from my father.

Dads, leave this priceless gift to your children, wife, and even grandchildren! Selah (think about it)

Kurt Bomar is pastor of Walnut Grove Church.

*Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth. 3 John 1:2*



## Humor

By Buddy Freeman  
Madison County



Being a new pastor to an aging congregation, I told them I would be serving them prune juice in Holy Communion. When asked why I would dare entertain such a thought, I said, "If the Holy Spirit won't move you...the prune juice will!"

My pastor friend put sanitary hot air hand dryers in the restrooms at church. After two weeks, he had them taken out. I asked him why and he confessed that they worked fine, but when he went in there he saw a sign that read, "For a sample of this week's sermon, push the button."

People who cough incessantly never seem to go to a doctor-they go to banquets, concerts, and church.

Sign in front of a garden center. "It's Spring! We got so excited that we wet our plants."

Alice was on her first cruise, and once she lost sight of land, she became increasingly nervous. Upon seeing the captain, she rushed over to him and asked, "Captain, do ships this size sink very often?" "No ma'am," the Captain answered, "never more than once."

A warning of an earthquake in California induced the parents to send their young son to stay with an aunt and uncle in another state. A few days later, the couple found a message on their telephone answering device, "We are returning your son. Please send the earthquake instead."

A young boy suddenly whistled during the worship. As soon as the service was over, his mother scolded him and asked, "Whatever made you do such a thing; you really embarrassed me." The little boy said, "Momma, I have been praying that God would show me how to whistle, and He did right there in church." (It would be hard to punish him for that.)

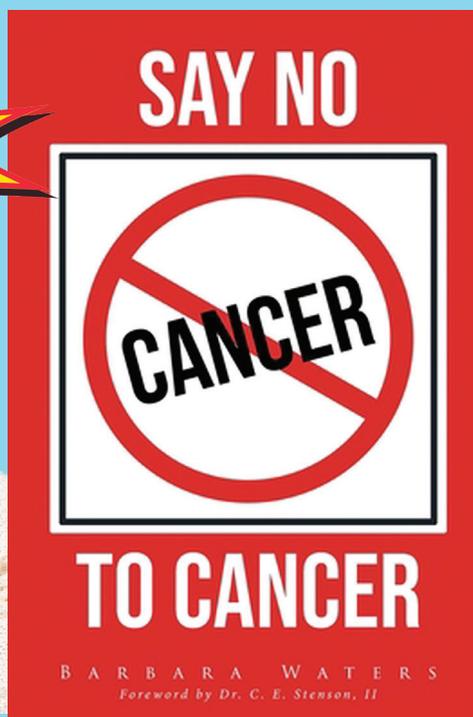
"People ask when they learned that Jesus had fed the 5,000, whether the two fish were bass or catfish and what bait did He use."

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

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