



# BLUE RIDGE CHRISTIAN NEWS



## Notes From the Shire

### Our Nation, One God Indivisible

By Nancy Malik  
Avery County



July is a month of memories of the most unique country in the world that was based on the Word of God. Brave men and women gave their lives in countless battles to declare independence from England. In 1776, our Declaration of Independence was a fire that blew across the world, for people of other nations, to come and live freely.

There are dark spots in this free country. People groups of Native Americans were put on poor reservations. The slave population that was set free after the Civil War had hard times living with that freedom due to people in the north and south continuing to keep them “under control.”

Many wars have come and gone for this great land, whose emblem is the Bald Eagle. A proud bird that represents freedom in the way they live. To watch them soar through the sky, raise and feed their babies, and know that they are the pride of this nation has always given America hope. But many in America and the world are losing their hope. Work, family issues, lack of money, and anger are big items in today’s world.

We watch our young grow and learn. After Covid, this world has been totally changed and so has our way of life. Fear has taken over and many of our youth cannot find the way back. Churches are closing weekly, numbers are the lowest recorded and people seem to have lost their way. End time prophetic books of the Bible discuss this time and show exactly how it will be. Families against each other, Christians hurting other Christians, food shortages, gas prices climbing, murders every day, and more violent acts. Good will be bad, bad will be good and on and on it goes.

But take heart! Jesus gave us all of this history today so we would be prepared for the hard times coming that will not be easy. Keep your eyes and heart on Him. He is the way, the truth, and the life! He loves His body, that is all the believers who have ever lived. Reach out to each other and help those who need it to the best of your ability. Need help? Call a trusted family member or friend for prayer. Don’t have anyone here? Let God lead you to a believing church that will

include you in its body.

We are in a troubled time, but also the most exciting of times! For God so loves the whole world, that He gave His Only Son (Jesus) that whosoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life! And He is returning soon!

A relationship of trust, love, and obedience to Him after asking forgiveness of wrongs done in your life will set you free! The Holy Spirit will guide you. Need someone to talk to? Ask Jesus to guide you to a person of peace! A pastor, Christian, or church that can help you on your path to freedom. Pray for direction from Him and let Him take you on a journey you never thought possible! Life!

I live in Avery County and have been active in visiting churches and praying heartedly for Revival! Please pray with me.

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





## 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

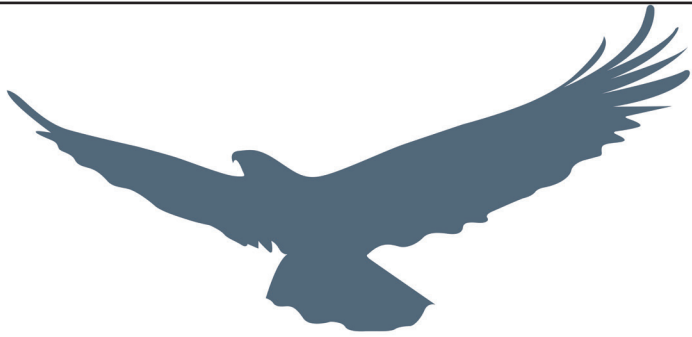
Our soul, the essence of our being, was created by God to exist forever. That forever is spent in one of two places: eternally present and in union with God because of His forgiveness and salvation or eternally separated from God because of sin and unbelief. At the moment that our physical body dies,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



  
**BLUE RIDGE CHRISTIAN NEWS**

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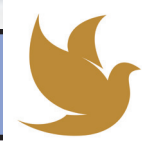
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“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace: that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation: that saith unto Zion. Thy God reigneth!”

Isaiah 52:7 KJV



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# Church Directory



## Bear Creek Baptist Church

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

### Reverend Bruce Cannon

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

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

## Landis Orthodox Presbyterian Church

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

### Elder Mike Cloy

opcmikecloy@gmail.com

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

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

## Berry Chapel Baptist Church

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

### Pastor - Steve Williams

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

Where Everybody is Somebody  
And Jesus Christ is Lord!

## The Rock Church

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

### Pastor - Micah Narlock

Sunday Morning - 10 AM  
Sunday Night - 6:30 PM  
Tuesday Night - 7 PM

Come Join Us  
Tent Revival 2020

## 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-  
tra, Adult Bible Study, Youth  
Discipleship, Preschool &  
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## Mount Carmel Baptist Church

195 Gouges Creek Rd.  
Spruce Pine NC 28777

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www.mcfamilyforchrist.org

Sunday School - 10am  
Sunday Worship - 11am and 6pm  
Mid-week Service - Wednesdays  
at 6:30pm

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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

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

## Pine Branch Baptist Church

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

### Reverend Bobby Joe Greene

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

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## Spruce Pine United Methodist Church

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

### Pastor Richard Schilling

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

The mission of Spruce Pine United  
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# Forgiving How To

By Joe Sturz  
Shenandoah, Virginia

The Lord Commands Christians to forgive others or He will not forgive us for our offenses to Him in breaking His laws (Mat. 6:14-15). Ask the Lord to bring to your mind any unforgiveness you hold toward anyone and then take steps to resolve this (Romans 7:23-25; Ephesians 4:22-27). Here are some practical ways to resolve unforgiveness:

- do not let the sun go down on your anger but seek reconciliation and peace right away so that resentment and bitterness do not settle in you (Ephesians 4:22-27),
- pray for the salvation and/or blessing of those that have mistreated you and seek to do good to those that have offended you (Matthew 5:43-44),
- brush away the remembrances of offenses that you have forgiven, whenever they come to mind (II Corinthians 10:3-5), do not dwell on them or you will become angry all over again and the devil gets a foothold (Ephesians 4:26-27).

So let us keep forgiving others for the personal pain and humiliation they cause us no matter how many times they offend and/or mistreat us as the Lord commands us (Matthew 18:21-35) and let the Lord deal with their wickedness (Romans 12:17-21). Let us dwell on the good, true, lovely, and pure thoughts in the power of the Holy Spirit (Zechariah 4:6; II Corinthians 10:5; Romans 8:5-11; 12:2; Philippians 4:8). Let us grow in God's grace as we suffer the trials and tribulations that come to us (Romans 5:1- 5) as we follow the plan of God for our lives (Psalm 37:23-24; Ephesians 2:8-10).

Brother Joe "forgiving and forgetting" Sturz June 14, 2022:

I became a Christian when I repented of my sins (I John 1:9) and trusted personally in Jesus Christ's suffering and dying on the cross in my place to take God's punishment for my sin and rising from the dead to secure a place in heaven for me (I Cor. 15:1-4). And now I follow Him (John 8:31-32). Do you?

A true believer accepts and acts on the Good News of the Gospel, which is: that Jesus Christ the innocent one, suffered and died on the cross to satisfy the Holy God's just punishment for the sins of His people ( John 10:14-18; I Peter 1:18-23). With His justice satisfied by punishing His Son instead of sinners He could justly grant sinners mercy and forgiveness and so secure a heavenly inheritance for those that believe and follow Him (I Cor. 15:1-4; Ephesians 1:10-14).

When you repent of your sin, you receive His forgiveness (I John 1:9). Then you must trust in Christ alone for salvation (Romans 10:9-10) and live for Him out of gratitude for saving you (Acts 1:8; Philippians 3:13-14).

Hear or read the Bible daily (Acts 17:11). Be baptized and attend a local Bible-believing church (Acts 2:38-41, 47). While attending church you will be equipped to share your faith with others and apply God's Law word in every area of your life (Acts 2:46-47; Ephesians 4:12-16). Thereby becoming one of Christ's kingdom builders (Mat. 6:30-34).

If you have already received Christ but are not living for Him as you should then now is the time to truly repent of your sin of backsliding, rededicate your life to Him, change your ways and become active in a local church again (Hebrews 10:25).

I am a Christian having no position of power but I do have dominion under God (Psalm 8:4-9) Who is the Creator and owner of all. As an heir of God and a joint-heir with Jesus Christ (Romans 8:16-17) I possess all things in Christ (II Cor. 6:10). And to the extent, I obey and speak His comprehensive Law Word (Ps.119:96). I speak with His authority in every area of creation.

Look for my daily morning Bible messages on Facebook seeking to be Biblically comprehensive, short, and simple, and/ or receive them by email by request at [joe@sturzchristiancounseling.com](mailto:joe@sturzchristiancounseling.com)

Joe Sturz, a Christian counselor at Sturz Christian Counseling Service now living in Page County, [www.sturzchristiancounseling.com](http://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.



# Something to Think About

Count The Stars  
By Dennis Love  
McDowell County



Listen to what the Bible says in Psalm 147:4-5. *“He counts the stars and calls them all by name. How great is our Lord! His power is absolute! (New Living Translation) The King James reads this way; “He telleth the number of the stars; He calleth them all by their names. Great is our Lord, and of great power: His understanding is infinite.”* Both translations make it clear that God knows the number of the stars in the Heavens, and that He has even given them all a name. This is one reason our God is so great, powerful, and all-knowing.

Do you have any idea how many stars are sparkling away out there in space? The next time you are restless and can’t sleep, don’t waste your time counting sleep. Simply, get out of your bed, step out into your backyard, and start counting the stars. On a clear, dark, starry night, you can see and count about three thousand stars with the naked eye. However, this is just in your little backyard and neighborhood. Our solar system is in the Milky Way galaxy. Astronomers estimate that our galaxy contains more than four hundred billion stars. Those same astronomers speculate that there could be more than one hundred BILLION galaxies out there, and some of those galaxies could contain as many as a trillion stars!

Now folks, don’t even try to take your smartphone and calculate the number of stars in the Heavens. Your smartphone is not even that smart, and you might fry its brain trying. But the Bible tells us that there is One who doesn’t even need a smartphone to calculate the number of stars in the Heavens. Matter-of-fact, He doesn’t need to estimate or even speculate on the number of stars in the sky. Psalm 147:4 tells us that Almighty God knows the precise number of stars in the sky because He is One who placed them in the Heavens. In fact, the Bible says that God not only knows the number of all the stars in the sky, but He has also given each one of them an individual name. Is that not awesome or what! That’s what you call great, powerful, absolute, and infinite. Praise the Lord! He is a mighty God!

Now if that doesn’t bless your socks off, this will. The very same God who knows the number of the stars in the sky, and the very same God who gave each one a name, and knows their names, KNOWS US BY NAME TOO!

So, take a few minutes on the next clear, dark, starry night, and take a sneak peek at just a very small number of the stars in the sky. Then, remember that God knows the number of them all and that He knows each one by name. Then, be strengthened and encouraged in your spirit knowing that He knows you too by name, that He has placed you on this earth at this particular time, and that your life is safe and secure in His hands. Now go back to bed and fall fast asleep!

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](mailto:dlovebrba@yahoo.com)

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Humor

By Buddy Freeman  
Madison County



An elderly husband and wife spoke to a TV reporter about their 75 years of marriage. The wife said, “ We never argue. What’s the use? We both are hard of hearing.”

A Sunday School Teacher asked one of the little boys, “ do you know what a Quaker is?” He replied, “I think so. They don’t fuss, fight or argue. My daddy is a Quaker but my momma is not.”

Seen on a Methodist Sign: “We are not Dairy Queen, but our Sundays are great.”

“ If you are a mother with small children with a lot of tension and you get a headache, do what it says on a bottle of aspirin “take two aspirin” and “keep away from children.”

One Sunday in church a little boy took off his tie and placed it in the offering plate. His mother asked, “Why did you put your tie in the offering plate?” The little boy said, “The preacher told us to give our ties and offerings.”

Little Tim was filling in a hole when his neighbor looked over the fence. The man asked him, “what are you doing?” The little boy said with tears running down his face, “My goldfish died and I am just finishing burying it.” The man asked, “why did you dig such a big hole for a little goldfish?” The boy said, “Be- cause it is inside the cat.”

A wealthy woman married a man with no resources. Over the years, she begins to wonder if her husband married her for her money. One day, she asked him, “Honey, would you have married me even if my father didn’t leave me all that money?” “Of course, dear,” he replied, “I wouldn’t have cared who left you the money.”

One woman asked another woman, “aren’t you wearing your wedding ring on the wrong hand?” The other woman replied, “Yes, I married the wrong man.”

Question: “How is marriage like a hot bath?” Answer: “Once you get used to it, it’s not that hot.”

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



**WE ARE  
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A Moment in Time

By Timothy W. Tron  
Burke County



C.S. Lewis wrote about the holy spirit, "It is quite right that you should feel that "something terrific" has happened to you (It has) and be "all glowy." Accept these sensations with thankfulness as birthday cards from God, but remember that they are only greetings, not the real gift. I mean, it is not the sensations that are the real thing. The real thing is the gift of the Holy Spirit which can't usually be—perhaps not ever—experienced as a sensation or emotion. The sensations are merely the response of your nervous system. Don't depend on them. Otherwise, when they go and you are once more emotionally flat (as you certainly will be quite soon), you might think that the real thing had gone too. But it won't. It will be there when you can't feel it. May even be most operative when you can feel it least."

But to those that receive it, "*And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirty-fold, some sixty, and some an hundred. And he said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick? For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad.*"

If we were to interpret the holy spirit as a sensation, then it would quickly dissipate. Jesus even explained the action like this, "*And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given. For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.*" While some say this is speaking of the gospel's truth, it can easily be seen how it also applies to the receiving of the holy spirit and, with it, the truth. For one cannot have one without the other.

Considering these scriptures and words from Lewis, thoughts, or rather, questions, began to form in my mind. How to encapsulate a testimony in so few words that it could be conveyed to a stranger passing on a twisty, root-covered mountain trail? From that momentary interaction, the planting of a tiny seed begins. How then can something more than a sensation, a feeling, be transferred in that split second of eternity? Those are the questions that arose.

The struggle with these thoughts was fully born the other night when my wife and I went to our favorite local ice cream shop for a treat. As we sat on our favorite bench across from said eatery, watching humanity pass before us, a young man and his daughter walked by. The father was dressed in familiar bib overalls, something that is second nature to my heart in clothing. A pair of worn but serviceable bibs with a t-shirt underneath is probably as close to heaven's robes that I will know on this side of glory. That was the first thing that caught my attention. The other was his intentional stare. It seemed that he noticed something about me that also drew him in. As he slowed to get a better look, our eyes locked, and it was then I realized I knew him from somewhere. My mind raced through the fog of mental cobwebs trying to place him. It was as if we were in a duel, seeking the past. Finally, the young father stopped walking. He had proceeded so far past our point of rest that he had to turn his head to continue staring. Then, as if neither one of us could not take the not knowing anymore, he smiled and said, "Don't I know you from somewhere?" The little girl with him turned around and came back toward us, wondering who her daddy had found in a town so far away from home that he knew.

"Sharpe's Store," I replied in question, "at the music?"  
He grinned a little bigger and turned to face us. "That's right. It's been a couple of Sundays since then."  
"I'll say."  
"Are you still playing music," he questioned, still trying to put the pieces back together.  
"Some, in fact, they have a jam up here on Saturday mornings that I go to sometimes."

My mind was trying to recover names or faces that he might know, but it was as if my head's fuel tank had run dry, and nothing would come. He seemed to be doing the same when he brought up a couple of names or instruments that they played. But nothing seemed to trigger the right neurons, and so we left it at that and started talking about what brought him to town. He was obviously there on vacation, so we went over the usual suspects of destinations. He was leaving to go back to Bonlee the next day. By this time, my mind was frantically trying to pause time. As I looked upon him, it was apparent that he hadn't physically changed much at all. He was still slim and clean-shaven. His children, whom I didn't know he had any, were now old enough to enjoy walking with their daddy down the main street in Blowing Rock. While I was still trying to drink it all in, he said, as if to reinforce my look of doubt, "The last time I saw you, you said you were starting to write a book."

That last statement sent my head reeling into dates so long ago that it seemed multiple rivers had flowed beneath my proverbial bridge. It was over twelve years ago that something like that might have been uttered from my lips.  
So much had transpired. It was almost beyond comprehension to put into words how much had changed. In other words, it was impossible to tell him that he was looking at the new me. What he didn't know, nor do most people in my life, was that the writing of that book changed my perspective on life and my walk with God. It placed upon my heart an urgency, an impetus of motivation born from those ancient ancestors that gave their lives to share the Gospels.  
Seven years ago, it had become too much. There was a frustration level in my

soul that couldn't be quenched by serving God just part-time. It was time to take the step off the proverbial cliff and devote all of me to Him. It was an immersion that would take my family and me hundreds of miles away from the only home my children had ever known – our Chatham county farm. My instincts were drawn to the mountains, both physically and spiritually – to a higher calling, if you will. The first year was one that I felt would break us, both financially and emotionally. It was our Israelite forty years in the desert phase. We learned to do without and to suffer. But we learned something much greater through all of those trials – that we couldn't do it alone. We needed God even more than ever before. But how could I convey this to Matthew, a person who had almost entirely been lost in my memory?



But there, in those precious few seconds, there wasn't enough time to tell the whole of the story. There weren't enough seconds to convey what God had done in not only my life but in the life of those around me. Suddenly, as if the breath of life were about to be removed from my chest, an urgency came upon me. If it weren't for this chance encounter, this momentary pause in time, we would have never seen one another again. There was an instant of longing to want to find a way to spend time with him and his family, but he said they would be leaving on the morrow. There was no way to reach out to him technically because, like so many where he came from, they have spurned those so-called advances, and for many good reasons. It was a finality of a missed opportunity that stung the most. There was so much to show him and his family they would have missed.  
But then, if we are true to our faith, isn't this a feeling that should possess us every day?

The feeling that we sometimes only have a moment in passing a person on the trail, walking past someone on the street, or even meeting someone only briefly in our daily life, to reach out to them to share with them the gospel of Jesus Christ. The sense that time would slip by before we could tell them how their salvation depends on the way, the truth, and the light of Christ descended on my heart mightily. This spirit of urgency began to drive me to seek wisdom and direction from the Word. And with it, a determination to seek out those who are lost, not by their own accord but through lack of hearing.  
It was in this mindset of fleeting chance encounters that lingered when the sunrise beckoned, and it was time to go to the Bible Study on Tuesday morning. Dan, our teacher for the day, walked us through first Timothy, chapter four. He was enlightening as always, and for that, we were grateful. But the moment which is always desired, but rarely seen, happened after the meeting had concluded. My friend Richard and I had planned to go hiking and were about to head out after all the bustling of departures had ended. But in my heart, that lingering pause, that feeling that we should rush out just yet lest we miss something, seemed to loom over my earnestness to depart.

The chance encounter occurred when one of the elderly men, named Jim, came over to my table and began to share with me the enjoyment of reading that book Matthew had alluded to the night before, "Bruecke to Heaven." He started to ask questions, and as is usual, they brought back the flood of memories, emotions, and spiritual awakening that had transpired through its writing. As we talked, another friend of mine, Richard, joined us. It was just us three in the restaurant's dining area at that point.  
Jim began to open up about his own personal walk and how that very morning, his dear wife had shared with him her point in life when she came to Christ. She told him that he needed to know it because it was something often mentioned at funerals, how the believer came to know Jesus. Tears began to well up in his eyes as we could feel our own heartstrings being pulled.  
As he continued to share, his own emotions began to flow down his cheeks. He then said he wasn't sure if he had ever truly received Christ into his life. We both could hear the despair in his voice. Then, without warning, he continued. The tears of sorrow flowed from his eyes like rivers of relief as my friend, and I felt that moment open, like the clouds after the rainstorm parting and the sun breaking through.  
"Do you want to come to Christ right now," Richard asked.  
"Yes."  
"Then let's do this," and Richard began to pray over Jim, asking God to come into his life and give him the gift of eternal life through the salvation of his Son, Jesus Christ. When Richard was finished praying, he then, with head still bowed, said, "Jim," as if to say, "take it away, you know what to do."

With head bowed and heart in deep contrition, I was blessed beyond measure to hear our friend Jim pray to God, seeking his forgiveness, thanking him for his Son, and asking him to fully come into his life, once and for all. He battled through his flood of emotions so much that we began to embrace him through his change. The Holy Spirit began to flow, and that shaft of sunlight seemed to illuminate that little room until all three of our hearts would almost burst with joy. For a moment, time stood still, and the love of Jesus Christ filled us to overflowing. Grace for grace became our measure.  
As I sit here this morning, the day after, still reflecting on all that transpired in the past couple of days, it is with profound, heartfelt sincerity that I want to share

continued on page 13



## Pistol Packing Shrimp

By Christy Lowman  
Burke County



The Lord cares so much for all of His creations that He gives them unique ways to protect themselves from enemies. He has also done the same thing for us. He has equipped us with the Bible which is a guide on how to conquer all things we might face in life. In the Bible, we are also told how to equip six weapons of warfare to protect us from the devil and his schemes. This is called the Armor of God. There is the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the spirit, and shoes filled with the Gospel of peace. The Bible is a wonderful tool to help us make it through each day. There are Bible verses to repeat for protection when you are scared or worried. There are also Bible verses for everything you might encounter in your life. They are comforting and give us the strength to make it through trying times. The Bible also tells us how to have a closer relationship with God.

One of the coolest animals God created is called a Pistol Shrimp or Snapping Shrimp. It is also known as "The Fastest Gun in the Sea." This is the coolest shrimp in the ocean, in my opinion. So cool, that I am writing a comic book about it!

The pistol shrimp has one humungous monster claw and one regular-sized claw. The large claw grows up to half of the shrimp's body! This claw is where it repeatedly shoots powerful deadly bubbles. These bubbles are so powerful they will kill the shrimp's predators and will make nearby creatures unconscious from their sound!

The bubbles are louder than a speeding bullet. Gunshots from a gun range between 140-175 decibels. The shrimp's bubble bullet has been measured up to 218 decibels. This is also louder than the sound of a fighter jet leaving the runway! Even though the sound of the bubble popping only lasts a fraction of a second, it is so loud that you can hear its snapping, popping sound when your head is underwater! How cool is that?

Back in WWII the pistol shrimp almost interfered with the US Navy's sonar and their ability to track enemy ships. The sonar was picking up the shrimp's bubble's busting which was making a crackling pop sound. The Navy soon realized it was the pistol shrimp that was messing up their sonar and took the necessary precautions to correct it.

Not only are the bubble bullets loud, but when they pop they are four times hotter than a volcano's lava, reaching 8000 degrees Fahrenheit. That is almost as hot as the surface of the sun!

Would you like to know how the shrimp's claw can make its own bubble bullets? There is a small crook in the shrimp's massive claw that fills up with water when it opens. The shrimp then shuts the claw with great force. A claw piece that acts as a plunger on the top claw then shoots the saltwater out of the claw as fast as a speeding car on the interstate! Is that not the neatest thing ever?

Not only does the shrimp use its pistol claw for protection for itself, but he also uses it to do good for others! The sound that his bursting bubbles produce also helps other sea creatures navigate the area. He also uses his pistol claw as a jackhammer to make a burrow for him and his goby fish friend to live in. The pistol shrimp and the goby fish have a symbolic relationship which means they work together to assure each other's survival. The shrimp lets the gobies live with him in the burrow he carved out, under his protection. In return, the goby helps look out for predators and other dangers while the shrimp digs their home and finds them food to eat.

The pistol shrimp is only a few inches long but with its massive claw, it can defend itself and its home from larger predators. But if by chance a predator grabs his pistol claw he will drop it to get away. If this happens the shrimp's other small claw will immediately start the growing process to become the new pistol claw! The empty spot, where the original pistol claw was will also start to grow but will now become the smaller claw. Isn't it cool how God made sure the pistol shrimp would not be without his pistol claw for protection?

Dear Lord, even though we long for our heavenly home, I praise you so much for loving us and all of your creatures enough to give us ways to protect ourselves and others in this crazy world. Thank you for your unconditional love, even when we turn our backs on You. You are only one step away from us, ready to help us with open arms. Help us learn to use the tools and armor you have given us in the Bible. In Jesus's name, I pray, Amen.

"No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us." Romans 8:37

"Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and he will give you everything you need." Luke 12:31

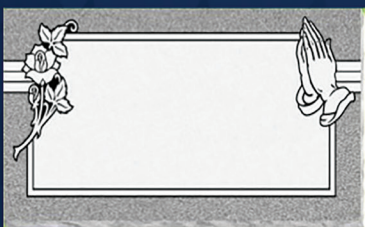
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Christy Lowman is a Christian author and illustrator that lives in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains with her husband and two children. She enjoys writing and illustrating books for all ages. Some of her short stories are published with Guideposts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

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A House Divided

By Michael Purcell  
Burke County

At the end of the Republican State Convention in 1885, President Abraham Lincoln gave a speech to encourage the party to fight for a free America. The famous words that have been referenced and used countless times since their original utterance was given as President Lincoln's primary argument for fighting against the evil of slavery in our nation. "A house divided against itself cannot stand." These words were clear and precise in carrying President Lincoln's purpose. He knew that he couldn't just change every American's mind about this moral dilemma, but he could express the need to preserve the strength of the nation.

In 1973 the United States of America's Supreme Court made a ruling on the Roe v. Wade case that sent a tremor into the future. Since the ruling of Roe v. Wade over 50 billion infants have been euthanized under the banner of "Women's Reproductive Rights." In the 1960s there was a Sexual Liberation Movement that challenged our views on relationships. Since then there has been a movement that has pushed for same-sex relationships, heterosexual relationships outside of marriage, and a dismantling of the nuclear family. Today we even see members of the LGBTQ+ community fighting for pedophilia to be normalized and socially accepted. Another major crisis we face in light of these immoral movements is the demand to accept one's belief that they were born in the wrong biological body. Children who are born as one gender can say they feel they are the opposite gender and are given "Puberty Blockers" which is really a drug called Leuprolide which was used to chemically castrate inmates guilty of pedophilia. However, none of these moral issues come close to the crisis we face in the Body of Christ. Today we face a moral dilemma that doesn't just plague our nation, but the entire world. We face a global crisis that is bigger than any virus outbreak, or any war that plunges countries into total destruction. Just as President Lincoln took a stand to fight against the issue of slavery in our nation so too must we take a stand against the crisis of the Body of Christ dividing while society is dismantled and morality is outsourced.

This year, in 2022, the Southern Baptist Convention held its annual meeting in Anaheim, California. Many great ministers, speakers, missionaries, and local church representatives came out to the event. Over 40,000 churches make up our denomination and it shows when the crowds turned out to worship, pray, and seek God's vision for our convention as we move into a new year for the SBC.

Many issues needed to be addressed at this year's meeting. We all know about the Executive Committee's report on sexual abuse accusations. We understood that a decision needed to be made, and our messengers came out and voted. There was a need to elect a President of the convention, and a candidate was chosen. 52 missionaries were recognized, prayed over, anointed, and commissioned to go into all nations to share the Gospel. It seems like this year's annual SBC Meeting was successful in making decisions for the good of the denomination. However, some appear to want to create division in the SBC.

As Christians, we are not immune to opposing beliefs. When you have a convention that is made up of 40,000 churches there are going to be different views of doctrine that come up in meetings or conversations. It is important to know what we believe when it comes to understanding the Word of God. It's ok for different ideas to come up when studying Scripture. But when differences lead to hostile attitudes and verbal assault against those who oppose your beliefs it creates a "House Divided."

There must be an understanding of doctrine that must be kept sacred and doctrine that we can disagree with one other. When it comes to the doctrine that matters it is important to take a stand in the truth found in God's Word. There is only one God. He is the triune God embodied in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Word of God is truth and without any flaw. The only way to salvation is through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Finally, God is the Creator of the universe. These are doctrinal truths that must be at the core of our beliefs. Anything outside of these truths is important but holds no eternal effect regarding our salvation. These beliefs are not worth creating division and conflict between ourselves.

Why is it that we are more willing to fight one another over issues of doctrine but not willing to stand up together and fight against what is going on in our society? The only reason I say the issue of the Body of Christ dividing over small theological issues is greater than the immoral acts being pushed in society is due to how the world sees us as we fight one another. We cannot be seen as the loving members of God's kingdom if we cannot even love one another. Why would anyone want to hear what we have to say if all the world hears and sees is how people didn't get their way during the SBC meeting? We must come together in love so we can shine the light of Jesus in this dark world.

As a Southern Baptist pastor there are theological differences between myself and those who are part of the Church of God denomination. An old classmate from high school and I discovered that we both became believers after graduating together. My friend is a Youth Minister of a Church of God in our area. We may differ in our doctrine, but we are united in our desire to see young men come to know Jesus Christ. That's why we started a basketball ministry. We called it Pearly Gate Warriors because we wanted to show our community that we are a team with a goal. We won't win any national tournament. There will never be a trophy case of all our awards. Our goal isn't to win games, but to win souls for the Kingdom of God.



By Doug Harrell  
Mitchell County

The thing that we all strive for each day is the thing called happiness! We want happiness in our lives and our hearts, we want to be accepted as one of the crowd, be chosen as part of the inner circle, to be the center of attention. Bottom line is that we want to be felt loved and valued.

What happens in so many instances is that we search for love in all the wrong places as the old song I was lookin' for love in all the wrong places, "Lookin' for love in too many faces, searchin' their eyes and lookin' for traces of what I'm dreamin' of." We see people that are turning to alcohol, drugs, sex, food, fancy cars and you can go on and on."

We never find true happiness until we find contentment, learning to be content, not complacent, but accepting where God has placed us at the moment. Accepting God's will and being in His will not always make us popular in the worldly views. We will be living in this world but not really be a part of this world, we will be born again as a new creature in Christ.

The picture Jesus painted in the sermon on the mountain list the attributes of those that would find true happiness in the long haul. We get all obsessed with happiness here for the brief moment of life, which passes quickly, and forgets about happiness for eternity, which is forever. Matthew 5:6 "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

Many translations use the word happiness rather than righteousness, but we find true happiness here on this earth when we are willing to search diligently for God's will in our lives and when we are willing to follow and trod in His path. Take time to contemplate your relationship with your Savior today, and put your trust in the One who can! Let your mind be filled with happiness from within, not from without.

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





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No Longer Lost With Martin Luther

By Ed Tooley  
Glendale, Calif.



My beloved wife Laura and I recently got lost in a major US city. This might not mean much to you, but to me, it was news-worthy. You see, Laura is gifted directionally. Give her a map and she will locate the treasured spot. She has had this gift ever since I have known her. She can compete with the best GPS. That is why I was in disbelief when she told me we were lost trying to locate my nephew’s house. We actually had to pull over and ask a friendly native where we were. (I only do that when I am driving alone. I am not shy to ask!) After we got going and turned in the right direction Laura shared that this particular city was difficult to maneuver because there weren’t any notable landforms to go by. AH HA!!!! She was absolutely correct. This city though clean and beautiful was also very, very FLAT. There weren’t any mountains or hills to give us visitors a sense of direction. It was mighty difficult to a bearing on where you were. Even the skyscrapers in the downtown area were difficult to locate.

It was no coincidence that during this visit I was reading a biography of the life of the great reformer Martin Luther. He had a similar problem. Mr. Luther could not find peace on this earth even though he lived a much more disciplined life. He was in his own way lost. Martin Luther was looking for direction, a place where he could get his bearings on truth. I am thrilled and satisfied to say that he found it. As I pondered the similarities about being lost along with the dilemma of Martin Luther a major revelation occurred. Martin Luther finally found his way after succumbing to much derision and strife. He found his way with the WORD OF GOD. The specific verse that changed the course of history is found in the second part of Romans 1:17, where it states that the just shall live by faith. It was the TRUTH found in the scriptures that started the reformation. Martin Luther found it and could not contain himself to voice his revelations. We could not find our way in this particular city because of the lack of landmarks. We became frustrated and confused looking for a way to turn. Martin Luther was lost because the landmarks he thought paved the way to truth led him straight into a dead end. It steered him away from what is true. That is also the way we can get lost on the road of life. What information or landmarks are you and I using to keep us from getting lost or manipulated in the world in which we live?

I recently watched a program on television where a controversial topic was being debated. The debate started civilly but got pretty heated as the arguments from both sides got ugly and personal. When the dust finally settled I was amazed that the issue that was being debated never got answered. Then it took me a while to realize that the answer to this issue is stated clearly in the Word of God. The voices of those debating were at times loud and full of self-assurance. Let us be reminded of the Bereans and how they were commended because they “searched the scriptures daily whether those things were so”. (Acts 17:11)

Martin Luther found the truth to live by that he was hungering and striving for in the Holy Scriptures. The scriptures gave him the right away to the truth. When the opinions and beliefs of others are voiced concerning the truth to live by, just remember where Martin Luther and for that part, millions have others have looked for the truth.....THE WORD OF GOD!!

Edward Tooley has had numerous articles published about education, adolescence, parenting, creation, and Christian Living. Edward has published two books for children entitled: Rounding Third and Headed for Home, and The Lighthouse/El Faro.



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Won't Fill The Void

By Todd Abraham  
Athens, Tennessee



Romans 8:7 “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” The natural mind is insatiable! And it's also contrary to all that is right in the eyes of God. Your mind without Christ in you, the hope of glory, will carry you straight to Hell. The minds we are born with and that develop throughout our lives will never comprehend the spiritual revelation of the word of God. That is why we must be born again of water AND of the Spirit. The latter part means to have received the Holy Ghost. Then we must spend the rest of our days fulfilling the command of this scripture 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.” Surprisingly though, that is not what this installment of Todd's Techy Tips is about.

What I felt of the Lord to convey to you is this. All this technology is wondrous to the mind. Smartphones are the most addictive thing in the world today. 6.648 billion people on this planet now own smartphones! The current world population is 7.9 billion people. Just a few short years ago, the number of smartphone owners was about half of what it is today. Technology has made it convenient for people to go to hell. Why? Because it consumes the mind which is contrary to the will of God. God never intended for people to see everything, do everything and overwhelm our minds nonstop every day. One staple of successfully serving God is to learn to be still, and quiet and give ourselves a chance to hear God speak to us. Technology is the opposite that and smartphones are the worst culprit. The fear of the Lord teaches us that God made the world and us good but not infallible. God knew man would fall and the devil would corrupt this world. He allowed it to create a free will. Another wonder of the mind of God is He declared the end from the beginning! Oh what a Mighty God we serve. Genesis 11:6 “And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.”

The information overload that smartphones and technology provide won't fill the void in your soul. But it will keep your mind occupied for endless hours and days and months and years. For many, it already has. The people behind this technology are in it to make as much money as they can and have no care for the welfare of your soul. Matthew 6:24 “...Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” To simplify, those who serve mammon are not serving God; period! How do you think the devil plans on controlling the world when the one-world government and one-world church come into existence? God is not going to give you any mind-numbing, carnal wonder warnings to let you know you are an idolater of technology and smartphones! God uses His Word and His preachers to warn His people and unctions from His Spirit, the Holy Ghost; period! We are in the midst of a battle for our minds and the devil is winning against most who call themselves Christians. Smartphones and technology are the primary culprits. For many, sadly, it will be too late before they realize they are lost. God's conviction comes in waves and if we ignore it, the waves stop coming. Despite much popular, false teaching in the churches today, God does and will turn people over to a reprobate mind. This means after that point, nothing a person does will stop their eternal damnation. But those folks won't realize it and will live out the rest of their days thinking they are right with Him. There is NO bible to support “Once saved, always saved”.

The end of what I'm trying to teach you is that you better do all you can by prayer, the right version of the word of God (original KJV), and fasting to get your carnal mind under subjection because the Lord Himself warned us. Matthew 26:41 “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

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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Do the Right Thing  
By Chastity Ogburn  
Avery County

*“I thought I was being a supportive friend. I thought the burden of this sin would be totally hers, and I was an innocent bystander just helping her do what she wanted to do. I drove her to the abortion facility three hours away. I was not permitted to go inside with her so I had to leave her to face this horrible ordeal alone. I felt guilty and helpless. I felt weak when she needed me to be strong. I was ashamed for my lack of courage to do the right thing.”*



This is a quote from a friend who was involved in an abortion decision. Women need support, the right kind of support. You could be the one that changes a young girl's mind about having an abortion. The teen pregnancy rate is only getting higher. These young girls need women in their lives who will help support, care for, and love them when an unplanned pregnancy arises! These girls and women need to know that just because they become pregnant does not mean that they should give up on their dreams or that their life is over. When everyone else is making fun of the girl who got pregnant in high school, look at her and tell her she made the right choice. These women need Christians who will show them the love of Jesus! We are not called to be like the world and other so-called “Christians”, we are called to be like Christ!

If you are pregnant, alone, or confused... stop by Anne Ministries! I promise you will be loved, helped, and supported throughout your pregnancy and even after your child is born! We will show you the love of Jesus and provide you with any baby items you may need throughout your journey through motherhood. I hope you know that there is someone out there that cares for you and wants to help! If you find yourself facing an unplanned pregnancy, know that we are here. If you ever find a friend caught up in an unplanned pregnancy, be the friend that does the right thing, and has courage. You could be the one that changes their mind and lets them know it will all be okay.

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

Mary-Kathryn Laws is a follower of Jesus Christ. She is a volunteer at Anne Ministries which offers pregnancy support and recovery services in Avery County. She is a wife, new mother, daughter, sister, teacher, and friend. Mary-Kathryn and her family attend Emmanuel Baptist Church in Newland. She is the daughter of Director Chastity Ogburn at Anne Ministries. For more information about Anne Ministries please visit [anneministries.com](http://anneministries.com) or email [anneministries@gmail.com](mailto:anneministries@gmail.com) . Like us on Facebook!

*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)*

James Madison – Bill of Rights  
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.

The Charters of Freedom is a grouping of America’s founding documents. It encompasses the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. These are the preeminent documents in American History. The Bill of Rights receives the most attention even though its history is the newest Charter of Freedom document. It is an extension of the United States Constitution and serves various purposes.

One of its objectives is to prevent tyranny by the government and guarantee every citizen's immunity from it. The Bill of Rights draws its heritage from several different doctrines and principles. They include the writings of English philosopher John Locke, French writers, such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who were active during the Age of Enlightenment in the 1700s, and others who wrote about natural rights, reasoning, scientific methods, and laws.

England’s Magna Carta of 1215 influenced the Bill of Rights based on its vital principle of all being accountable to the law. Its fundamental rights afford fair and equal access to trials and justice regardless of social status, ensuring the rule of law.

In 1689, the English Bill of Rights was the reply to the brutal reign of King James II. This decree provided safeguards to speech, and religion, shelter from cruel and unusual treatment, and the right to a fair trial. Virginia’s Declaration of Rights, adopted in 1776, contributed to its philosophy of human rights, life and liberty, and natural rights, including religious freedom.

On June 8, 1789, James Madison submitted recommended amendments to the United States Constitution. The House of Representatives discussed and approved 17 amendments on August 24, passing them to the Senate. The Senate altered and condensed them into 12 articles on September 9, 1789. These are the 12 articles of the Bill of Rights displayed in the National Archives and Foundation Forward, Charters of Freedom settings.

Congress agreed to the Senate’s amendments, and they were sent to the states for their endorsements. Following this, on December 15, 1791, Articles One and Two were set aside, with Three through Twelve ratified as the ten that are our Bill of Rights. Nevertheless, some amendments continue to be debated in society and shaped by decisions of the federal courts.

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](http://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](mailto: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.*



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The Inspiring Word

By Terry Cheek Th.D.  
McDowell County



Thank you for being patient with me as I study to open the truth of God's word from Paul's epistle to the Romans. To truly grasp the context of Paul's epistle to the Roman church, we must understand it as Paul has written it. Notice with me from chapter one and verses 1-4 the implication of the gospel. We find in verse one its decree. Paul was a man called, prepared, separated, and anointed to spread the gospel. Paul intended to press on despite the many Jews, government leaders, and gentiles trying to smear his credentials and qualifications.

Moving on to verses 2-4, we can find the information contained in the gospel. Every Christian knows that Christ is at the heart of the gospel message. Paul sets Christ in front of us threefold within the following three verses. First, Paul shows us Christ is the revealed one, the one "promised afore" (v2). The "gospel of God" is rooted deeply in the Old Testament.

The gospel is the highest climax in the revelation of God. So we can see that Paul's special calling was to take the latent things of Christ from the Old Testament and explain them in the light of Calvary. As a result, Paul possessed the understanding of three great truths or even mysteries. He described these in his church epistles. In Romans, the first one is the mystery of Christ's cross and expounded in I and II Corinthians as a reproof of moral failure. Finally, his exposition continues in Galatians as a correction of doctrinal error. Second, from Ephesians, Paul explains the mystery of Christ's church and expounds it first in Philippians as a reproof of practical failure, then from Colossians as a correction of doctrinal error. Third, Paul unfolds the mystery of Christ's coming from I and II Thessalonians.

These truths or mysteries were new revelations to the first-century church, none of them inconsistent with what God had revealed through the Old Testament.

The gospel's message reveals Jesus as not only the revealed one but also as the reigning one. From verse 3, we read. "Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh," Paul states Christ's right to reign two ways. Positionally, Christ is "the seed of David." And personally, Jesus Christ is our Lord. World governments may deny Christ His throne as the seed of David during this age, but every believer's heart and life are bound to own Jesus as both Lord and Christ.

The gospel has a third aspect of Christ's advent. He is the resurrected one. "Declared to be the Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (v.4).

Notice the expression "spirit of holiness." I see the Lord Jesus as one living a life of victory over the power of sin, and this affirms His life on earth was perfectly holy.

The expression "by the resurrection from the dead" suggests to me Jesus gained victory over the penalty of sin. Jesus rose from the grave! Jesus' resurrection was the very thing that impressed Paul. While on the Damascus road, Paul first met Jesus as the risen and ascended Lord from Heaven. The fact that Jesus was indisputably alive and glorified convinced Paul that Jesus was indeed the Son of God.

What significance does the gospel message have in your life? What evidence has Christ given through the Holy Spirit to gain your attention? If you have read this far, you also know we live in dangerous days. So many people are turning away from God. Don't be the next one. Come to Christ while Grace abounds.

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

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Terry Cheek is the founder and broadcaster of The Inspiring Word media ministry. He and Lori are members of Blue Ridge Church of Marion N.C. You can contact Terry by email at [theinspiringword@gmail.com](mailto:theinspiringword@gmail.com).

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Whence Cometh My Help

By Jim Huskins  
McDowell County



For nine days in the Fall of 2012, Hurricane Sandy wrought death and destruction. Jamaica, Hispaniola, Cuba, the Bahamas, and Bermuda were devastated. So was the entire US Atlantic Coastline. At least 160 US citizens died. Damage is estimated in the tens of billions.

During the news coverage, a woman in an affluent, New Jersey neighborhood grabbed a reporter’s microphone and issued an impassioned address. “Mr. Obama,” she cried. “We’re suffering. Send us food, send us water, send us medicine, send us generators, send us refrigerators.” I found the scope and tone of her plea astonishing. Emergency agencies provide shelter and supplies following natural disasters, but is it their job to provide expensive infrastructure equipment to individuals?

The mandate for the work of our Federal Government is clear. Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution says that Congress shall have the power to lay and collect Taxes, Duties, Imposts, and Excises, to pay the Debts and provide for the common Defense and general Welfare of the United States. Congress may borrow Money on the credit of the United States, and regulate Commerce with foreign Nations and among the states. Further authorization is given to coin money, establish Post Offices, build roads, and raise and fund Armies. Walter E. Williams gave this summary in a speech delivered to Hillsdale College in March of 2000. Dr. Williams then comments, “Nowhere in the Constitution do we find authority for up to three-quarters of what Congress taxes and spends for today. There is no constitutional authorization for farm subsidies, bank bail-outs, or food stamps. . . . We have made a significant departure from the constitutional principles of individual freedom and limited government that made us a rich nation in the first place.”

Twenty-two years after that speech, the notions of individual freedom and limited government seem quaint relics. Every American citizen should be asking important questions: Should the Federal Government be allowed unchecked expansion, or should the government be limited? Should we be concerned about technology that facilitates massive intrusion? Should we allow the consortium of private, mega-banks known as the Federal Reserve to continue issuing debt-based currency? Can freedom coexist with a digital currency that will make the Feds a party to our every transaction and give them the ability to decide what we buy, where, and when?

These important questions point to even more significant concerns: Is the current trajectory of an institution that Lincoln described as of, by and for the people, any different from history’s countless regimes that we label totalitarian? Are our elected officials in charge of what is happening, or are they being controlled? Should our government be devoting massive effort and resources to legitimizing and promoting practices that God calls an abomination? When did we vote to allow the Federal bureaucracy to invade privacy, levy oppressive taxation, destroy our economy, promote infanticide, legitimize sexual deviancy, throw open the borders, and facilitate wars in which we have no national interest? Can we depend on such a government to promote our legitimate interests?

God insists that we depend on Him. In Matthew 11:28-30 we read one of the most compelling invitations to dependency: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 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. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

The power in these words flows from the incredible covenant God offered us through Abraham and later clarified through Moses. Perhaps the most astounding summary of God’s promise to care for us is found in Deuteronomy 28:1-14. Read it now! Any who struggles to determine the best way to provide for their needs should meditate on that passage. Jeremiah records several of God’s promises to care for us including 7:23, 24:7, and this divine declaration in 31:33: “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD; I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

When I point out these passages to some Christians and emphasize the fact that God’s promises are predicated on our obedience, I am often told that we now live under “grace” and that obedience is not necessary. Scripture says that salvation comes to us through grace alone, but lives that please God are based on obedience. Hebrews 8:10 makes it clear that the “new” covenant is merely a better application of the “same old” covenant: “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” The Hebrew writer is quoting Jeremiah 31:33.

Jesus paid the price for our sin, but His offer to care for us does not include floating on His coattails. We are taught that “when God looks at me, He sees Christ’s righteousness.” No scripture makes such a claim. When God looks at us, He sees who we are and what we are doing. Romans 2:6-8 says, “He will pay back each person according to his deeds. To those who by perseverance in doing good are seeking glory, honor, and immortality—eternal life. But to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—wrath and fury.”

When we take on Jesus’ “easy yoke” and “light burden”, we become His “bond-servants.” Bondservants are thrilled to be saved by His grace and dependent upon His provision. He is the source of all good things. Bondservants joyfully attempt to express their gratitude by conforming their every action to His call and example.

Beginning July 2, Obedient Heart Fellowship will meet at 10:00 Each Sabbath (Seventh Day) in space graciously shared by New Covenant Church in Christ. 2460 US 221 Business N. In Marion, NC. Call for info. 828-460-7913

*Jim Huskins is Pastor of Obedient Heart Fellowship.*

how important it is that we seek those chance encounters. In those brief moments of time, we must find a way to stop time and speak into another's life. Be always prepared to succinctly and as abundantly tell someone about the gospel of salvation, the story of Jesus Christ. And even more importantly, allow them time to come to Him in their own words.

It is truly a matter of life and death.  
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 [//www.timothywtron.com/](http://www.timothywtron.com/) or see more of his writings [HERE](#).



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

Crossword Solution

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God Bless America

Roan Mountain Baptist Church

“Is God Calling You to Deal With a Problem?”

By Russell McKinney  
Mitchell County



David Livingston, the legendary missionary to Africa, was a man who understood that some jobs God asks us to do aren't for the faint of heart. On the subject of Livingstone's work in Africa, one man wrote him, "I would like to join you. Is there an easy way to get to where you are?" Livingston wrote back, "I don't want a man to join me who is looking for an easy way. I want a man to join me who will make his own way if he has to."

When Christians discuss problems that need to be handled, the conversations often end with something along the lines of, "Let's just pray and ask God to take care of things." Frankly, though, it has been my experience that God usually solves a problem by raising up a man or a woman to do the solving. Even more than my experience, scripture teaches this same truth. For every Bible story in which God takes matters into His own hands to personally solve a problem, there are dozens of stories in which He works through human beings to solve one. But how do you know when God is singling you out to be the human vessel through which He solves a problem? Allow me to offer a basic list of how the process works. This, at least, is how the process has worked in my life.

# 1. You are brought face to face with the problem. The fact is, there are problems here, there, and everywhere, but you don't think about them because they don't affect you. A problem has to get into your personal wheelhouse before you will start searching for the solution to that problem.

# 2. You realize that no one else is going to do anything about the problem. The first indicator that God is wading you into the battle is when it becomes obvious to you that no one else will even think about truly going out on a limb to do something about the situation.

# 3. You begin to feel a growing burden deep down inside you that calls you to duty. If the burden you are feeling to address the problem is truly from God, it will only increase with time.

# 4. You hatch out a plan of action, at least the first step of one. Since your second step will probably be dependent upon how others react to your first step, you might not be able to hatch out the entire plan all at once. Rest assured, though, that God will give you a unique, specific, step-by-step plan for the battle.

# 5. You get personally involved with solving the problem by taking the first step of your plan of action. At this point, you will actually enter the arena and don't be surprised if you find yourself fighting in there alone. Remember, the problem wouldn't still be there for you to encounter if a slew of people had taken it on before you.

Of course, it goes without saying, that you should be praying, staying humble, and continuing to seek God's will throughout this entire process. Please don't envision yourself as the fast-draw sheriff who is going to ride into town and clean up the mess in no time flat. Instead, envision yourself as the humble (even reluctant) servant of God who is simply trying to be the vessel through which God gets the necessary work done. Seriously, the moment you start getting puffed up about what you are doing, you run the risk of acting from your own logic and fleshly instincts.

And will the job that God is calling you to do be hard? Yes! Again, if it was easy, someone would have done it before you got there. As David Livingston so graphically pointed out, you will most likely have to make your own way by hacking out a new trail through the thick underbrush. But just know that God will help you with that hacking as long as you are hacking out the trail that is pleasing to Him. So, don't be afraid to take on the problem, and don't shy away from allowing Him to do an impactful work through you.

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

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

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Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson Rebukes ‘Wussification’ of Manhood

By Mark Creech

North Carolina’s Lieutenant Governor, Mark Robinson, has stirred controversy again. For some, his words were apocalyptic, like an earthquake, and the sun was black as a sackcloth of hair or the moon-like blood. What did he say?

During a worship service at Freedom House Church in Charlotte, Robinson, who is African-American, rebuked common defeatist responses to hardship by the black community. The Lieutenant Governor demonstrably said, “My God tells me when I face adversity that number one I am to stand up like a man. M-A-N. Unbend your back and stand up like a man!”

Knowing he was headed into treacherous waters, he said he was “getting ready to get in trouble.” He added, “We are called to be led by men.” He explained women had noble roles in God’s economy, “but when it was time to face down Goliath,” God sent “David and not Davita”...God sent Moses to lead the Israelites, not “Momma Moses.”

The church responded with applause and shouts of agreement. But it wasn’t long before the demons and their minions on the outside were howling.

Women of the state Senate Democratic Caucus issued a statement of condemnation, calling Robinson’s remarks “misogynistic.”

Rachel Stein, a spokesperson for the Democratic Party, tweeted that the Lieutenant Governor was wrong and had denigrated women’s “leadership work.” Even some Republicans seemed to distance themselves by either saying nothing in defense of his remarks or suggesting that such comments may have been imprudent.

And, of course, WRAL, the Raleigh television station, seemingly sworn to attacks on conservative Republicans and those who dare to ally with them, was the first to vilify the speech as an attack on women’s equality.

Please keep in mind Robinson’s remarks were made inside a church. It never ceases to amaze me that those who typically tout an absolute separation of church and state find something irregular or irresponsible about a head of state expressing his religious views in a church.

Robinson’s conservative religious views are no more a threat to the performance of his constitutional duties as Lieutenant Governor than John F. Kennedy’s Catholicism was to his Presidency. Nevertheless, perhaps there is something both church and state could learn from the situation.

Robinson exalts the Bible as the guidepost by which to judge all of life. This isn’t new for our nation’s leadership. The Bible has been extolled by the Founders, Presidents, Statesman, members of Congress, courts, and judges. American authors, poets, scientists, and famous people have also admired and applauded its teachings. Robinson’s love of the Bible puts him in good company as a leader. Moreover, there has never been a time in American history when there was such a desperate need for the renewal of biblical manhood in the home, church, and state. The Bible teaches that God authorizes the man to be the leader of the home. Ephesians 5:22 says, “The husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church.”

The man’s role in the home is one of incredible responsibility. He is to provide for his family’s needs. He is to protect and promote his wife’s emotional and spiritual advancement. He is to manage his children with godly direction and discipline.

The former head of Moody Bible Institute, George Sweeting, has written: “There is perhaps no failure as widespread and tragic as the failure of husbands and fathers. Ignorance, apathy, and rebellion against God’s will have led to the abdication by many husbands of their authority and responsibilities. In millions of homes across our nation, the father is no more than a breadwinner, a live-in paycheck who, in some cases, merely supplements the income of the wife. He has no authority and wants none because he fears the responsibility that goes with it.” America is in grave danger when men abdicate their servant leadership role in the home.

Men are also to pilot the church. This point is disputed in some Christian circles. Nevertheless, the doctrine is not a complicated one. It seems only complex for those who have difficulty squaring the counter-cultural values of the Scriptures with popular and widespread views of womanhood.

Although the privileges of religious faith are equally available to both sexes, spiritual activity is differentiated. It should be noted that Christ chose no woman as one of the twelve disciples. The Lord’s Supper was instituted in the presence of men alone. The apostolic commissions in John 20:19-23 and Matthew 28:16-20 were given to men, not women.

There is no question that women occupy a place of astonishing nobility in Christ’s church, but it is not primarily a leading one. This doesn’t mean women are inferior spiritually or otherwise; it only means that God has given them different roles. The direction of the churches, the writing of the New Testament, and the offices of the church were entrusted to men.

It is crystal clear that men should lead in the home and the church, but the Bible’s teaching on women in government seats of power isn’t so clear. Still, I’ll venture to offer an opinion.

It seems inconsistent that God would call for men to lead in the home and the church, but then in government, not have them at the forefront. Generally speaking, God’s ideal is that men should be at the helm.

Granted, certain great women in Old Testament times steered the ship of Zion.



Women such as Deborah, one of the judges in Israel, and Huldah, the prophetess who lived in Jerusalem. But these women were raised by God, I believe, in a time of spiritual and moral declension when there were no men fit for the job. It appears their appointment, as many scholars have argued, was a way of God shaming the weak-willed, unsound men of those times. Isaiah reflects the same when he says, “O My people! Their oppressors are children, and women rule over them” (Isaiah 3:12). Women (and thank God for them) had to stand in the gap (as they often do) because the men were too sorry to do their duty.

Our current state of affairs reeks of the same. I’m not saying that women should never hold public office, their positions of power should not be honored, or that one should never vote for a woman. I am saying, however, that this doesn’t seem to be God’s perfect will any more than polygamy was God’s intention for marriage. Yet the Lord permitted it in past dispensations because people at the time were so far removed from his expected standard.

It was to this predicament, I think, that Lieutenant Governor Robinson was speaking.

We need men to be men. Robinson wasn’t denigrating or bullying women. He was reminding us of God’s ideal. He was appropriately rebuking the present “wussification” of manhood.

Now that is a natural leader – a man of conviction and character – one that operates faithfully “in and out of season” – one who is not driven by politics but the principle — what a contrast to so many politicians who let the tail wag the dog. Thank you, Lieutenant Governor Mark Robinson.

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

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Pleasant Hill Baptist Church

Unique Observance

By Caron Cline  
Burke County

The Fourth of July observance is unique to the United States of America, for it is a celebration of our nation’s independence from British rule. The Second Continental Congress voted to declare independence on July 2nd, 1776, but actually ratified the Declaration of Independence two days later on July 4th. These men stated that the thirteen American colonies would no longer bow to the King of England, George III, but were now ‘united, free, and independent states. Americans celebrate their freedom each year on July 4th through parades, fireworks, concerts, and family gatherings. Only US citizens have the unique privilege of celebrating such a rich heritage of individual freedom; the freedom to pursue life, liberty, and happiness. Similarly, the celebration of our deliverance from the bondage of sin is the unique privilege of born-again Christians. Formerly, we were oppressed by a harsh taskmaster called Satan and were powerless to overcome his deception. This cycle of depravity began with the disobedience of the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, and has continued from generation to generation. Unlike the American colonies, we had no weapons capable of defeating an invisible, supernatural foe. There was no hope of freedom unless someone more powerful than Satan and his spiritual hosts of wickedness came to the rescue. In eternity past, the plan for deliverance was ratified. Our Heavenly Father’s love refused to leave His creation without a remedy; therefore, He sent His only Son to seek and to save the lost. The price for freedom was not the blood of mere men, but the blood of the Son of Man, the required ransom in exchange for our souls. Jesus delivered His followers from the power of sin and made them free! Every Christian has been granted the benefits of eternal life, freedom from the captivity of sin and shame, and joy unspeakable and full of glory. Believers are now free to run in the paths of our Lord’s commands. In other words, obedience to the word of God allows freedom from any form of bondage and opens doors of protection, purpose, and power. Believers are now free to bask in the warmth of our Lord’s love. Nothing can ever separate the people of God from the love of God, not even death. Believers are now free to experience the fullness of our Lord’s joy. Abiding in Christ and allowing His Words to abide in us, produces spiritual fruit and proof that we are truly the children of God. The promises of ‘Christ in us, the hope of glory’, and ‘there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus’, are worthy of all our praise and warrant a lifetime of the celebration. After all, Peter reminds us that this freedom which cost the Father His only Son is a subject that even the angels long to understand. That’s worth some fireworks every day of the year!!!!

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.



Evergreen Church

Happy 4th of July

By John McCoury  
Roan Mountain, Tennessee



The greatest question on this matter of the nation, and is the problem of the relationship of the Christian to government. And where does the Christian stand with this? Notice that I did not say the relationship of the church and state, or the church and the government.

Now let me say just three things in this connection to A Christian’s attitude towards government: first of all, a Christian must respect the government and its representatives. You remember that story in the book of Acts when Paul was captured in Jerusalem and brought before the High Priest and Sanhedrin and the High Priest spoke to him very sarcastically. Paul replied in kind; he rebuked the man who spoke, and someone standing by slapped him and said Would you revile God’s high priest? The Apostle’s reaction was immediate; he said I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people. This I think indicates the true Christian attitude regarding government. Christians must respect the government, pay the taxes that it demands, and they can certainly exercise their privilege to try to correct abuses but the government has the right to demand these things. It is a power for good. It is a factor for righteousness even though it is an ungodly government, and the Christian must simply face the fact that any government is better than none, and that anarchy is the worst possible condition. To let human evil run rampant and out of control is the most devastating thing that can happen to a government. Second, the Christian must not expect the government to pass on his faith. This is a very important part. Since government by its nature is limited to the control of actions and not attitude, therefore it is quite wrong for a Christian ever to expect the government to come to the aid of passing on the Christian faith. That’s the job of a believer as a witness in the Holy Spirit. The most that a Christian can do is ask that the government permits such activity. This is proper if the rights of the majority and the minority are protected in this respect so that those who do not agree are free to not participate if they like and suffer no ill consequences for it. The majority has a right to plan and the government has a perfect right to permit these activities in the light of the word of God. Then the third thing, a Christian must correct and if necessary resist the government when it intrudes in areas which it has no right to come into, that is in the area of the conscience. Our Supreme Court has said the institutions of our society are founded on the belief that there is an authority higher than the authority of the state. There is a moral law that the state is powerless to alter, that the individual has rights conferred by the Creator which government must respect. That simply is a reflection of the teachings of scripture, that there is a time when the Christian must say ‘no’ to what the government says. And there is a long line of Christian martyrs to testify to this. Governments do become tyrannical, and totalitarian, intruding into the basic inalienable rights of men. When they do, the Christian has not only the right but the duty to oppose this even at the risk of his own life and liberty. May we bow in prayer and say: Our Father we thank you for our beloved nation. We love it, we rejoice in the marvelous benefits accorded to us as citizens of this blessed land. We look beyond the nation to thee our Father and know the King is not saved by the might of his great army. The war horse cannot deliver us by his strength. The only force, the only power, the one supreme might that can keep us and safely take us through all the woe and troubles and trials that may oppress us, is the might of thy right arm, Lord. We pray that we may look to thee, give thanks to thee, the God of the Nations, as the one who holds all the nations in the palm of thy hand, who weighs one against another before whom all others are just a drop in the bucket. May we recognize that the Lord can use them, turn them, change them, and move them at will. And in that recognition, we bow and give thanks In Jesus’ name, Amen.

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

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“I Really Can’t Think of Anyone I Need to Forgive”

By Steve Parker

A few years back, I was working with a young man named Keith. He had heard that I had some experience working with people who wanted to go further with the Lord in their life, and he had sought me out.

Keith and his wife had given their lives to Christ a year previously and had found freedom from alcohol and drugs. They were both passionate about their new faith and wanted to grow spiritually. However, Keith was struggling with his temper. It seemed that almost anything could set him off. The wrong word spoken at just the wrong time could send him into a rage. Just recently, while angry, he had punched a hole in the wall of his house. He was rightfully concerned about what he might do to his wife or kids when he was in one of these fits of anger.

After he had shared his story, I asked Keith if he had any unforgiveness in his life. He thought for a minute and said he didn’t think so. I pushed him on this question. I have found that unforgiveness and anger often go hand in hand. He thought further and said, quite earnestly, “I really can’t think of anyone I need to forgive.”

I met with Keith a few more times. Sadly, I don’t believe any progress was made. I still see him from time to time in public. He continues to walk with the Lord, but he still struggles with anger issues.

What is sad about this story is that I would later find out that Keith had all sorts of people in his life whom he needed to forgive. A short time before we met, Keith had gotten into a terrible argument with the leadership of his church. It was so heated that they had almost come to blows.

Keith had left that church and never went back. He had also told numerous people about how awful that church was and how badly the people there had treated him. To the best of my knowledge, he still carries that unforgiveness today.

Think about it. This young man, who had almost struck spiritual leaders and then went on a vendetta to smear the name of their church in the community, told me that he wasn’t carrying unforgiveness. That sounds ridiculous, doesn’t it? How could he not recognize this?

Sadly, that’s one of the most dangerous elements of unforgiveness. Sometimes, we don’t realize that we are caught in its snare. We may be eaten up with it and not even know it. How is that possible?

Often, it’s because we feel justified. The people whom we haven’t forgiven have done, in our view, terrible things to us. They have hurt us badly. The feelings we carry toward them are justified in our minds because of the grievous nature of what they have done. In our hearts, we don’t believe they deserve our forgiveness.

But for those of us in the body of Christ, this creates a challenge. The whole idea of forgiveness is fundamental to our faith. After all, God in Christ paid the highest price on the cross so that we could be forgiven. And we KNOW that we are supposed to forgive others. It’s hard to read very far in the New Testament without realizing this is true. Unforgiveness is a sin.

So how do Christians get away with not forgiving others and still sleep at night? Generally, we use different words for it. It’s not that we are holding on to unforgiveness. Instead, we’re just “angry” with that person who hurt us. Or better yet, we call it “righteous indignation.” And it’s especially easy to justify our feelings when we can find scripture verses to back up our unforgiveness toward another. Then we’ve got God on our side as well. In our minds, the Lord has joined us in our anger toward that person.

A few years ago, I read of a survey that had been conducted among pastors and ministry leaders. The questions concerned what kind of sins they struggled with the most. The number that responded that they dealt with unforgiveness was very low, around 9 or 10 percent. However, the number that said they had problems with anger was near the top of the list. Over two-thirds of those responding said that not becoming angry toward people was a challenge for them.

I’m going to go out on a limb and suggest that there is a lot more overlap between those two sins than many of them realize. If someone is angry with another, there’s a good chance that they are carrying unforgiveness toward that person. However, as noted earlier, Christian leaders are very much aware that Jesus commands us to forgive. Therefore, they “rebrand” their unforgiveness as anger, which is a much more “acceptable” sin in their minds

“Wait a minute!” I hear some of you saying. “Anger isn’t necessarily a sin. After all, the Apostle Paul tells us to *‘be angry and sin not’*”(Ephesians 4:26). That’s correct. Being angry isn’t a sin, UNLESS we let it take hold of us and build a dwelling place in our lives. We must deal with our anger quickly, forgiving and loving the person who has offended us. If we don’t do that, if we choose to let our anger fester and hold a grudge toward another person, we are sinning. Further, we are giving the enemy of our souls an entry point into our lives. This is why immediately after telling us to *“be angry and sin not,”* Paul continues with the exhortation to not let the sun go down on our anger. If we choose not to do this (yes, staying angry is a choice), we *“give the devil a foothold”* (Ephesians 4:27).

Consider that we are specifically told that holding on to anger, choosing not to forgive, will give the devil access to our life. Therefore, just four verses later, Paul writes that we are to *“get rid of all bitterness, wrath, and anger”* (Ephesians 4:31). Our goal isn’t just to keep from sinning when we get angry. It’s to be free from anger completely, at least as it relates to other people. God has created us to be a testimony of His love to a lost and dying world. It’s impossible to do that if we are mad at the people with whom we are supposed to be a witness.

If you’re reading this, perhaps God has brought to your memory someone with whom you are angry. That may be a good sign that He wants you to deal with the unforgiveness you may be carrying toward that person. If so, before you do

anything else, ask God to forgive you for allowing unforgiveness to have a place in your life. You’ve given Satan an open door. Slam it shut in his face. Then, choose to forgive that person. You may still have some harsh feelings that oppose this act, but you don’t have to be controlled by your emotions. Set those feelings aside. Exercise your will and pray this prayer: “God, I want to be obedient to your Word. I want you to be the Lord in every area of my life. I choose to forgive \_\_\_\_\_ for what he/she has done. Help me to love that person with your merciful love. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

Now, walk in this forgiveness. If you find yourself negatively thinking about that person, stop immediately and begin praising and thanking God instead. Say a prayer for the person. Bless them! Ask God to give that person what they need, in the present moment, to fulfill the purpose for which they were created. And then choose to think about something else.

You will find that if you continue to practice praying for and blessing the person, the negative emotions you hold toward them will subside more and more. Not only that, but your obedience to forgiveness will flow over into other areas of your life. Just as being angry towards someone gives the devil a foothold, being obedient to God’s commands concerning forgiveness will expand into the rest of your existence. After all, Jesus said the Kingdom of God is like yeast. You work it into the dough and the whole loaf expands (Matthew 13:33).

Walking in forgiveness is a critical part of the disciple’s life. I will be writing more on this subject next month. In the meantime, I encourage you to take up your cross and follow the Lord. Choose to forgive. Let the forgiveness that He practiced on Calvary flow through you. I promise you will be glad you did.

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

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# Grand View Baptist Church

## Distinguishing Genuine Messages From God From False Ones Jeremiah 23:16-17, 21-22; 28:5-9, 15-16

By Glenda Ward  
McDowell County



A genuine message from God proclaims God’s righteous demands, is in harmony with God’s revelation, and actually comes to pass. Jerusalem recognized many prophets. At times, these prophets contradicted one another. Since false prophets abounded during this time, the people needed a clear view to judge well, to obtain spiritual guidance, understanding, and wisdom in TRUTH. Jeremiah was positive that Babylonian captivity was Judah’s immediate downfall. The nation’s kings had failed to set the right example and lead the people in repentance (Jeremiah 21:1 to 22:30). The spiritual leaders also failed. False prophets were leading the people to destruction. The ones who should have sounded a clear warning had instead produced confusion and chaos in the social, moral, and spiritual realms.

Jeremiah’s reaction as he saw horrible things from the prophets of Jerusalem; he was heartbroken over the prophets’ failure (23:9-15). The people were immoral, dishonest, violent, and hypocritical. Judah’s spiritual leaders had adopted similar lifestyles. Now, God was preparing for a bitter end for them. From the false prophets of Jerusalem, profaneness had gone into all the land. These prophets were causing the people to be without worth, value, and roots. They spoke of a vision of their own heart, not from the mouth of the Lord. They say to all “*No evil shall come upon you*” (Jeremiah 23:17).

Jeremiah branded many prophets as false because they spoke of a vision that originated in their own hearts and imagination, NOT from God. Jeremiah warned the people. When we hear contradictory messages from different preachers, teachers, or writers today; which voice we should listen to is not always easy to discern or to know which one is TRUE. Jeremiah gave some clues to help us to know how to determine God’s Truth.

A true prophet’s life will validate what he says. Jeremiah accused the false prophets of being profane (immoral) instead of holy and righteous (Reference 23:11), and liars who supported evildoers in their wickedness (25:14).

1. A true prophet will not proclaim false hope (23:16). False messages will lead to “make you vain”. Messages of unfit prophets filled the people with false hopes. These prophets confronted no one with one’s own sinfulness (23:17). A false prophet teaches and preaches that no harm will come to those who do wrong. Such messages condone evil and encourage people in their rebellion against God.

2. True prophets have received a divine call from God (23:21). A false prophet’s message still affects people, but the effect can be so much different if the God-called preacher/teacher/prophet has a True close interwoven relationship with God and a direct call for their ministry from Him. A true man of God will reflect his call from God!

In Jeremiah chapters 27 and 28; under God’s instructions, Jeremiah made a yoke and wore it on his shoulders to reinforce God’s message. God had put Judah under Babylon’s yoke. Jeremiah preached that message and continued to wear the yoke to remind all who saw him of his message, from God to the people. The prophet Hananiah however preached an entirely different message. He jumped to the wrong conclusion. (Read Jeremiah 28:6-8). Jeremiah’s response to Hananiah is another clue as to how to determine the True from the false.

3. Jeremiah compared what Hananiah said to what previous men of God had said. He laid Hananiah’s message alongside of Scripture to see how it matched up with Bible Scripture.

The New Testament warns against false teachers, and to try the spirits whether they are of God; “*believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world*” (1 John 4:1). We are to try or test what we hear and compare it with what Bible Scripture says. If one does not know the Bible well enough to test the teachings they hear, then more consistent Bible Study is needed! God has given pastors and teachers of God’s Word to us. He has given the church family spiritual leaders who have knowledge and experience that we lack. We are to utilize their counsel and bring our questions to those who demonstrate that they know the Word of God in Scripture by their daily living of God’s Word.

4. If God says something will or will not happen, it works out that way. Deuteronomy 13:1-5 cautions that even if what is said does come to pass if the messenger is leading people away from God, he is a false prophet.

Two Truths to remember: 1) God’s promises and prophecies are fulfilled on His timetable, not ours. 2) God’s promises are sometimes conditional. To claim promises without meeting those conditions are futile.

Was Hananiah sincere in his message? Listen to what Jeremiah says; Read Jeremiah Chapter 28. In verses 2-4 the lie which Hananiah caused the people to believe; the people believed this could be validated by Scripture in 2 Kings 24:20-25:17. They rebelled against Babylon with great results. Jeremiah prophesied the false prophet’s death. Hananiah’s death came within months and is recorded in Jeremiah 28:17. What Jeremiah said came to pass. What Hananiah said did not. Jeremiah was the True prophet!

CHRISTIAN LIFE NEEDS

A genuine message from God proclaims God’s righteous demands, is in harmony with God’s revelation, and actually comes to pass.

Young Adults – need help to sift through a barrage of religious teachings. They need to develop spiritual and mental discernment.

Midpoint Adults – need to be encouraged to hold to their values in scriptural standards of Truth. They also need to point others to God’s Truth.

Senior Adults – need to reaffirm the biblical foundations on which they have built their beliefs and behavior.

- Center attention on Scripture Reading to see its importance.
- Affirm that false teaching is an ancient and modern phenomenon.
- Comprehend the historical setting of the Scripture being studied.
- Identify characteristics of false prophets and True prophets.
- Discover at least two traits of a True prophet: Truth never contradicts truth. A genuine message from God is in harmony with the Scriptures.
- Criteria for discerning True Messages from God: Proclaims God’s righteous standard; is in harmony with the Scriptures; points people to God; and comes to pass. God’s purpose in our being participants in our local churches is to give us spiritual “elders” to help us when contradictory voices confuse us.

Have you learned to listen for God’s message to you in His Word as it is read and preached? The extent of your obedience measures the reality of your worship!

*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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# Family of Faith Fellowship

## Angels do Play Harps and I Have Proof

By Dr. James L. Snyder  
Ocala, Florida



A few weeks ago, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage came to me with a question. I'm always very cautious whenever that happens because it could be a trap.

"Next Saturday I have to go and pick up something. It's about an hour away, and I wonder if you could come with me?"

This is a new one. So I asked her, "What are you going to be picking up?"

That's a straightforward question with no strings attached.

She looked at me for a few moments and finally said, "It's a secret, and I don't want to tell you yet."

That was enough to put me on my guard. A secret? What kind of a secret could this be?

So I ask her, "What is the secret?"

She didn't respond right away, but finally, she said very soberly, "I don't want to tell you right now. It's a secret, and you'll understand when we get there."

I don't mind secrets as long as they are my secrets. But when The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage has a secret, the red flags begin waving.

Thinking about it for a few moments, I thought I should go along with her, so I said, "If you need me to go with you, I'll be glad to go."

Hoping to trip her up, I said, "And what is the secret?"

She looked at me, smiled, and walked away.

For her to have a secret and then want me to help her facilitate that secret without telling me what it is, is beyond my pay scale. As long as we've been married, I've never heard her ask for this kind of favor.

Of course, this kind of favor could work in my favor down the line. Whenever I want something, I could always say, "Do you remember that secret I helped you with a few years ago?" I'm sure I could use it for some value at the proper time. For the last few weeks, I noticed she's been searching for things on her computer, but there's no way in the world I'm going to get on her computer and try to figure out what she was searching for.

Finally, the Saturday came, and she said, "Are you ready to go?"

"And," I said staggeringly, "what are we going for?"

"You'll find out in due time."

I didn't know what I was in for, and I did not know how to prepare for it. I'm not very good at handling secrets, especially if they're not my secrets.

We finally arrived at our destination, and my wife parked her van there was a lady on the sidewalk waiting for us.

My wife looked at me and said, "That's the lady who has my secret."

We got out of the van and I walked rather slowly toward the lady, not knowing if I should shout or run. She did not look like a dangerous lady with a dangerous secret, but I was going to be cautious nevertheless.

We greeted her, and my wife introduced me to her; then we walked to the back of her van, and I found out what that secret was.

I didn't quite know how to handle the secret or what to make of it, but I just smiled and helped transfer this "secret" from the lady's van to my wife's van.

As the transfer took place, my jaw dropped. I really could not believe what I was seeing. There was a harp and all the things that went with it. The secret was my wife had just purchased a professional harp. I did not know what she was going to make of it, but our travel home was very interesting as she described this new interest to me in detail.

In the next several weeks, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage learned how to play the harp. She watched a bunch of videos and was quite a fast learner.

She played the piano for years and did it for all our church services as long as I knew her. From what she told me, playing the piano helped her learn how to play the harp.

Every time I came home, I walked into the house and she was sitting there with her harp playing it. I discovered she was quite good with this harp as I listened to it.

I did not know very much about this kind of an instrument; as far as I was concerned, only angels played harps in heaven, which got me wondering.

Is there another secret that I don't know about?

Could she be playing this harp, preparing me for heaven?

I know my wife knows everything, and maybe there is this other secret she's not telling me for a reason.

One consolation is she's not playing fireballs. I can handle the harp preparing me for heaven, so I just sit back every time she played and enjoyed it.

After all, angels do play harps, and my wife is getting better at it every day. As she was playing her harp I thought of a verse of Scripture. "I will also praise thee with the psalter, even thy truth, O my God: unto thee will I sing with the harp, O thou Holy One of Israel" (Psalms 71:22).

Is going to be a wonderful time in heaven as we gather together listening to the Angels play their hearts as we worship the Lord together.

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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By Jim Denison

Matthew McConaughey quotes a Bible verse in remembering the Uvalde victims

Actor Matthew McConaughey spoke from the podium of the White House press briefing room this week, encouraging lawmakers to take action on gun violence and citing stories of the young victims of the mass shooting in his hometown of Uvalde, Texas.

In his speech, he told the story of ten-year-old Ellie Garcia, who had been attending a Baptist church with her uncle. According to McConaughey, Ellie had been preparing to read a Bible verse in the next Wednesday night service: "The verse was from Deuteronomy 6:5. 'And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy might.' That's who Ellie was becoming. But she never got to read it."

I invite you to read that verse for Ellie today, slowly. Now let's see why it is so vital to the future of our broken culture. An "age-appropriate" drag queen show for children?

From the firebombing of a pro-life pregnancy center to a man who told police he wanted to kill Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh, to divorce celebration parties, to the Smithsonian American Art Museum's so-called "age-appropriate" drag queen show for children age three and up, today's news reinforces the fact that we desperately need God to "heal our land" (2 Chronicles 7:14).

We have been discussing this week the path to such healing: "If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land" (my emphases).

If we do what God calls us to do, He will do what he promises to do. We have focused on the humility that admits we need what only God can do and the prayer that intercedes continually for our nation. Now let's turn to God's third imperative: "seek my face." Seek means to "search diligently." God's face is His personal presence.

Thus, to experience His healing for our lives and our land, we must do what Ellie Garcia was doing: we must devote ourselves personally and passionately to seeking intimacy with the Almighty.

Why?  
Returning from the Holy Land with a heavy heart

I returned yesterday from leading my latest study tour of Israel. Every time I travel to the Holy Land I seem to fall more deeply in love with the Jewish people. Their courage as they live surrounded by enemies who want to destroy them is coupled with a passion for life that is truly inspiring.

However, as I returned home, my heart was heavy for the Jewish people as well. Paul's testimony is mine: "My heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved" (Romans 10:1).

I saw scores of ultra-orthodox Jews gather at the Western Wall in their black and white clothing, long beards, and prayer shawls, their phylacteries on their foreheads and hands, rocking back and forth as they prayed. I watched a bar mitzvah as a young man was introduced formally into the Jewish faith. I was impressed again by the way the nation observes the Shabbat (the Sabbath)—everything closes from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday.

And yet, what Paul said of his Jewish people is still true today: "I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge" (v. 2). Knowledge could be translated "full understanding." Here is what the apostle meant: "For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness" (v. 3). They were trying to "establish" ("put into place") "their own" righteousness rather than submitting to "God's righteousness."

What they needed to do is what everyone needs to do: "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (v. 4).

"This is not your own doing"  
All religions, Judaism included, are the human attempt to worship and serve whatever the religion considers to be the ultimate reality. Muslims adhere to the "five pillars"; Buddhists try to follow the "four noble truths" and walk the "noble eightfold path"; Hindus commit themselves to ascetic rituals and disciplines. Christianity is different: our faith offers not a religion but a personal relationship with God. It recognizes that sinful humans cannot in our own efforts "establish" our own "righteousness" with a holy God. Because we could not climb up to Him, He climbed down to us in Christ. As a result, "By grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Ephesians 2:8–9).

Does this mean God expects no response on our part? On the contrary: "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (v. 10). We pray, read our holy Scriptures, give, and serve as do the Jews and adherents of other religions—not so we can find God, but because He has found us. Not so He will accept us, but because He has accepted us. Not so He will love us, but because He already loves us.

John Calvin was right: works do not save, but the saved do work.

Do you have all of God you want?

God promises his people, "You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13). Are you seeking the "face" of God today through his word, worship, and service? Are you loving him with all your heart, soul, and might? Are you responding to the gift of His Son with the gift of your



life in gratitude for such grace?  
Or are you settling for less than personal intimacy with the Almighty? Have you made your relationship with God into a religion about him? Have you segmented your life into "religion" and the "real world" and consigned God to your religious activities?  
Asked differently: Do you have all of God you want or all of God you need?

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 Passing Through

By Steve Williams  
Mitchell County



How many of us have been complaining about the time we are living in today? Well, if we would be truthful, most everyone has. Gas prices are up, food, utilities, going out to eat, everything is going through the roof. Think of the people on fixed income, newly married couples, moms and dads, trying to make decisions on how to cope with these crazy days that we are living in. If you're a Christian and you know your Bible, it speaks of these days and times that we are entering into. But to those of you who are Christians, I have some Good News. You say what is that? You're Just Passing Through this old world. This even goes for the lost person, but they don't have the hope and the same promise that Christians have.

Now, remember this if you're going somewhere different than where you are now. You have to pass through different places to get there. But what I have noticed is that there are a lot of people who fail to understand that we are all just passing through this world. I believe people think they are going to have permanent residence down here. How do you get that preacher? Because I never see them doing anything for the Lord. They don't go to church. They don't talk about the Lord until they are in a jam or someone has passed away or smashed their hand in the door. Many people act as if when you die, down here on earth it is all over with. Well, I'm here to tell you when you die down here on this old earth and you're a Christian, life has only just begun. Because we're passing through.

There may be someone who is not a Christian, maybe wondering how you can pass through this old world. Well, the Bible tells us in John 5:24 "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." This is another verse that tells us that there is only one way to heaven. You don't buy it because you couldn't afford it, You don't work for it because you cannot work enough to get it, you have to inherit it. So let's look at some things we will Pass through down here on this earth before we get to our final Home in Heaven.

1st You'll Pass-Through the Blood of Jesus Christ. This is simply saying that you have to believe in Jesus so that you will become a part of the family of God and so you can inherit the heaven to be your final home and resting place. When you believe this verse you will go to Jesus and He will cover you with His precious blood. 2nd You Pass Through The Fire & Trials of Life. Christians need to understand that God has promised us a safe landing, not a calm passage. As Christians, we will have to pass through the fires and trials of life. Brothers & Sisters let me challenge you not to go looking for trouble because trouble knows where to find you. Many times Christians give up when the fire gets hot. Folks the hotter the fire the purer the product will become. As Christians, we need to understand that all these fires and trials we have to face down here on earth we are just passing through. The Bad Days, Sickness, Heart Ache, Depression, and Financial Struggles will come but they are going to be left behind. Hey, when you find yourself at Wit's end you'll find God lives there. God proved that when the three Hebrew children found themselves in the fiery furnace, He was there with them. (Hebrew 3 tells us the story.) Lastly, after you have passed through the Blood of Jesus and the Fiery Trials of this life, then you will Pass Through the Gates of Heaven. When times are difficult, remind yourself, that you're just passing through.

#### Words of Wisdom:

- When times are difficult, remind yourself, that you're just passing through. Colossians 3:2 *Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.* God's Word the Bible
- When you feel like outsiders in this world remember, that you are and that you're just passing through. John 17:16 *They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.* God's Word The Bible
- When a Christian sees death we are reminded how short life really is, and how we are just passing through, Psalms 23:4 "Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death. I will fear no evil." God's Word The Bible

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



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# Bear Creek Baptist Church

## Help Us, O God, For You Alone Are Our Hope!

By Bruce Cannon  
Mitchell County



As I write this article there are so many things America is grappling with...issues that must be decided biblically or we will be carried further and further away from God. All of these issues need to be prayed over by those who understand that the Lord is the only One that can lead us through them and that His will and His ways must be followed! Check out a few of the ones most pressing on my heart:

\*The Supreme Court is grappling with what to do with Roe vs. Wade. We all know what should be done. It should be overturned. Sixty-plus million babies have been aborted and this current Court has the votes to be able to do so. Yet, they are hesitating in announcing a decision. Why? Because of the fear of reprisal. Already justices have been threatened. If they do what is right (overturning the law) it is predicted there will be mass rioting all across America. If they overturn, they will be in danger of personal attacks upon themselves or their family. They are in a very difficult position! We must pray for them!

\*The economy is in shambles. Inflation currently is at a 40-year high. Gas prices are terrible. Food costs have gone up considerably. Seniors and others on a fixed or limited income are having to decide what to cut out: medicine, food, bills owed, etc. How we need the Lord's help on this issue!

\*This week we took a huge step away from the Lord and His will by reopening a Palestinian embassy in Jerusalem. The previous administration closed it and by doing so recognized, as the Bible teaches, that Jerusalem and Israel belong to the Jews; not the Palestinians. God honors those who honor His chosen people: the Jews, not the Palestinians.

\*The NC Senate voted overwhelmingly this week to allow medicinal marijuana as a legal inhaled drug in North Carolina. Even some of the more liberal thinkers believe this is a huge mistake as it will lead to the recreational sale of marijuana here as it has done so in so many states and too much greater addiction. How sad!

\*The shortage of workers in 2022 is leading to a further lessening of the production of desperately needed goods. Raw materials needed for food production, the building industry, and other very important services are not being produced simply because of a shortage of workers. This also is further hurting the economy because we are still giving out stimulus checks, to those who could be and should be working, when we do not have the funds to do so. The lessening of the labor force is also causing decreased federal, state, and social security taxes to be paid which also further hurts our economy.

Who can lead us out of this "darkness" into the light? Only the Lord! And, He can! He can help us if we will seek Him. He will provide for us if we will turn to Him. While I don't see Washington doing that you and I can. We can stand in the gap and beg the Lord for His mercy. This verse has been used so many times but it is still very relevant: *"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."* He will hear and He will heal if we will humble ourselves.

On this, another birthday of our Nation, pray. Encourage others to do so. Seek His Face. He is our hope. Claim His promises. Be at peace as much as possible as you understand that no matter what, He will help those who call upon Him. He will be found by those who seek Him with all their heart! Amen!

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

*The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; Isaiah 61:1*



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Marion Lighthouse:  
Reopening the Well of Revival  
By Marion Stephan  
McDowell County

As the Bible’s Abram and Jacob discovered, a new name often accompanies a new vision from God. The Hickory Aglow Lighthouse, which has been meeting in Marion, North Carolina since February, has now been transformed into the “Marion Aglow Lighthouse.” And this, says the group’s president, Pat James, reflects “a new assignment and a new vision” from God.

James explains that when North Carolina lifted most public meeting restrictions in the summer of 2021, the Lighthouse leadership team initiated a prayerful search for a live meeting location. The search culminated in a combination of in-person and online meetings which began in February at His Place Worship Center in Marion. (The Lighthouse had been meeting via Zoom since October 2020.)

The leadership team soon began discussing a name change. Then, says James, she received a confirmation from God as a result of her study of Genesis 26. This chapter describes Isaac’s efforts to re-dig wells that had been stopped up by the Philistines after Abraham’s death. After continual interference from the herdsmen of Gerar, Isaac’s men eventually succeeded in the well-named Rehoboth. James emerged from this study convinced that the Hickory Lighthouse was called to “reopen the wells of revival in the Marion community, and that's why we needed to be there.”

A visit by the leadership team to the 1896 Shearer Schoolhouse Holy Ghost revival marker in Murphy, North Carolina reaffirmed to James that the team “was on the right track” with its efforts to reopen wells of revival. “God’s greater plan was for us to be there.” The Marion leaders visited the site, along with other area Aglow leaders, as part of Aglow’s Western North Carolina Spring Gathering on May 27-29.

Hickory Aglow initially set up Zoom meetings in October 2020, amid public meeting restrictions. At the time, James saw online meetings as an opportunity to “reach people outside the walls of our buildings and around the world.” This emphasis has continued in the current live meetings, which are also broadcast on Zoom and Facebook Live. However, James is not limiting outreach efforts to the world-wide web. Following the next meeting, at 10 a.m. on Saturday, July 9, she will be inviting attendees to participate in a door-to-door evangelism effort.

James, a Christian author with 35 years of Christian counseling experience, will be teaching on “Re-opening the Wells of Revival” at this meeting.

The Marion Aglow Lighthouse is a chapter of Aglow International. Per the Aglow International website at [www.aglow.org](http://www.aglow.org), “Aglow is an international organization of women and men in more than 170 nations of the world, presenting Biblical principles as solutions to the challenging issues of our time.”

Marion Lighthouse meetings, including worship, Biblical and prophetic speaker messages, and fellowship, occur at 10 a.m. on the second Saturday of each month. The doors of His Place are opened at 9:45 a.m. for finger food and fellowship. Additional information about this lighthouse, including links to the Zoom and Facebook Live meetings, are available at Marion Aglow’s website and Facebook page: <https://aglownet.org/marionnc/> and <https://www.facebook.com/marion-aglow2022>, respectively. Interested persons may sign up on the website to receive monthly email newsletters. Readers may also receive related Facebook notifications by following the Facebook page.

Marion Stephan is retired and is active in His Place Worship Center, Marion, North Carolina.



No Regrets - Why Does God  
Contend With Man?  
By Dean Honeycutt  
Mitchell County

When my boys were small, we would wrestle. The contest was easy because I was much bigger. It was a lot of fun. They would struggle with me and sometimes I would let them win. But the older and bigger they got the struggle became harder. I wrestled with my boys because they love to wrestle and test their strength. Just recently I wrestled with my youngest son, and he got the best of me.

In Genesis 32 Jacob wrestles with Jesus Christ during the night until the break of day. Of course, wrestling with God is no contest. During this wrestling match, the Lord dislocated Jacob’s hip to remind him of his contest with the Lord. The struggle with the Lord was for Jacob’s benefit, not the Lord’s. Jacob was allowed to prevail with the Lord and the Lord would bless Jacob and change his name to Israel. Israel would be God's chosen people to be a blessing to the nations and to glorify the one true God.

We know that Israel failed miserably. Israel has struggled with God for many years. In Acts chapter 9 we see Paul traveling to Damascus where he is struck blind by Jesus and falls to the ground in fear. The Lord asks Paul why do you keep resisting me i.e... why do you keep struggling against me? Paul cannot resist the grace of God and he surrenders his life to God and becomes a great missionary and penning most of the New Testament.

Why does God contend with us? Why does God struggle with us? We know that God destroyed the world with a flood only sparing Noah and his family because the world was so wicked. It seems that God would get fed up with His creation and put an end to all life. I know the Bible teaches that one-day God will judge all people. The righteous will enjoy everlasting life while the unrighteous will suffer in the Lake of Fire.

But why is God so patient with us? Repeatedly we insult God and disobey God. We do things in America that are an Abomination against a Holy God. Yet God continues to contend with man. Why does God continue to struggle with us when we blatantly disregard Him?

The only Biblical explanation I can think of is God loves us despite our actions and inactions. Despite our moral failure and disregard for His creation and kindness. The Bible teaches us.

2 Peter 3:9 KJV “[9] *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*”

I am grateful for the long-suffering of God. Something I realize in this struggle and contest with God is that God is not in a contest and God is not in a struggle with us. Just as I always won with my small boys, God always wins. So, it is not a contest. The struggle is on our part, not God’s.

God may allow me to struggle in this life and often life feels like a contest. However, these struggles always lead to a stronger faith and a deeper relationship with Christ. We are created in the image of God and marred by sin; however, God wants to restore His image through a relationship with His Son Jesus Christ. My struggle is not with God as the Lord said in Job 40:2 “*shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct Him?*” My struggle is with myself overcoming my pride and selfishness. I want to be more like Jesus and to be more like Jesus the battle and struggle begin in my heart. My pride and self well must be defeated by the Grace and Mercy of a loving and patient Savior.

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).



Paul Boyd, co-pastor of His Place Worship Center, and Pat James, president of the Marion Aglow International Lighthouse, are pictured in front of His Place Worship Center.



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When Do We Rebuke?

By Kurt Bomar  
Avery County

Of all the gifts we get from the Spirit, this one is probably the most confusing. First of all, if you think you have the gift of rebuking, you don't! It is not something you should enjoy. It should hurt you as much as the person you have to correct. In fact, it's not really a gift at all. It's a duty that we must, on occasion, perform.

The next thing that's confusing is trying to determine when we should reproach someone and when we should "mind our own business". I want to share some thoughts with you regarding this dilemma.

There is Biblical support for both positions:  
Jesus spent all of Luke 14 rebuking the Pharisees when they attacked him for healing on the Sabbath. Yet Jesus, in Matthew 17 tells Peter to pay the Temple tax even though he doesn't owe it. What was his reasoning? "So that we don't offend them: (the Pharisees)."

"So I'm confused," you say. "Do I bear my neighbor's infirmity, or do I correct him for edification?"

The answer is you do what the Lord tells you to do at any given moment. Sometimes He will tell you to bear with those who are weak. Other times, He'll tell you to love them enough to give them a word of correction even if it means you might get yelled at.

God gives us broad principles in His Word and then says, "See Me for further instructions!" He wants us to ask Him for wisdom for the situation. He enjoys interacting with you. He wants to be involved not just in the situation, but with you. "if any man lacks wisdom, let him ask of God who giveth to all men generously" James 4:8.

He will show you what to do, and it will be right, blending reproof with love. Selah (think about it)

Kurt Bomar is pastor of Walnut Grove Church.



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Madison County

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You're always listening to us  
As we walk this pilgrim way.*

*You long to hear from us again  
Each time we look above  
Help us see how much you care  
Each day you give your love.*

*Lord it seems like manna  
When we put our trust in thee  
And call upon your mighty name  
You send sweet grace continually.*

*As men look up from earth below  
And some from oceans shore  
Our awesome great creator  
Looks down from heavens door.*



A Grateful Girl

Grateful Girl Gathering Women's Conference Returns for 2022

By Patti Jensen  
Mitchell County



Have you ever felt the need to connect with other Christian women in your community? Have you ever had a prayer for a closer relationship with your friends and for ways to impact your community? Have you ever prayed for God to help you be more grateful even on the tough days?

You are not alone! The Grateful Girl Gathering was born from prayers just like that...Praying for God to reveal how we could use our gifts and talents for Him to bless other women just like us! We are women of different ages and different churches who were seeking a unique event that could bring women together to worship, study God's word, hear amazing speakers, and have fun!

The Grateful Girl Gathering Christian Women's Conference returns in 2022 bringing an event to encourage women with great speakers, amazing worship music, and a time to connect and be encouraged.

The Grateful Girl Gathering will be held Saturday, August 27th at the Cross Street Commerce Center in Spruce Pine, NC. In its 2nd year, the conference team is planning for a great day for women of all ages! In 2021, women from all across WNC as well as other states attended the conference. "The planning team for the Grateful Girl Gathering is made up of women from different area churches and are of different ages and stages in life," said Patti Jensen, one of the team members. "We hope that women make plans to attend this year to hear the speakers, experience the worship, and enjoy the fun activities allowing them to connect with other women from our area."

Churches are encouraged to bring their women's groups and there is a new group registration process this year that makes registration much easier. There is also a new feature to gift tickets to women to bless them with an opportunity to attend.

Tickets will go on sale July 1, 2022, at [www.gratefulgirlgathering.com](http://www.gratefulgirlgathering.com). For updates and notices, those interested are encouraged to sign up for the conference newsletter on the website.

The event is sponsored by several businesses and churches throughout the region. If your business or church is interested in helping to make the event possible, you can visit [www.gratefulgirlgathering.com/sponsors](http://www.gratefulgirlgathering.com/sponsors).

"There are a lot of factors in this world that are negative and discouraging," said Jensen. "But we want to remind the women in our communities that God is good, that He loves them and has a special purpose for their lives," said Jensen. "Our desire is that women will come to the conference and feel a connection to God and the other women in attendance!"

For more information visit [www.gratefulgirlgathering.com](http://www.gratefulgirlgathering.com) and follow along on Facebook and Instagram at [@agratefulgirlgathering](https://www.instagram.com/agratefulgirlgathering)



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# Mt. Olive Baptist Church

## Fish Fry to Fund New Scholarship at MHU

By Jan Caldwell  
Madison County

Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church is pleased to announce the creation of a new scholarship for Mars Hill University students in honor of Charity Ray. A fifth-generation resident of Mars Hill, Ms. Ray worked at Mars Hill College from 8-1-70 to 7-31-2009 as a Library Assistant. She was also a lifetime member of Mt. Olive Baptist Church. It is because of her dedication to Mt. Olive Missionary Baptist Church, Mars Hill University, and the people of Madison County that Mt. Olive Church is establishing this scholarship in honor of this remarkable woman. She helped both organizations as well as numerous individuals and therefore needs to be remembered. This scholarship will cause that to happen.

According to one of her closest friends, Charity Ray, “Never said bad things about anybody.” She loved animals, flowers, Mt. Olive Baptist Church, the Mt. Olive Gospel Singers, the Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School, Mars Hill University, MHU students, baking cakes, painting in watercolor, and most of all Jesus. The same friend also reported that she always helped others.

She was also a much-loved member of the community and Mt. Olive Baptist. Many people will remember her as the local artist whose calendar of watercolor paintings hung on their walls each year.

This year’s Mt. Olive fundraising Fish Fry will be at the Mars Hill City Park from 12 noon until 3 pm on Sunday, July 3. The church has agreed to donate all of the proceeds from its annual Fish Fry to begin creating the endowed scholarship. When a scholarship is endowed, it can be given annually from the interest earned by the endowment in perpetuity.

Pastor William Hamilton of Mt. Olive Baptist announced the creation of the scholarship this week.

“We have been trying to figure out the best way to honor Sister Charity since she passed away more than a year ago. When we received a donation in her honor, we knew it was time to get serious about what to do. We all agreed that a scholarship to help her beloved students would be the most fitting way for her to be honored and remembered. She was always helping students in need, so we figured, there was no better way to keep her legacy going.”

Hamilton went on to say that Mars Hill University is helping Mount Olive with the campaign to get the scholarship fully funded. Those who would like to contribute to the scholarship may give online at <https://www.mhu.edu/alumni/giving/>. They will need to select “other” in the dropdown box and note Charity Ray Memorial Endowed Scholarship in the box provided. Look for more information in the near future.

The annual Fish Fry in the Mars Hill City Park Pavilion down the hill from the swimming pool is scheduled this year for Sunday, July 3 from 12 noon until 3 pm. The menu includes fried fish, homemade hush puppies, baked beans, coleslaw, and a drink for \$10. Desserts are available for an extra donation.

Again this year, merchants in town have been generous in their support. The Wagon Wheel, Ingles, Big Ivy Guns, The Hardware at Mars Hill (Builders Express), Metco, Walmart, Ledford’s, CVS, and Bojangles have all contributed to the event, for which the church is grateful.

The church used the money from last year’s Fish Fry to begin renovations on the church. Along with a grant from Sacred Places of Appalachia and donations from friends in the community, the money from the food and raffle sales last year was used to put a new roof on the church. Other exterior renovations such as grouting and painting the building’s exterior were also completed since last year’s Fish Fry. Interior renovations are still going on thanks to the generous help of community friends.

Pastor Hamilton continued, “We are so happy to have gotten the Fish Fry going again after a few years of not being able to have it. It is a wonderful Independence Day weekend tradition.”

“We are grateful to our community for their support of this event. We hope all of our friends will be able to join us at the park on the first Sunday in July for this longstanding part of the holiday weekend. We’re praying that this event will generate the \$10,000 it will take to endow the scholarship and we’re grateful for the community’s help in reaching this wonderful goal.”

*Jan Caldwell, a retired Communication instructor, is a member of Mt. Olive Baptist Church in Mars Hill, NC. She is on both the scholarship and Fish Fry committees*

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











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Why the New Covenant Is Better Than the Old Covenant

By Christopher L. Scott  
Moses Lake, WA



If you’ve lived in extreme cold you know about the difference between single-pane windows and newer double-pane windows. Single-pane windows let a cold draft in that you can feel if you place your hand near the window.

Technology improved and window companies started making double-pane windows with argon gas between the two sheets of glass. Two pieces of glass with gas between them provide extra insulation to keep cold air out and warm air in. Anyone who has lived in a house with both can testify about the drastic difference between each of them.

Hebrews 8 reveals that Christ has initiated a new covenant which is better than the old covenant God had made with Israel based on the Law.

*“But now He [Jesus] has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises . . . When He said, “A new covenant,” He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear”* (Hebrews 8:6, 13, NASB)

The Old Testament Law—which was part of the old covenant—had four purposes. One, it showed the sins of Israel. Two, it showed Israel their need for a savior. Three, it showed them what the savior would look like when he arrived. Four, it showed them how to live differently from all the nations around them.

We should not be surprised that the author of Hebrews says the New Covenant of Jesus Christ is better than the Old Covenant of the Law. The author of Hebrews told us *“Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant”* (Hebrews 7:22). And that better Covenant is because of our Lord Jesus Christ who died for us and whom we are saved because of our faith in Him.

But why is the New Covenant better than the Old? The New Covenant is better than the Old because it is based on Christ’s blood which pays for the sins of everyone who believes in Him, *“for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins”* (Matthew 26:28). We no longer have to offer blood offerings for our sins because Christ has offered his blood on behalf of us. The New Covenant is also better because we are ministers of it and get to participate in it, *“He has enabled us to be ministers of his new covenant. This is a covenant not of written laws, but of the Spirit. The old written covenant ends in death; but under the new covenant, the Spirit gives life”* (2 Corinthians 3:6, NLT).

Anyone who has tried to follow God’s Law will tell you it was tiring. But anyone that has lived under grace, based on Christ’s death for us will tell you it is liberating. Jesus Christ is the beginning of a better Covenant.

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



Sudoku

Solution on page 14

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

The Importance of Joy

By Marlene Houk  
Burke County



*“And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.”* John 17:13

The Other Half of Church, is a book about combining “brain science with the Bible to identify how to overcome spiritual stagnation by living a full-brained faith.” The book discusses “the four ingredients necessary to develop and maintain a vibrant transformational community where spiritual formation occurs, relationships flourish, and the toxic spread of narcissism is eradicated.” One of those four ingredients is joy and this article summarizes chapter three entitled, Joy: The Face of Jesus That Transforms.

Joy is influenced most profoundly by our right brain. While our left brain uses “logical thinking, problem-solving, strategies, and language,” our right brain leads the way. The right side of our brain is the fast track, processing at 6 times per second, and the left side is the slow track at 5 times per second. Our right brains control our relationships (including with God), emotions (including joy), character growth, and identity. The author says, “If we want to grow and transform our character into the character of Jesus, we must involve activities that stimulate and develop the right brain.” Since the “right-brain runs at the speed of joy,” restoring this emotion becomes critical to all learning.

We learn the truth about God using our left brain, but our relationship with God leads our learning. That is what the authors meant by the book title. We offer church members much information, but often we fail to encourage the use of the right brain; the character formation. We emphasize “beliefs, doctrine, willpower, and strategies but neglect right-brain loving attachments, joy, emotional development, and identity.” Using only information hinders experiencing God’s love in distress. Both the left and right brains should synchronize information growing in the relationship. “When joy is low, our brain is not in a state that responds well to spiritual practices, including reading the Bible.” We need joy, relationships, identity, and community. When we restore these, including joy, acting more like Jesus naturally becomes possible.

In Chapter Three, the book explores the richness of joy and its benefits. Joy reduces the trauma of recovery and calms our painful emotions. Jesus exemplified the idea of looking beyond our circumstances to the joy of God’s presence in Hebrews 12:2 when it says in the middle of the verse, *“who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross...”*

Maintaining relationships when in trouble brings joy from the comfort of our friend’s presence. God, Himself shows great joy in being with us, and this creates a bond between us and Him. Likewise, the pleasure of connecting with our friends mixes with the negative emotions, taking the edge off the pain. The comfort we feel in their presence helps to maintain our relationship during crises which brings joy to help diffuse sorrow.

The Other Half of Church offers beginning exercises in restoring joy. The first step is silent gratitude by feeling a grateful memory bodily and connecting to God through it. The second is to improve our relational skills by seeking community and bonding together. Practicing joy, diffuses negative emotions, heals our trauma, and redirects our steps toward God. When we experience Christ-like joy in our relationships we realize its importance in our healing and spiritual transformation.

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)

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Typewriters, Computers, the Law, and Jesus

By Tracy Jessup

*“Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed. Therefore the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith.”* (Galatians 3:23-26)

In today’s passage, the Apostle Paul uses dramatic imagery to communicate the role of the Law of Moses in bringing people to faith in Christ. He states that the law was a guardian and disciplinarian. According to most scholars, in Paul’s culture, this idea is a reference to a slave or servant who, though not the teacher, was assigned to watch out for the student on his way to school and help with things such as manners, and discipline, and perhaps even schoolwork. This would continue until the child’s “coming of age” (i.e. late adolescence).

In the same way, God’s people were guarded and disciplined by the Law to be able to recognize the revelation of faith in Christ. The law was never meant to justify us before God. Instead, it was to make us aware of our sin and lead us to faith in Christ, who not only kept the Law perfectly but indeed is the fulfillment of the Law.

New Testament scholar Scot McKnight writes, “I often compare the role of the law in history to the role typewriters have played in the development of word processing. The technology and idea of a typewriter were eventually developed into an electronic, faster, and far more complex computer that does word processing. But when typing on a computer, we realize that we are still using the old manual typewriter’s technology. Further, we realize that the computer far transcends the typewriter. Everything that a typewriter wanted to be when it was a little boy (and more!) is now found in the computer. This compares to the law. Everything the law wanted to be when it was young (as revealed to Moses) is found now in Christ and the life of the Spirit. Thus, when a Christian lives in the Spirit and under Christ, that Christian is not living contrary to the law, but is living in the transcendence of the law. It is for this very reason that life lived primarily under the law is wrong.”

McKnight continues, “When the computer age arrived, we put away our manual typewriters because they belonged to the former era. Paul’s critique of the Judaizers is that they are typing on manual typewriters after computers are on the desk! He calls them to put the manual typewriters away. But in putting them away, we do not destroy them. We fulfill them by typing on the computers. Every maneuver on a computer is the final hope of the manual typewriter. ‘Now that faith/Christ has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law’ - but not because the law is contrary to the promises; rather, it is because the law is fulfilled in Christ and the Spirit in a manner similar to the way a typewriter is fulfilled in the technology of a computer. And I am profoundly thankful for both!” (The NIV Application Commentary: Galatians, p. 184).

Our only hope of becoming a child of God (cf. 3:26) and a spiritual descendant of Abraham (cf. Galatians 3:29) is through faith in Jesus Christ – not our ability to follow and keep the Law. In Jesus Christ, God has done what the Law could not do for us and what we could not do for ourselves.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the law that shows us our sin and leads us to faith in Jesus.

*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.*



One If By Land Two If By Sea

By Steve Bietz  
Burke County

The enduring fame of the Old North Church began on the evening of April 18th, 1775. That is when the Church Sexton, Robert Newman, and Vestryman, Capt. John Pulling Jr. climbed up into the steeple of the Old North Church. They held two lanterns as a signal from Paul Revere that the British were heading to Lexington and Concord and were crossing the Charles River in rowboats, thus coming by sea and not taking the longer land route. Poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow would put the incident into a poetic story in his poem, Paul Revere's Ride.

The Old North Church was the perfect location to be sending a signal across the Charles River. It was the tallest structure in Boston at the time, some 175 feet tall. The signal lanterns would be the event that ignited the American Revolution. Built-in 1723, Christ Church in the City of Boston, is known to all as the Old North Church and is Boston's oldest surviving church building in the city and is also the most visited historical site in the city of Boston. "One if by land, two if by sea" would become a well-remembered phrase that helped launch the colonies into war with England to win her liberty.

One of the original lanterns that were used by the patriots at the Old North Church to signal the folk in Charlestown that the British were coming, still exists. You can see it at the Museum of Concord.

It is not uncommon for lights to guide us as we make our way in this life. Lighthouses were long used to warn ships of danger. We see yellow caution lights as we drive our cars when we are warned of construction, school zones, and countless other situations. We know about warning lights that give us the signal of what is approaching.

The Bible shows us lanterns of light that supply everyone who watches, signals of what the future holds and what we need to be doing. No, not that the British are coming but rather that Jesus is coming. It is in Luke's Book of Acts that we see him describing our Lord's ascension and return for us. *"Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who you saw taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."* Acts 1:9-11.

We have been given the signal, not from a lantern in a church's bell tower, but from God's Holy Word. A signal of a coming Savior. A signal that asks us to watch and be ready like the Minutemen of the Revolutionary War. John in the Book of Revelation puts it this way as he quotes the Lord's words: *"Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."* Revelation 22:7. Are we using God's Holy Word as a lantern of light? The Psalmist reports this: *"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."* May we each see the signal lantern and allow the light of the Word of God to guide us to the liberty from sin that we are each promised. May we each proclaim, not Paul Revere's words that the British are coming, but instead that Jesus is coming!

Steve Bietz, Pastor, Morganton Seventh day Adventist Church.



*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Romans 8:1-4*

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Freedom Life Holds Mentor Training Retreat

By Jim Smith  
McDowell County



Did you know that more than 600,000 adults are released from America’s prisons each year? Each year, Freedom Life helps many justice-involved individuals reintegrate into their community through successful life coaching, resourcing, and mentoring. Most of these men and women need food, clothing, housing, jobs, and much more. Their prospects, however, are generally unwelcoming. More than one-third have a physical or mental health struggle, and over three-quarters have a history of substance misuse.

Many formerly incarcerated men and women return to some of the poorest communities in the country, where they typically lack established social bonds and few supports and services to help them restart their lives. It's hardly surprising that recidivism rates are high, given the large gap between complex needs and limited options for dealing with them. In reality, half of the formerly incarcerated individuals (50 percent) return to prison within three years of their release.

The situation will only get worse unless effective measures to reduce recidivism are developed. The number of people incarcerated in the United States has continuously risen to more than 2.3 million men and women.

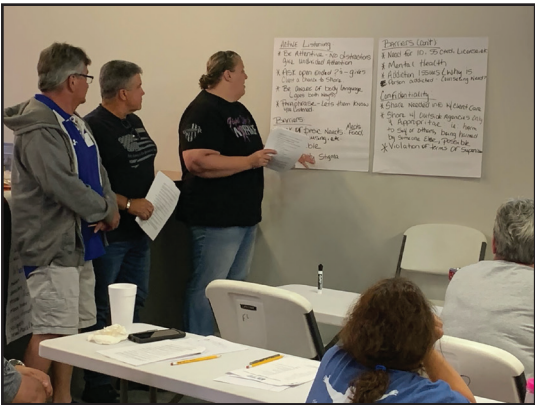
Almost all of them will be freed at some point, and unless something changes, more than half of them will be unable to reintegrate into their communities successfully and will be sent back to jail.

Freedom Life reentry mentors work alongside Case Managers to help formerly incarcerated men and women make the transition from life on the inside to life outside the prison walls, assisting them in stabilizing, rebuilding their lives, and finally achieving self-sufficiency and improved well-being. We provide training and ongoing support to our mentors, who partner with, encourage, and support their mentees (incarcerated adults over the age of 18) as they walk through the demands of reentry and reintegration into the community.

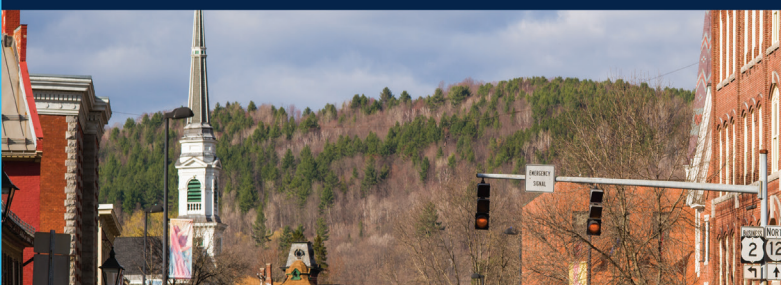
Melissaa Nealley, Director of Client Care shared that an integral part of the mentor program is letting the clients understand that there is hope and can be a sense of normalcy in reentering society. “We want to make sure individuals know they are valued and can have a positive future. They need to know God loves them with skin on. Our mentors can be that skin.”

For more than a decade, Freedom Life has proved that well-structured, well-run mentoring programs may improve at-risk individuals' social, behavioral, and academic outcomes. Mentoring works, according to research, when a person develops a trusting relationship with a mentor who provides constant, nonjudgmental support and direction.

Jim Smith is an area Worship Arts Director; He is the Development Director at Freedom Life Ministries, and run a production company [wjscreativegroup.com](http://wjscreativegroup.com)



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



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Praising The King

By Regina McIntosh  
Yancey County

The heart, the soul  
Are all aglow  
With love that rains down  
Hope and joy  
Peace and passion from  
above  
Lighting the spirit  
With sensitivity, fulfilling  
Every thought, each dream  
Beautiful grace  
Sent on the wings of faith

The wonder of a love  
Flowing through the veins  
Inspiring such trust  
Belief that awakens thanks  
To the One who gives  
His ultimate gift  
The life that He lives  
Dying on a tree  
Inviting me to be free  
Through His deliverance  
From the darkest grief  
He is the Savior  
The One who makes a way  
When all hope was lost  
He always knew the cost  
But still went to the cross

The miracle of His love  
Fills hearts with assurance  
He will always be available

Answering prayers  
With His tender compas-  
sion  
Pulling the lost  
From the murkiest waters  
Keeping them secure  
In the arms of a harmony  
So warm and pleasing  
It feels like He has over-  
come  
The loneliest night  
The demons of fright  
The dread of a plight  
That seeks to destroy

His love is a gift  
That gives unconditionally  
With joy and faith  
Abundant hope and grace  
A light that never fades  
With His still small voice  
He gives us all a choice  
And we can call upon His  
name  
Whisper through faith  
He relieves all pain  
Paints the soul in hues  
That glow with adoration  
His love is forever stirring  
Hearts to overflowing

I'm so thankful – eternally  
praising my King  
He is my everything!



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

Summer Camp

By Grace Holbrooks  
Avery, Burke, Mitchell, and Watauga Counties

The summer of 2022 will be the 35th year for Carolina Cross Connection – a summer camp for youth and adults. In-  
dividuals and youth groups from churches will come together  
as a community to help meet the various needs of people  
throughout North Carolina. Students and adults will spend  
the camp week growing in relationships with their neighbors and each other while  
completing safe access projects.

Our Home Repair program will be held at four locations throughout North  
Carolina. The counties that are served in this area are Avery, Burke, Mitchell,  
and Watauga. There will be multiple camp weeks held at each location during  
the summer of 2022. We will be in the communities of these camps for multiple  
weeks during June and July.

As an organization, Carolina Cross Connection aims to connect churches to  
communities and build relationships with people they meet, create a safe space for  
people to learn and share about Jesus, let members of our camp and local commu-  
nities know they are loved, and serve alongside local agencies to meet the greatest  
needs in their community.

During a week at Carolina Cross Connection, students and adults from all  
around the country come together to form a community centered on Jesus. These  
volunteers form work groups, teams of 7 to 8 campers, that will go out each day  
of the week to work on projects scheduled by the CCC staff. These projects will  
help make life more pleasant for someone in need and may include light home  
repair, painting, cleaning up yards, and always sharing love with the people with  
whom we work. In the evenings, campers will return to camp to enjoy recreation,  
sharing, fellowship time, singing, skits, campfires, and worship programs led by  
the camp staff. A week at CCC provides an opportunity for students and adults to  
share the love of Jesus with each other and with others in the community.

If you or anyone you know might need some of the services that Carolina Cross  
Connection provides you can reach out to 980-439-4514 or [ccc@carolinacross-connection.org](mailto:ccc@carolinacross-connection.org).

My name is Grace Holbrooks, and I am a Camp Director for Carolina Cross Con-  
nection this summer and serving in Avery, Burke, Mitchell, and Watauga counties.  
This is my fourth summer on staff with Carolina Cross Connection and I couldn't  
imagine my summers any other way! I am excited to get to know the communities  
in these counties this summer and serve alongside them.



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MITCHELL COUNTY, NC



# YOUR GOVERNMENT PAGES

## NC Senate District 47



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

The North Carolina Senate passed HB 755 – Parents’ Bill of Rights to provide additional transparency for parents who want to be involved in their child’s school or learn more about what is being taught in the classroom. Parents need to have confidence that their children are learning appropriate material and this legislation sets a path for parents to request materials related to in-class instruction to see for themselves what is being taught in their child’s classroom.

In May, a Wake County elementary school teacher used flashcards to teach colors to preschoolers that depicted a “pregnant man.” Confusing children about human biology and discussing gender identity and sexual orientation are totally inappropriate in the K-3 curriculum. This legislation sets standards for age-appropriate instruction for our youngest, most impressionable students. This legislation also solidifies a parent’s right to know about the mental and physical well-being of their child. Recently, a middle school in Michigan issued guidance to teachers to hide from a child’s parents the child’s wish to be called a different name and use a different pronoun than the one the child’s family uses. So, when communicating with the parents, teachers use masculine pronouns and the child’s given birth name, but at school, the child is called by a chosen feminine name and referred to with feminine pronouns. HB 755 – Parents’ Bill of Rights would require that parents be notified if their child wants to use different pronouns in school.

Recent polling by WRAL/SurveyUSA showed wide support in our state for legislation prohibiting the teaching of sexual orientation or gender identity to our youngest students. Fifty-eight percent of parents polled and 58% of adults polled support the legislation, with 45% strongly supporting a ban. In a Florida poll, 52% of Democratic primary voters agreed that K-3 students should not be taught about sexual orientation by their classroom teachers; however, only one Democrat in the North Carolina Senate voted with the Republicans for the passage of this legislation.

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

Welcome to summer in western North Carolina! Our weather has certainly been heating up, but I hope you have been able to enjoy your time outside while staying safe in the heat.

Our calendar at the N.C. Department of Labor has been busy in June, and we continue an exciting travel schedule in July. During June, I was able to attend several Carolina Star – our highest safety honor – award ceremonies, including presentations at Biogen in Durham, LANXESS in Dallas, Monteith Construction in Wilmington, and InServ Corporation in Fuquay-Varina. Congratulations to employees and leaders at each of these companies who have proven their commitment and dedication to workplace safety!

You may remember hearing about the Winston Weaver fertilizer plant fire that occurred earlier this year in Winston-Salem. Thanks to the swift action and leadership of the Winston-Salem Fire Department and Chief Trey Mayo, the department brought calm to the citizens of the city and helped ensure a positive outcome to this dangerous situation. Our Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Division opened an inspection into the fire, and without the tremendous assistance of the fire department, the critical information necessary for our OSH activity could not have been obtained. I was pleased to attend the City of Winston-Salem’s public safety news conference on June 8 to present Chief Mayo and the department with a letter and certificate of appreciation.

The 2022 safety awards banquet season is quickly coming to a close. During June, we recognized hundreds of employers at banquets in Raleigh, Winston-Salem, Monroe, Gastonia, Lincolnton, Asheville, and more. Our final banquets of the year will take place in July. I sincerely thank the nearly 2,000 employers who applied and qualified for awards this year. Congratulations!

On July 17-20, I will join other state labor commissioners and labor department officials at the annual National Association of Government Labor Officials (NAGLO) conference. Last year’s conference was canceled due to the pandemic, so I am even more excited to attend this year’s event and meet my counterparts from around the country. We will discuss issues related to workplace safety, wage and hour laws, and other labor-related topics. I look forward to reporting back to you about the NAGLO conference next month. In just a few days, we will celebrate Independence Day, July 4. May we all be thankful for the freedoms that abound in this great nation. Enjoy the holiday and stay safe!

## NC Senate District 46



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

Happy Independence Day! Since its founding, America has been and continues to be, a beacon of hope for people across the world who yearn for freedom. As President Reagan once said, “If we lose freedom here, there is no place to escape to. This is the last stand on Earth.” As you celebrate on the 4th, take time to be thankful for the hard-won freedoms we enjoy in this country. Here are a few legislative highlights from the month of June: The House and Senate are diligently working to put together and pass necessary budget adjustments for our 2-year budget. It is our goal to pass the budget by July 1, so that we can adjourn by the 4th of July. Time will tell if we will be able to pull that off! More details to follow in the next edition. Earlier this month the North Carolina Senate passed House Bill 755, known as the “Parents’ Bill of Rights.” This bill supports a strong partnership between parents and educators and prioritizes the safety of students. Only one Senate Democrat voted to support the bill. Republicans remain dedicated to fighting for parental involvement in education, including school choice. The “Parents’ Bill of Rights” includes several measures that broaden the rights of parents in education. The bill provides a pathway for parents to request materials related to in-class instruction, notifies parents of the health services offered at their child’s school at the beginning of each school year, and notifies parents of changes in the name or pronoun used by their child at school and notifies parents of any changes in services or monitoring of their child’s mental, emotional, or physical health. It prohibits instruction on sexual orientation or gender identity as a part of the curriculum in kindergarten through third grade (like 5 to 9-year-old kids don’t need to be taught any sexualized materials) and informs parents of their legal rights and responsibilities relating to their child’s education. It is now in the House for consideration. The Senate also passed Senate Bill 766, a law-and-order bill targeting organized retail crime. The bill is a two-pronged effort that will help business owners, consumers, and law enforcement. It elevates penalties for all degrees of organized retail crime and levies additional penalties for property damage and assaults committed during a theft. A new provision will allow business owners to retrieve property stolen during a theft more quickly. In North Carolina, law enforcement agencies have busted retail crime rings and recovered hundreds of thousands of dollars in merchandise. Senate Bill 766 also creates new transparency standards for online marketplaces that host third-party sellers, putting consumers in a better position to know who and where they are buying goods from online. The bill is supported by the North Carolina Retail Merchants Association, the North Carolina Conference of District Attorneys, the North Carolina Chiefs of Police, and the North Carolina Sheriffs Association. The bill passed unanimously and is now in the House for consideration.



# YOUR GOVERNMENT PAGES

## NC House District 86



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

### Our State Government Appears Prepared to Weather Current Economic Adversities.

The Covid pandemic created unpredictable ups and downs for our state and national economies. Unprecedented federal government spending intended to help citizens and states cope now seems to have added to inflationary pressures that were already present but now are at a 40-year high. The Stock Market has taken a beating, with many billions of dollars of value lost, perhaps especially for retirees or others with investments in 401(k)s or other funds for their retirements. Of course, one of the biggest drivers of inflation is escalating gas prices now hovering across N.C. at prices approaching \$5.00 per gallon. In the face of such inflation and supply chain disruptions, the Biden administration has intentionally reduced energy supplies by shutting down pipelines, making new production and refining entirely unlikely by the addition of impossible regulatory burdens on energy production and transport. It is no wonder that everything is more expensive, and our hard-earned dollars are buying much less. Indeed, the Federal Reserve Bank has admitted that it erred badly in not anticipating high and persistent inflation. To keep things from worsening even more dramatically, it is now on a course to dramatically and, repetitively, raise interest rates. Sadly, the current Congress and President Biden are persisting in the very policies that caused the economic problems and will continue to make things worse. In the circumstances, I think there is not much doubt we are already in a non-yet declared recession that may well persist due to the President's unchanging policies.

Since Republicans gained the legislative majority in 2011, North Carolina, unlike most other states, has pursued economic policies to position the state to cope well when an economic downturn occurs. As a part of those policies, in addition to controlling spending growth, we have provided tax cuts and increases in standard deductions for taxpayers while building a multi-billion dollar "rainy day" fund to cushion any future downturn or slowing of state revenues used to pay the bills. I think, largely for those reasons, in 2021, North Carolina experienced a strong economy, generating impressive gains in several areas, with the state's GDP increasing at an actual rate of 4.5%. This was much better than the national rate of 3.8% and greater than the 2.6% rate in the state during the pre-pandemic year of 2019. The North Carolina economy is now 3% larger than its pre-pandemic level. In times of economic uncertainty, we can rely upon the common-sense, fiscally conservative, economic policies of our current legislative majority to keep North Carolina strong and resilient. In that way, we avoid the tax increases, slashed budgets and frozen salaries, and furloughs of educators and state employees that Democrats used in 2008-2010 when confronted with the Great Recession for which they were totally unprepared.

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each State shall have...  
No Person shall be a Repres...  
and who shall not...*





Mitchell County

The Harris High Class of 1965 will be having a Class Reunion Saturday, October 15, 2022 at Harris Middle School from 1 p.m. until 5 p.m.

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Orchard At Altapass Celebrates The Month Of July

Kate Groff  
Mitchell County



It's going to be busy at the Orchard at Altapass in July—beginning on the second with a book signing and traditional music. Author and photographer Mignon Durham will be on hand to talk about and sign her book, *Devotion*, from 1-3. Traditional musician Will Ritter follows bringing his many instruments and many songs of the region. On Sunday, Town & Country steps up to the pavilion “plate” to bat out their renditions of popular tunes. But the fun doesn't stop at this weekend's end. The Orchard will be open on Independence Day. The Apple Core Grill will offer delicious 4th of July dishes, and Dave will be on hand to blast us into the freedom of the day with his mighty cannon. It's going to be a Bluegrass kinda music day. The Boone Trail Band returns after their premiere performance last month from 1-2:30. Then from 3-4:30, welcome back the Dollar Brothers, a mainstay at the Orchard for years.

We shake it up a bit on the ninth and tenth. Spruce Pine's Jessi and the River Cats perform on Saturday, then the Greg Speas Band—new members, same great sound—on Sunday. The Orchard is now starting to kick into anticipation mode, but not before another busy weekend. On July 16, from 11:30-1:30, award-winning WNC author Julia Nunnally Duncan presents her latest book, *A Place That Was Home*. Her partner and well-known woodworker, Steve Duncan, showcases his work, including his uniquely carved walking sticks. Later that afternoon, the Ruglifters turn up the corners of the stage from 3-4:30. The middle of the month music ends on Sunday with Eric & Addie returning for another season of applauded Americana.

With two weeks left in the month, all await the ripening of the first apples. But until then, the fun continues. In a partnership with the Parkway Playhouse, “Elephant and Piggies in a Play” plays out on the pavilion from 11-12 in a special free performance. Never Too Late steps up with Bluegrass and Buffalo Cove comes to the front on Sunday. The month ends with Rhonda Gouge, *Keeping Time's* Kathy Kuhne, and Sam McKinney on Saturday, July 30. And Sound Traveler makes an Orchard stop on July's last day. Music performances are from 3-4:30.

All fingers crossed that the first apples will be ready to pick and make the finest apple-sauce around. It's the experience of U-picking off the Orchard trees that puts all that excitement into the sauce. June may have busted out all over, but July is going to burst over the top and melt down the sides. Experience the O and help us "Save the good stuff."

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

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



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# 666 Beast of Mankind

By Robert Garner  
Rutherford County

What wisdom and scripture references do we have to understand how to “count the number of the beast” as 666? Revelations 13:18 KJV; “*Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.*”

The dragon and the beast are the kingdom of Satan on earth; Rev 12:9, & 13:2.

The word “man” in Revelations 13:18 KJV is in slight error regarding the Greek translation to English. Strong’s # G444 Anthropos, a masculine noun, refers to “the number of men”, all of mankind, not a single “man” Individual. A similar error of false end-time doctrine has many Christians thinking the antichrist is an individual man living on earth. Satan the devil and his hosts of demon spirits have been here since the Garden of Eden, from the beginning. Satan and his followers of mankind are antichrists, KJV, 1John 4:3 & 2:18. See BRCN The Antichrist – Sep.23, 2021.

What percent of the world’s people are antichrists and follow after the beast, Satan?

How does a part of anything equal several something? The bible is full of numbers without fractions or decimals given as (parts or part of something, whatever is in view). Present-day mathematics could be written with a whole number, a decimal point, or a fraction. Exodus 16:36, “*now an omer [2.08 quarts] is the tenth part [1/10] of an ephah [20.8 quarts].*” In this example, the ephah is in view as the total part, and the omer is the tenth part of an ephah.

A simple scripture highlights the division of people into two parts; 1 Kings 16:21, “then were the people of Israel divided into two parts: half [0.5] of the people followed Tibni the son of Ginath, to make him king, and half [1/2] followed Omri.” What was the total number, of “the people of Israel”, who were divided into two parts? We don’t have the total number of people divided into two parts in this verse.

Scripture reveals various circumstances with the destruction of men related to the number 3, also 3 parts. The number 3 spiritual meaning is God’s purpose. 2 kings 1:8-15 reveals 3 captains of 50 men. 2 captains of 50 men destroyed and 1 captain of fifty precious in thy sight.

David uses 3 measuring lines and is a spiritual figure (a type) of Christ in 2 Samuel 8:2. “*And he smote Moab, and measured them with a line, casting them down to the ground; even with two lines measured he to put to death, and with one full line to keep alive. And so the Moabites became David’s servants, and brought gifts*”

Zechariah 13:8, 9, “*And it shall come to pass, that in all the land [H776 earth], saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, it is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God.*”

The land above in Zechariah 13:8 is (Strong’s #H776 translates as the whole earth, as opposed to all the land). The verses above describe 3 parts, two parts shall be cut off and die, and the third part will be tried: “*they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, it is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God*”.

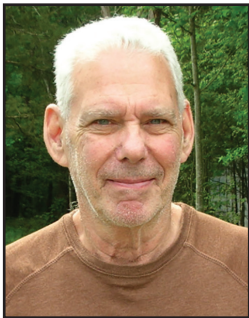
The total number of parts in Zechariah 13:8 & 9 is (3 parts), representing all the people on planet earth. (2 parts) are cut off and die in all the earth’s population, (1 part) call on the name of the LORD. Divide 2 parts by 3 parts = 666 simplified = six hundred threescore and six is the spiritual number of mankind who follow after the beast. A calculator will prove the number 2/3 of (1=total population) = 666, divide 3 into 2 = 666.

Interesting calculation formula requires understanding (3 parts) equal the (whole earth) population of approx. 7.5 billion people. Applying Zechariah 13:8, 9 to the year 2022 population of mankind (7.5 billion people) divided into 3 parts is as follows. Demographic data experts claim approx. one-third (1 part) of the population (2.5) billion identify themselves as Christians. Two-thirds (2 parts) (5) billion identify themselves with other religious doctrines. Again; divide 2 by 3 (2 parts divided by 3 parts) = 666. Five billion people have the spiritual number 666 of the beast.

1 Corinthians 13:10, “*but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away with.*”

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

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



If a couple of guys from different denominations can come together and strive to grow the Kingdom, imagine what we can do as a convention when we put our differences aside and speak out against the sin of this world. We already are the largest missionary force in the world. The SBC recognized and commissioned 52 missionaries to go into the world with a goal. Can we bring that same goal to our own lives? Can we stop fighting each other and fight together against the real enemy?

I love my brothers and sisters in the Lord. I do not want to see our convention become divided. It is my dream to see us more united as we finish out this year and see the Gospel furthered. It is my hope and prayer that not only the SBC, but all Christian denominations put aside their differences and stand together in the Gospel and be a shining city on a hill. We can’t do that if we are a house divided.

*Michael is the pastor of Community Baptist Church in Burke County, NC. He is a Fruitland and SEBTS graduate called to preach and teach to those who have ears to hear; and make disciples of the nations.*

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The Poor in Spirit

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

At the very beginning of Jesus’ “Sermon on the Mount” found in the Gospel of Matthew, Chapters 5-7, you will find a wonderful and powerful introduction that has been called “the Beatitudes.” Each of these simple declarations begins with the word “blessed.” If you look carefully, you will see eight “Be” attitudes which Jesus declared are eight godly and spiritual attitudes that manifest both the working of the Holy Spirit and the characteristics of someone who is sold out to Jesus, His calling and His mission.

Jesus began His powerful sermon with these words, “*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God.*” Would you pause and consider who is the “poor in spirit” to which Jesus is referring? One might quickly assume that Jesus is referring to the poor, downtrodden, poverty-stricken, and war-torn people of this world. Truly, the Lord God cares for the ones who are forgotten and forsaken; for those cast-off, manipulated, and misused; or for those who find themselves with little or no resources on which to live. God will, without a doubt, be merciful to them—for He cares for each and every one of us.

But the phrase that Jesus uses gives us a clear hint of whom He is speaking to. One who is “poor in spirit” is the one who has recognized that they are poverty-stricken, helpless, and hopeless without God. This is none other than one who has relinquished and turned their lives over to Jesus. You are one of the “poor in spirit” when you have truly heard the Lordship claim of Jesus over your life and you have responded by faith, giving your heart and life to Jesus as Savior, Lord, and Master.

In ancient Israel, the term “Lord” (adonai in the Hebrew and rabboni in the Greek) was used often, signifying and declaring that one was relinquishing or deferring to the wisdom, power, or position of another. The two terms, lord and master, were almost synonymous with each other. A master was one who rightly claimed ownership or dominion over another. And in a world of slavery, a master or lord literally owned the individual and was given the right to determine everything that a slave did.

Godly people continue to work to remove the blight of human bondage and slavery in our world. But make no mistake! God claims ownership over His creation. Jesus Christ, God’s Son, and His sacrificial Lamb or Messiah, rightly claims ownership over us. But unlike ancient times, He draws near to us and invites us to willingly give up ownership of and sovereignty over our lives. He demands the position of Lord and Master because He is our only Savior. And to all who come to Him in simple, childlike faith and invite Him to be Lord, Savior, and Master, He claims as a spiritual child of faith. You are not His slave, but rather His spiritual child. And He invites and implores His beloved to serve Him completely and fully.

So when Jesus proclaimed, “*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,*” He is not talking about poverty or lack of money or financial resources. He is referring to those who know just how spiritually bankrupt and empty they are without Him as Lord, Master, and Savior. The poor in spirit are those who know their need for God and are hopelessly dependent upon Him. The poor in spirit are those who realize that everything in their lives, their past, their present, and their future depends upon their absolute reliance upon the grace, mercy, and love of Christ Jesus. And because of that understanding, they choose to live each day; each moment under the absolute, comforting, loving, and powerful Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Jesus declared that those who are spiritually bankrupt and poor in spirit will “inherit the Kingdom of God.” Imagine that! The kingdom promises (salvation, forgiveness, reconciliation, freedom, and eternal life) are for anyone and everyone who knows how inadequate they are on their own; who throw their lives upon the mercy of the Lord; and who live out of desperate dependence upon the Lord. Blessed are you who choose Jesus!

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



“Our Father” “Abba”

By Michael Ward  
Burke County

Luke 11:2 “*And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.*” For years I tried to reconcile the tension between an austere Father and a loving, tender, welcoming Pappa. Maybe you have as well, or maybe you’ve never given it much thought. The term “Father” in Luke 11 is an English translation of an Aramaic word, “Abba”. Technically, “Abba” does mean “Father”, but that translation is an arm’s length away from its intended meaning, which is, “Pappa” or “Dad”. I know it sounds scandalous to speak in such a way about the God who stands from Eternity to Eternity. And honestly, that’s why I had such difficulty seeing the heart of the Father and His tenderness. How do you ever see the Creator of the Universe as, “Pappa”? What sort of mental and theological gymnastics do you have to accomplish to arrive at that kind of intimate reconciliation?

Religion and Legalism told me I had no right to throw around His Name in such a way. He was God and I was just a sinner saved by Grace. He was Holy and I was someone He was mostly displeased with. He was perfect and I was struggling and broken at times. Like a square peg fitting into a round hole, I just couldn’t make such an intimate connection with the idea of “Pappa”. I knew exactly who I was. I knew my laziness and the hypocrite that lived in me. But I knew my good days, also. Days when I went the extra mile to show God how serious and consecrated I was to please Him. On those days, I felt better about myself. Yet, it still seemed as if it wasn’t quite enough. In my mind, it was a step in the right direction to get God’s attention and affection, but I now see that my issue was not with making a tender, loving Jesus, Holy. My issue was with making a Holy God, tender and loving.

I’m beginning to understand that God loves me unconditionally, and as Brennan Manning wrote, “just as I am and not as I should be”. To many of you, that may seem heretical or unbalanced. It may seem like the utterances of an immature believer. Hear me when I tell you that the majority of my years as a Christian were galvanized by spiritual renewal, and discipleship. Ironically, many of those attempts produced good and wholesome spiritual fruit in my life but still held a sense of dissatisfaction. I felt like I could never do enough to allow myself to be seen as worthy of Sonship.

Out of desperation, I put aside my religious propensities by allowing myself a moment to stand before the Lord, bare and unvarnished. There wasn’t any Pomp and Circumstance, but He came to me in an ordinary kitchen, void of throne rooms and angelic hosts. It was the arms of Abba that surrounded me that night. He called me, “Son”. And I began to feel the weight of one whose eyes burn like fire, and who loves me just as I am and not as I should be. To my legalistic ears, it sounded reckless to throw around such phrases. But that’s exactly the love of Abba.

The Abba revelation is paradoxical but it is far from sinful. It rekindles fire and revives a dry and thirsty soul. It leads the way to paths of righteousness and holiness without having to strive for them. The union I have found in Abba’s unconditional love has opened the door to be sanctified, consecrated, satisfied, restful, faithful, and alive. In Him, I’m a better father, husband, and co-worker. “Just as you are, and not as you should be”

It’s scandalous. It’s freedom and it’s the altar. It’ll leave you feeling uneasy and unmoored.

But it’s also the journey your heart was built for.



Michael Ward lives in Western North Carolina. A father, a husband, a Son. Associate Pastor at River of Life Church in Valdese, NC.



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The Misplaced Passions of Spectator Disciples

By Shawn Thomas  
Angleton, Texas



In Charles Dickens’ A Tale of Two Cities, he tells of the Marquis St. Evremonde, an extremely rich man who entertained himself by racing his carriage through the narrow streets of Paris and watching the peasants dive out of the way. But one day while he was driving, he heard a thud; the carriage stopped. People were screaming and crying. His carriage had hit a child. The Marquis was upset also: “Why is he making that abominable noise? How do I know what injury you have done to my horses?” He tossed out a gold coin to the child’s father and sped away.

That rich man’s passions were grotesquely misplaced, weren’t they? He cared more about his horses, and his entertainment, than he did a maimed and dying child. But before we shake our heads at him, let’s make sure that we don’t see ourselves in his reflection. What really bothers YOU? What are YOU passionate about? The Kingdom of God and the people He loves? Or your own possessions and comforts?

The Book of Jonah seems to have a “happy ending” with the repentance of Nineveh in Chapter 3. Except God then gives us Chapter 4, which shows us the ugly “rest of the story”: how Jonah had become a spectator, with misplaced passions. Does that describe us today as well?

**I. The Role of the “Spectator”**

Jonah 4:5 says that Jonah went outside the City of Nineveh and sat down “until he could see what would happen in the city.” He wasn’t going to “do” anything. He was just going to SIT there, and “SEE” what would happen.” Jonah had adopted the role of the SPECTATOR.

Others have one that same thing. Matthew 26:58 says “But Peter was following Him at a distance as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and entered in, and sat down with the officers to see the outcome.” Here again, just like Jonah, Peter “sat down” “to SEE the outcome.” He was just going to watch. Peter was entirely a spectator.

Too many people in God’s churches today are just like Jonah and Peter. They’ve become “spectators” in the church and God’s Kingdom work. They don’t preach or teach or sing or go on mission; they don’t serve in any particular way. Their entire “role” is just to be a spectator.

Unfortunately over the years, many leaders in the church have cultivated this mindset. They’ve taught that “the clergy,” the “professional ministry” is to do everything, and the “common folks” are just to leave the ministry to them. Purposefully or not, they’ve basically trained their people to think they are fulfilling God’s plan if they just come to church faithfully as good “spectators”!

But Jesus didn’t intend His followers to be mere “spectators.” His call was “Follow Me!”; to “make disciples;” to “visit orphans and widows;” NOT just to be a “faithful spectator.”

Jesus died on the cross to pay for our sins so that whoever would call on Him might be saved. And when we ask Him to save us, He sends His Holy Spirit into our hearts to “seal” us as His. And when the Spirit comes into our life, He gives us gifts — special abilities with which we are to serve Him. EVERY Christian has at least one of these gifts. I Corinthians 12:7 says: *“To EACH ONE is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”* So ALL of God’s people are to serve Him in some way.

Lyndon Johnson ran in a special election for U.S. Senate from Texas in 1941. LBJ’s campaign group was devoted to serving him. Someone sneered at a young man, Carroll Keach because he was only Johnson’s chauffeur, but Keach replied simply: “Everyone can do something for him. This is what I can do for him.” (Caro, The Years of Lyndon Johnson: The Path To Power, p. 680)

That’s what our attitude should be in serving the Lord. What we do may not be “glamorous,” and it may not be what someone else can do, but there should be something of which we can say: “This is what I can do for Him.”

What about you? Are you a “spectator” or a participator in God’s church? Maybe you would say, I just don’t know what I can do to serve. If that’s so, then, first of all, PRAY. Ask God to show you where you can serve. God knows how to get your feet on the ground where He wants you to be! ASK Him! Then when you hear of a need, step up and volunteer. Or GO to one of your ministers, and ask them for a way you can serve. THERE IS ALWAYS A PLACE AND A WAY GOD CAN USE YOU!

Don’t be content until you can say of something specific: “This is what I can do for Him!” Don’t become a “spectator Christian” like Jonah.

**II. Consumed With Our Own Comfort**

So God planned a little “episode” to reveal Jonah’s heart. Verse 6 says that He appointed a plant to grow up and give Jonah shade. The end of the verse says: “and Jonah was extremely happy about the plant.”

That is so revealing: “Jonah was EXTREMELY HAPPY about the plant.” He’d been so “greatly displeased” by how God showed mercy on Nineveh. But now Jonah was EXTREMELY happy! Why? Because now he was comfortable. He’s got a “good seat.” That’s what’s important to the spectator: his comfort.

When you’re a spectator, the most important thing to you is your own comfort. You aren’t really there to DO anything; you’re just watching, so you want to be comfortable while you are being entertained. The best sports arenas have comfortable seats; armrests with cupholders, etc., because comfort is important to the spectator.

A participant has a different mindset. Spectators at a football game only care about the comfort of their seats. An actual player in the game isn’t focused on

comfort; he wears uncomfortable shoulder pads, a very tight-fitting helmet, etc., because he’s not focused on comfort, but on competing, and winning the game. It’s the same with military people; they’re not focused on comfort, but on accomplishing the mission they have been given.

I remember touring a World War II submarine and seeing the bunks where the sailors slept. There were 3 or 4 of them stacked right on top of each other, with only about 18” of space between them! As a spectator, I thought: “That doesn’t look very comfortable!” NO ONE would want to vacation there, right? But that ship was not made for comfort. It was a warship!

That’s exactly the mindset we need to get into in the church. Too many in the American church — whether they’d say it or not — regard the church as a kind of “cruise ship” that’s there for our comfort. We expect:

- comfortable seats
- the temperature to be comfortable for US
- songs that suit our tastes
- a length of service that we are comfortable with

And so on ... and this has become so ingrained into our expectations that we don’t even consciously think about it. We just expect it: this should be comfortable for us. That’s the way it’s supposed to be!

Think about it: many of the concerns that American Christians express today about the church, have to do with our own comfort. When “spectator Christianity” takes hold, then like Jonah, our “shade plants” become important to us. Like Jonah, we too have our own “shade plants” don’t we? Our “shade plants” are the personal comforts and conveniences we enjoy. What might be a “shade plant” for you? Your comfortable chair? The air conditioning? “Your” classroom that you don’t want to give up or share — or some other “comfort” or “convenience” in the church? But it is a comfort that is most important to the spectator.

**III. The Misplaced Passion of the Spectator.**

Verse 7 shows us what happens when the spectator loses the comfort he enjoys so much. It says God appointed a worm to kill the plant Jonah loved. And it revealed Jonah’s misplaced passion for this PLANT, instead of for the PEOPLE God had called him to minister to.

Verse 6 said that “Jonah was EXTREMELY HAPPY about the PLANT.” Not in the revival that took place in Nineveh; not in the repentance of the people there; but about the comfort he received from that plant!

So when God caused the worm to kill the plant, the sun beat down on Jonah, and he got angry. God asked him if he had a right to be angry, and in:9 Jonah says, “I have good reason to be angry, even to death”! Jonah was passionate about this plant; which is really to say, he was passionate about his own comfort.

So God confronted Jonah, and said in:10, “You had compassion on the PLANT ... which came up overnight and perished overnight — should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city, which has 120,000 people, who do not know their right hand from their left ... ?” In other words, you are so passionate about this perishable PLANT, just because it gives you comfort, but you don’t care whether hundreds of thousands of PEOPLE, live or die or go to heaven or hell?!

Jonah is a great example of what happens when God’s servants misplace their passions. They become passionate about their own “shade;” their own comfort; instead of God and His mission and the people God so loves!

Each of us should search our own souls today: have we become “spectator Christians,” more concerned about our own comforts, than over people who are lost or hurting or in need? Think about it:

What would cause the bigger uproar in a church:

- if the air conditioning went out and we didn’t fix it in time for Sunday?
- or if we knew there were children within a mile of the church who didn’t know the name of Jesus?

Most churches would go into emergency mode to fix ONE of these two things by Sunday — which one do you think that would be?

- Would people be more upset if their comfortable worship seating was replaced with foldable metal chairs
- Or that they knew some senior adults felt abandoned and alone?

Are we passionate about the right things?

Years ago I was talking with a senior adult woman from a church in Florida. She shared that many new kids were coming to their church — but she wasn’t excited about it; no, she was complaining about it. She said: “Do you know what kind of mess they make in the pews? Do you know how much toilet paper they use?!” Seriously? Their church was reaching kids and families, but she was upset because they used too much toilet paper?!

What bothers us, gives us away, doesn’t it? Our passions reveal where our heart really is. Are we more concerned with our personal “shade plants” in the church — or reaching and caring for people?

God to help us not to be mere “spectator disciples” who care way too much about the wrong things.

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

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# Crossword

Crossword 280  
ACROSS  
1 earneth wages to put it into \_\_\_\_\_ with holes. (1,3)  
(Hag 1:6) KJV  
5 As an \_\_\_\_ pleasing to the LORD (Num 29:2)  
9 Praise the LORD with \_\_\_\_ : sing unto him with the psaltery (Ps 33:2)  
13 and hath greatly offended, and \_\_\_\_ himself upon them (Ezek 25:12) KJV  
14 And the rough goat is the king of \_\_\_\_ (Dan 8:21) KJV  
15 Cut down the tree and \_\_\_\_ off its branches (Dan 4:14)  
16 The alien who lives among you will rise \_\_\_\_ you (Deut 28:43)  
17 He who \_\_\_\_ his father and drives out his mother is (Prov 19:26)  
18 LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the \_\_\_\_ (Ex 14:26)  
19 Mockers \_\_\_\_ up a city, but wise men turn away anger (Prov 29:8)  
20 No one \_\_\_\_ a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment (Matt 9:16)  
21 Uzziah the king was \_\_\_\_ unto the day of his death (1,5) (2 Chron 26:21) KJV  
23 The man said, \_\_\_\_ is now bone of my bones (Gen 2:23)  
27 Do you see this \_\_\_\_ army? I will give it into your hand (1 Kings 20:13)  
28 Moses, Joshua, and David were \_\_\_\_ of some of the books of the Bible  
31 I saw something like a large \_\_\_\_ being let down from heaven (Acts 11:5)  
34 a foolish man who built his \_\_\_\_ on sand (Matt 7:26)  
36 Abner son of \_\_\_\_, the commander of Saul's army (2 Sam 2:8)  
37 The nations will \_\_\_\_ and tremble; anguish will grip the people (Exod 15:14)  
39 Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, \_\_\_\_ and Ivvah? (2 Kings 18:34)  
40 God \_\_\_\_ raised this Jesus to life (Acts 2:32)  
41 At that time I, Daniel, mourned for three \_\_\_\_ (Dan 10:2)  
44 so that by the grace of God he might \_\_\_\_ death for everyone (Heb 2:9)  
45 I will obey your decrees; do not \_\_\_\_ forsake me (Ps 119:8)  
47 the sons of Eliphaz were Teman, \_\_\_\_, Zepho (Gen 36:11)  
49 When the LORD God \_\_\_\_ the earth and the heavens (Gen 2:4)  
50 "Will he even \_\_\_\_ the queen while she is with me in the house?" (Est 7:8)  
53 Men stalked us at every \_\_\_\_, so we could not walk in our

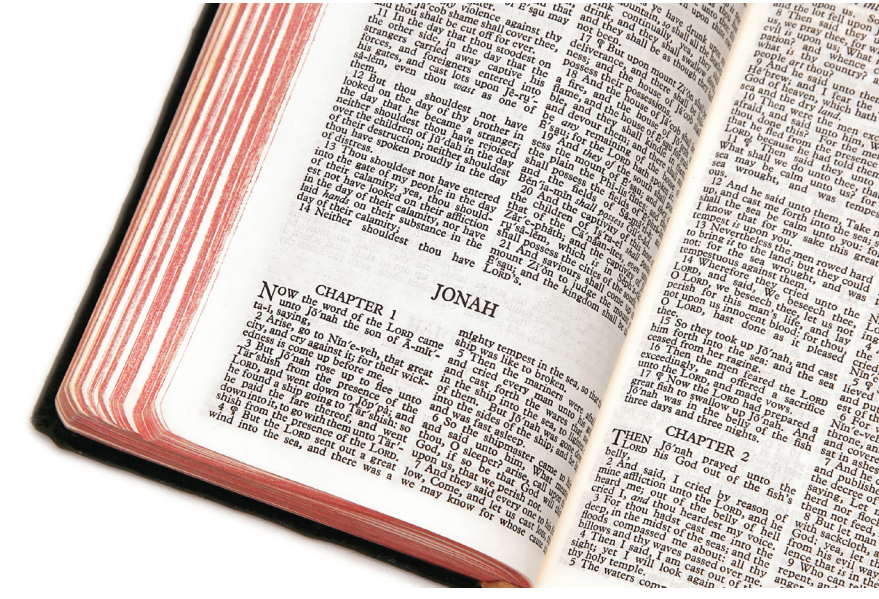
streets (Lam 4:18)  
55 His master replied, \_\_\_\_ done, good and faithful servant (Matt 25:23)  
56 "They \_\_\_\_ me," you will say, "but I'm not hurt! (Prov 23:35)  
58 being not a forgetful hearer, but a \_\_\_\_ of the work (James 1:25) KJV  
59 David, wearing a linen \_\_\_\_, danced before the LORD (2 Sam 6:14)  
60 for wide is the \_\_\_\_, and broad is the way (Matt 7:13)  
61 return to it and remove all its vile \_\_\_\_ and detestable idols (Ezek 11:18)  
62 He is coming with \_\_\_\_, our faithful and dear brother (Col 4:9)  
63 Man is a \_\_\_\_ phantom as he goes to and fro (Ps 39:6)  
64 creatures of the sea are being \_\_\_\_ but no man can tame the tongue (James 3:7-8)  
65 Like a bird that strays from its \_\_\_\_ is a man who strays (Prov 27:8)  
DOWN  
1 the Egyptian magicians also did the same things by their secret \_\_\_\_ (Ex 7:11)  
2 the brothers sent Paul and Silas away to \_\_\_\_ (Acts 17:10)  
3 Then Samuel took \_\_\_\_ of oil, and poured it upon \_\_\_\_ (1,4) (1 Sam 10:1) KJV  
4 on the two stones the way a \_\_\_\_ cutter engraves a seal. (Exod 28:11)  
5 I will make thy windows of \_\_\_\_, and thy gates of carbuncles (Isa 54:12) KJV  
6 He saved us through the washing of \_\_\_\_ (Titus 3:5)  
7 by this time there is a bad \_\_\_\_ (John 11:39)  
8 Abraham died in a good old \_\_\_\_ (Gen 25:8) KJV  
9 Bakkbakkar, \_\_\_\_, Galal and Mattaniah son of Mica (1 Chron 9:15)  
10 Do not slaughter \_\_\_\_ or a sheep and its young on the same day (1,3) (Lev 22:28)  
11 He took one of the man's \_\_\_\_ and closed up the place (Gen 2:21)  
12 He was with David at \_\_\_\_ Dammim when the Philistines (1 Chron 11:13)  
19 He \_\_\_\_ on the ground, and made clay of the spittle (John 9:6) KJV  
20 Sell me some property for a burial \_\_\_\_ here (Gen 23:4)  
22 Nobody has \_\_\_\_ heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind (John 9:32)  
23 The 19th letter of the Greek alphabet  
24 twenty loaves of barley, and full ears of corn in the \_\_\_\_ thereof (II Ki 4:42) KJV  
25 Jacobs new name (Gen 32:28)  
26 the wife of Hezron bore him \_\_\_\_ the father of Tekoa

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(1 Chron 2:25)  
29 Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy \_\_\_\_ (Jude 14)  
30 Joshua \_\_\_\_ his clothes, and fell to the earth (Joshua 7:6)  
32 the sun rises with scorching \_\_\_\_ and withers the plant (James 1:11)  
33 There were three gates on the \_\_\_\_, three on the north (Rev 21:13)  
35 Absalom got his hair stuck in this type of tree (2 Sam 18:9)  
38 My steps have \_\_\_\_ to your paths; my feet have not slipped (Ps 17:5)  
39 rabbit (Deut 14:7) KJV  
41 \_\_\_\_ your cloak around you and follow me (Acts 12:8)  
42 The \_\_\_\_ is the lamp of the body (Matt 6:22)  
43 If \_\_\_\_ forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles (Matt 5:41)  
44 the \_\_\_\_ ones will be brought low (Isa 10:33)  
46 represent four kingdoms that will \_\_\_\_ from his nation (Dan 8:22)  
48 Remember that you \_\_\_\_ me like clay (Job 10:9)

51 In you, O LORD, I have taken refuge; let me never be put to \_\_\_\_ (Ps 71:1)  
52 To \_\_\_\_, mine own son after the common faith (Titus 1:4)  
53 As he was scattering the seed, \_\_\_\_ fell along the path (Mark 4:4)  
54 Like a lion I will devour them; a wild animal will \_\_\_\_ them (Hos 13:8)  
55 "May your God, \_\_\_\_ you serve continually, rescue you!" (Dan 6:16)  
57 to see if you would stand the \_\_\_\_ and be obedient (2 Cor 2:9)  
58 my eyes are \_\_\_\_ with grief. I call to you, O LORD (Ps 88:9)  
59 abbr. for the 17th book of the Old Testament  
60 for a \_\_\_\_ and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem (Isa 8:14) KJV

Solution on page 14





# Bear Creek Baptist Church

**The Unexpected**  
By Brian Westveer  
Mitchell County

My first visit (after 50+ years as a resident in Mitchell County) to the church at the top of the hill (Bear Creek Baptist) on Memorial Day was a treat. The van ride from Spruce Pine with Jay Carver was a great introduction to the church family. The Sunday school teacher, Irene Silver was challenging and her hands enthusiastically punctuated her stories.

The worship service had everything expected: excellent music, children participants, lay leadership, and directed prayer. The unexpected were: projection screens front and back of the sanctuary which projected words for singing and photos of the veterans, displays of uniforms of vets, a parade of flags from all military groups, and a superb sound system. The congregation is proud of their service heroes.

After joy-filled singing of America's praise, the congregation knelt at the altar in recognition of America's sins with the hope for the restoration of ideals. We were all proud to be American, and free.

While the highly sophisticated use of the audiovisual equipment was unexpected to me, the large, new family center and the vast parking areas show clearly the forward-looking congregation leaders aim to meet the needs of today and the future in the best creative ways.



Brian Westveer was raised Presbyterian in large active suburban Detroit churches. For the last twenty years, Brian was organist at the Little Switzerland Episcopal Church.

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