



BLUE RIDGE CHRISTIAN NEWS



Photo by Ken Merop

Pause...and Consider

Exclamations in Nature

By Ken and Jan Merop
Cleveland, Tennessee

I cherish two special memories involving children and nature from our back-to-back trips to North Carolina and then to Colorado.

We had taken our 3 ½-year-old grandson, Jonathon – a nature lover – to a Christmas tree farm near his home. The farm also has animals to feed and tractors to wow the youngest tractor lovers.

He had a blast. But, my favorite picture is of this little guy walking ahead of us amidst towering Christmas trees while waving his arms and talking out loud to them. The outdoors speaks to him and he couldn't help but respond.

While on a hike in Rocky Mountain National Park a few weeks later, Ken and I and our friends, Howard and Alynn, passed by a mom, dad, and their young son. Inhaling the scents of the forest and enthralled by the wonder of nature, our souls were fed even more by this youngster.

Ken and Howard were a little ahead of us when they heard the boy genuinely exclaim, "This is life!"

Then as we brought up the rear and the family drew closer to us, the boy asked in a voice of wonder and hope, "Can I move here?"

His eyes were alight with joy as he embraced the place and how it made him feel.

I couldn't help but respond, "Sure. And I'll move here, too!"

Of course, it's not possible to move to a national park. But the sights and sounds of such a place take up residence in us somehow. And that's because it's not simply 'nature.' It's a manifestation of who God is.

The Bible tells us in Romans 1: 20, NIV, "*For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.*"

Many other Scripture references attest to the intricacies and varieties of God's creation. And, yet, we so often want to explain it away as 'mother nature' or the evolutionary theory. In reality, God has revealed himself through his creation



so that we might be drawn to him – who is the more magnificent, awe-inspiring being behind creation.

And he longs to have a relationship with us.

We are given opportunities on every walk along a roadway where wild flowers grow; every hike into the mountains where waterfalls surprise us, awakening our senses; and, gazing into the night sky twinkling with endless stars to talk about our amazing creator God.

Nature exclaims his majesty. Let's do the same and point our children to him. Selah

Fall Silent

***Sometimes the only response to such beauty is
to fall silent in its presence.***

***Hush! And experience a song without sound,
a poem in motion...and yet still.
Intricate beauty on display.***

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

After six years in the mountains of Avery County, Ken and Jan Merop are now living in the hilly Tennessee countryside of Cleveland, TN...just outside of Chattanooga. Ken's photos can be seen at kenmeropphotography.com.



By Chastity Ogburn
Avery County

“ I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.” Psalm 32:5

I remember sitting in the office with my Pastor 25 years ago. I was broken and in a very low place in my life. My marriage was struggling but my problems went much deeper. I was broken because I was still carrying the sin of my two abortions that occurred at the age of 16. I had been bound by guilt and shame for over 7 years. That day I broke my silence and voiced for the first time to the Pastor of my past abortions. My Pastor looked at me with tears in his eyes and accepted me with the love of Jesus. I had never told anyone. Every day I heard the enemy’s voice reminding me of what I had done. Fear consumed me. This day was different. My Pastor was there for me and God used him that day to point me to Jesus. He pointed me to the one that had already paid the price on Calvary that could make me free from all my sin and shame. His blood that was shed for me covered it all. I believed in God’s forgiveness but I had not been allowing myself to accept His forgiveness in my life. I thought my sin of abortion was too great and I had gone far beyond the reach of God’s forgiveness and grace. The truth was Jesus accepted me. He loved me. He forgave me. That day I embraced God’s forgiveness in my life. His mercy and grace poured out on me and my chains were broken. I was forgiven and freed from the sin that for years had bound me. John 8:36 says, “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.” I walked out of my Pastor’s office that day with my relationship with the Lord restored and made alive again! Sin no longer separated me. My Pastor connected me with a dear lady that was the director of our local pregnancy center to help me begin a healing journey from my past.

October is Pastor Appreciation Month. I wanted to share this story because I am so thankful for my Pastor that 25 years ago was there for me and allowed himself to be used by God. He showed me the love of Jesus. Friend, God places people in our lives every day. We are called as Christians to be like Christ. How can we show the love of Jesus to those He places in our lives? We never know what others are going through and it may be that God wants to use you to be Jesus to them. God can use you to show them the love of Christ that they so desperately need and their life will be forever changed.

Anne Ministries wants to honor all our Pastors preaching the truth of God’s word and sharing the love of Christ. We want to show our appreciation and thanks this month by asking our Pastors to stop by the ministry at 305 West Mitchell Street, Newland for a special gift the week of October 11-13th after 2:00 pm. Don’t forget to show your Pastors this month how much you love and appreciate them.

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 or email anneministries@gmail.com



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

God

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

Jesus

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

The Holy Spirit

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

The Bible

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

Humanity

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

Eternity & Eternal Security

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

Salvation

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

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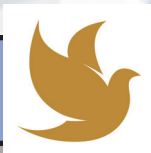
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“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace: that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation: that saith unto Zion. Thy God reigneth!”

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 9:00 AM
Worship Service 10:00 AM
Discipleship 6:00 PM
Evening Worship 6:00 PM
Wednesday Worship 6:30 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

opcmmikecloy@gmail.com

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

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

Berry Chapel Baptist Church

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

Pastor - Steve Williams

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

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The Rock Church

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

Pastor - Micah Narlock

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

Come Join Us
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Grassy Creek Baptist Church

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

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

Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church

2187 Jamestown Road
Morganton, NC
828-584-8212

Pastor Steve Bietz

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

Altapass Baptist Church

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

Dr. Marcus R. Benfield Rev. Tony Lominac - Associate Pastor

Sunday School - 10:00am
Worship - 11:00am
Sunday Evening - 6:00pm
Sunday Youth Program - 7:00pm
1st & 3rd Sunday
(Conductors for Christ ages 5-11)
2nd & 4th Sunday
(Teen Discovery ages 12-18)
Wednesday - 7:00pm

Plumtree Presbyterian Church

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

Pastor Ryan Bridgeo

pastor@plumtreechurch.com

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

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

Pleasant Hill Baptist Church

2396 Enola Road
Morganton, NC 28655
(828) 437-4082

www.pleasanthillbc.church

Senior Pastor Dr. Jack Hodges

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

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

Newland Christian Church

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

Pastor - Phillip Greene

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

"A Local Congregation of Christ's Church"

Burkemont Baptist Church

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

Sr. Pastor - Dr. Luke Lane

Sunday Services
8:30a - Early Worship
9:45a - Sunday School
11:00a - Worship
Wednesday Services
6:30p - Adult Choir & Orches-
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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Sunday School - 10am
Sunday Worship - 11am and 6pm
Mid-week Service - Wednesdays
at 6:30pm

"A Family Focused On Christ"

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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Bridge Worship Center Church

5530 Chestnut Drive, Hickory, NC 28602
828-443-0821
rev.kbarnett@gmail.com

Sr. PASTOR/EVANGELIST KEITH BARNETT

Sunday Morning Prayer: 10:00 Am
Sunday Morning Service: 10:30 Am
Thursday Evening Service: 6:30 Pm

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Spruce Pine United Methodist Church

11090 Hwy. 226 South
Spruce Pine, NC 28777
sprucepineumc@gmail.com
828-765-7446

Pastor Richard Schilling

Sunday Worship - 9:00am
Sunday School - 10:00am
Sunday Worship - 11:00am
Choir Wednesday - 7:00pm

The mission of Spruce Pine United
Methodist Church is to be a beacon on
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Revelation Chapter 3: The Church That Was Frail, But Was Fabulous

By Rev. Mark Creech

One of the finest speeches ever delivered by an American President was given on June 26, 1963, in West Berlin. Less than two years earlier, East Germany had erected the infamous Berlin Wall, which had become a profound international symbol of the great divide between those who were free and those who were under the heel of communism.

Standing on the steps of the Rathaus Schoenberg before an audience of 450,000 Berliners, President John F. Kennedy said:

“Two thousand years ago, the proudest boast was *civis romanus sum* [I am a Roman citizen]. Today, in the world of freedom, the proudest boast is *Ich bin ein Berliner!*... All free men, wherever they may live, are citizens of Berlin, and therefore, as a free man, I take pride in the words, ‘*Ich bin ein Berliner!*’”

Jesus’ sixth letter to the churches in the book of Revelation is to the Church of Philadelphia – Philadelphia, meaning “Brotherly Love.” (Revelation 3: 7-13). Our Lord doesn’t offer even a hint of rebuke to this Church. He has nothing but praise for them. Therefore, Christians everywhere committed to being Christ’s body worldwide might take pleasure in saying, “I want to be a Philadelphian churchman.”

Every Church should be like the Church in Philadelphia because it was a very loving church. It was firmly committed to doctrinal purity and godly living, but unlike the Church in Ephesus, it wasn’t cold, legalistic, or insufficiently caring. It struck that essential balance between holding fast to biblical truth and acting from a charitable disposition.

American minister and writer Sherwood Eliot Wirt once said: “I have learned there is no point in talking about strong and weak churches, big and little churches. Such categories are unrealistic and beside the point. There is only a loving church or an unloving church.”

The apostle Paul said he could give all that he had to the poor and could offer his own body for burning at the stake, but if there were no love in his heart, he would still not be a real Christian – everything he did in Christ’s name would be no more than “*a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal*” (I Corinthians 13:1-3).

Many years ago, after arriving home from a long trip, my parents told me about a remarkable experience. They said that at one point in their travels, they became hungry and decided to stop at a restaurant which turned out to be very crowded. All the tables were full, and there was nowhere to sit down. Seeing their predicament, a deputy sheriff sitting at a table alone invited them to join him at his table. Somehow, my parents said, the conversation turned to matters of faith, and the deputy began to share a fantastic story. He expressed that many of his family members, devout Christians, repeatedly asked him to go to Church with them. He always hedged his way out of it and sometimes just boldly refused. Over time, he started to resent them for asking.

Nevertheless, they asked him again when Revival services were being held in the Fall of the year. This time he said that he accepted their invitation, but with a plan to stop them from ever asking him to Church again.

Before leaving for the services, he drank some whiskey so the smell of alcohol would be heavy on his breath. Then he splashed some of it on himself like he would cologne. No doubt, he thought, reeking of liquor and perceived intoxicated, he would embarrass his family before the entire Church and never be invited again.

Much to his surprise, however, he received just the opposite response from everyone. His family was delighted to have him with them, and the Church overwhelmed him with grace and love. So moved by their genuine affections, he said he could not resist giving his life to Christ.

Jesus said the Church in Philadelphia had a “*little strength*” (v. 8). In other words, they were frail, but they were fabulous. They weren’t a prominent congregation and probably didn’t have many members. They weren’t stylish. Yet, Jesus said that he found them faithful.

Do you know how Christ defines a successful church? Success is not determined in terms of offerings, the size of its membership rolls, community status,



or how erudite the parson. Indeed, this is the way many define an exceptional church. But true success is determined primarily by one standard – faithfulness. The Scripture says, “*Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful*” (I Corinthians 4:2). No institution in the whole world has been given a greater trust than Christ’s Church – that trust is to keep his Word and to proclaim his name (v. 8).

My wife and I were married in a church with a sign at the front of the sanctuary that read: “To Know Him and to Make Him Known.” That’s a good description of the Church’s mission. Drawing from the Church in Philadelphia, a similar sign might read: “To Keep His Word and To Proclaim His Name.” This is what Philadelphia was wholly committed to doing.

Jesus also said he had set an “open door” before this Church that “no man could shut.” When God’s people are faithful, revival breaks out with new opportunities for evangelistic and other mission endeavors that advance God’s kingdom. If Christian love is coupled with hearts contrite over sin, a fresh wind from God rushes through his house, clearing out Sardis’s decomposing smells and supplanting it with the sweet savors of Philadelphia revival.

I recently learned about a guest minister who said he preached with extraordinary energy in a revival meeting. Still, at the end of more than several days of meetings, he said it seemed to have little effect on the Church or the community. “I learned the cause for the failure from the frustrated pastor who told me of a split between two prominent families of the church which he was unable to heal,” said the guest preacher. “Both families attended church for years but refused to speak to each other.”

Churches today hardly know anything of a genuine revival experience. But if an appreciable number of God’s children would penitently plead: “*Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me*” (Psalm 51:10), they would see such a movement of God in their midst it would likely produce goosebumps on the pews.

Revivals were characteristic of what is called the Philadelphia Period in church history (1700-1900). These tremendous movements of God – the Great Awakening – revivals – the era of Wesley, Whitfield, Edwards, Finney, and Moody resulted in the salvation of untold thousands upon thousands and even profoundly impacted the American colonies in the 1730s and 40s. These awakenings came at a time when secular rationalism was emphasized, and an appetite for the things of God was sorely suppressed.

Finally, the Lord promises in his sixth letter to the Church in Philadelphia that he would return swiftly and keep them from the great Tribulation that would come upon the whole world and try those who belong to it (v. 10).

Some believe this text has an immediate application and probably refers to an empire world crisis, specifically the Roman Empire at that time, which affected both believers and unbelievers. But Christ promises to keep his faithful safe.

Others, however, such as Clarence Larkin in his book, *The Book of Revelation*, argue: “[T]his ‘Hour of Tribulation’ must still be future and refers doubtless to the ‘Great Tribulation’ that is to come upon the ‘whole world’ just before the return of the Lord to set up his Millennial Kingdom, and as the promise is that the ‘Philadelphia Church’ shall not pass through the Tribulation, is not this additional proof that the Church shall be ‘caught out’ [in the Rapture] before the Tribulation?” Whichever interpretation is correct, the message is clear – no matter how great the trials that beset believers, those who stay faithful to the Lord may always be assured they are secure in Christ’s care.

What is more, faithful followers of Christ are promised to be made pillars in God’s temple, possessing esteemed positions of stability and support. God will write his name upon them so that they bear the brand of their benevolent master. Thus, allowing them access to the City of God, New Jerusalem, where they will also be given a new name that entitles them to see his face and serve him joyously forever (v. 12).

The apostle Paul wrote, “*No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him*” (I Corinthians 2:9). “*He that has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches*” (v. 13).

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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The Beacon Center of Spruce Pine, a Warming Station, opening this Winter - seeks volunteers Spruce Pine United Methodist Church is opening a warming station, The Beacon Center of Spruce Pine, in its Fellowship Hall this Winter. There are those in our community for whom warmth in the winter months is a real problem. It may be a family that has had their electricity cut off or can't afford enough home heating oil or gas. It may be an isolated elderly person whose house lacks sufficient insulation to keep warm. What is a Warming Station? A warming station is a temporary facility that operates when extreme cold weather creates dangerously inclement conditions and normal coping mechanisms are ineffective or unavailable. Incidences of extreme temperature conditions are designated "Code Purple".

The purpose of the Beacon Center of Spruce Pine is to meet this critical need in the community thereby preventing death and injury due to exposure to the elements. Warming stations are not homeless shelters. They are open for a limited number of hours for a limited number of days and provide limited services. Stations are not daycare for children, the elderly, or others who cannot care for themselves. It is assumed that individuals who use the station can return to their homes when the station is closed. How does it work? When the overnight temperature is forecast to be consistently below 30° Fahrenheit, the decision will be made to open the Beacon Center of Spruce Pine. The Center will operate overnight from 6 PM in the evening to 8 AM the following morning. It will inform local law enforcement and emergency management that it will be open, and make announcements on local radio stations (WTOE and WKYK), newspapers, and social media. The Beacon Center of Spruce Pine will also place a purple banner at its location on Route 226 when it is open. There will be hosts present at the Center to assist our neighbors in need at the warming station. It will provide partitioned sleeping areas in the church Fellowship Hall equipped with cots and single-use bedding for guests' comfort. Meals will not be served. How can I help? The Beacon Center of Spruce Pine is seeking volunteers to serve as hosts to stay at the shelter during emergencies. There will be training that covers everything volunteers need to know to serve the needs of guests seeking shelter at the Center. All volunteers are subject to a background check. For more information or to volunteer please contact the Beacon Center of Spruce Pine at (828) 675-8511 or email beaconcenterofsprucepine@gmail.com.

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Shod With the Preparation of the Gospel of Peace

By Dr. Tom Walker
McDowell County



The Bible says, *“Having your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace”* (Eph.6:15). We continue our studies on the warfare of the believer. It is easy to see there is a battle that is ongoing between the forces of evil and Almighty God. It is a conflict that we cannot deny since we see it every day as we walk through this world on our pilgrim journey to Heaven.

Despite the inward and outward battles we face, some present the Christian life as a leisurely tiptoe through the tulips. That is a false concept of what the Christian life actually is. When you enter the family of God by faith, you enter into a new realm of conflict like you have never known. You were born with an old nature that tends to lean toward sin, but when you become a true child of God, you begin to realize you have a new nature that you did not have before.

That nature is a divine nature. Peter speaks of it when he says in 2 Peter 1:4: *“Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”* Since we have been born again, we have new leanings and new tendencies since we have new desires that we never had before our salvation.

It is further pinpointed and explained in 2 Corinthians 5:17. In that Scripture the Apostle Paul wrote: *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”* A person’s whole being, nature, life, and behavior change. Man is born in trespasses and sins, but as a new creature, he becomes alive unto God. Man had no relationship with God but as a new creature, we have a permanent relationship established. Before salvation, we never communed and fellowshiped with God, but the new creature can fellowship and commune with God all the time. We did live in sin but as a new creature, we live in righteousness and holiness. What a clear contrast between the old life as a lost sinner and the new life that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ!

If you are going to fight the battles you face you must make the proper preparation if you are going to effectively conquer your enemies of the world, the flesh, and the Devil. This verse gives us a part of that preparation that should be ours as we represent Christ.

The Preparation of Our Feet

Have you thought lately about how important our feet are and how thankful you should be if you have them both to support the weight of your body? Feet are the foundation of your body. Keeping them healthy is important and vital to your overall health.

Your feet serve three purposes. First, they support your body weight. Something has to be able to handle the weight of your body. Secondly, they provide balance. Just one toe missing, can affect the accuracy of your balance. Thirdly, they serve as shock absorbers for the human body.

If a person is going to take care of his or her feet, your shoes must fit as they should, or they could lead to injuries and disorders.

Not only should we be concerned about our physical feet but also our activities for our Lord, which shoes represent. What do shoes speak of in our spiritual lives?

They speak of activity. There can be little or no activity without feet to support or carry your body from one place to another. God desires that His people be busy with His business rather than in a state of sloth or laziness.

They speak of acknowledgment. As we have our feet shod with the Gospel of Peace, we acknowledge the importance of putting our feet to use to carry the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

They speak of resistance. Since feet absorb the shock of the weight of your foot, it resists the pain that could come to the rest of the lower part of your body. “Shod” means to “bind under one’s feet.” It would suggest in Paul’s day putting on shoes or sandals. It is not a good idea to go into battle without having your feet covered. I have never seen bare-footed soldiers going to battle, have you?

The Proclamation of the Message

Paul mentions the gospel in our text verse. If you have been a Bible student any length of time, you will know the word “gospel” has the idea of “good news.”

Our day is filled with a great deal of bad news. Just turn on the news on television and you will hear of shootings, crimes, and murders. You will hear bad news about our standing in the world or problems on the home front. Bad news seems to dominate what we see and hear on the television screen.

As we go through this pilgrim journey, we are to carry the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We are not left on earth just to sit and wait for our journey to Heaven. It is our place to witness and tell the good news of the Lord’s death, burial, resurrection, and His coming again.

There is hesitancy to overcome. Too many potential witnesses for Christ are hesitant to do so, possibly afraid they will offend someone or arouse some hostility from the other person. We cannot allow such that to hinder us from giving a Christian witness to the person who is lost in his or her sin. Jesus faced hostility, but that did not keep Him from giving out the truth to sinful men.

There is knowledge to acquire. It helps a Christian witness to adapt a plan of Bible verses you can use in presenting the Gospel of Christ to sinners. Many use the Romans Road (Rom.3:10, 23; 5:8; 6:23; 10:9,10,13). Others used what some call the Isaiah Trail. Here is what this trail looks like:

1. God loves man and desires that all men should experience a life filled with His blessings (Psm. 16:11 and Isa.41:10).
2. Man is separated from God by sin; He is a sinner by nature and by will. (Jer. 17:9 and Isa. 64:6)
3. The result of sin and separation from God is spiritual death. (Jer. 31:30 and Isa.59:2)

4. God has provided a way by which reconciliation can be accomplished. (Isa.1:18; 43:11; 53:4-5; Lev.17:11)

There is an urgency to express. It is possible to wait too late to reach someone for Christ. We do not know exactly when death is coming to anyone. I have seen situations where doctors told family members their loved ones would not live overnight, yet they lived for several days. We do not know how our death will come or when it will come, but we must do all we can to witness and get people ready for the day they leave this earth and meet God in another world.

III. The Peace We All Enjoy

Peace is not something we can fully explain but is something every believer can enjoy as he or she walks with the Lord, depending upon Him in daily life. When we believe the message of Christ and trust Him, peace can be our portion in our day-to-day activities. Due to our faith in the Lord, panic, despair a host of other problems, can be overcome in our lives.

The wonder of it passes all understanding. Philippians 4:6-7 says, *“Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”* We cannot explain peacefully, but we can express it to others and gratefully enjoy it. What does it mean to pass all understanding?

Once we have peace with God then the peace of God can flood our lives. The believer is not to fret about anything. The Philippians had every reason to worry if it were the proper thing to do. They were suffering severe persecution, there was disunity in the church, they had carnal members who were selfish and self-centered, there were false teachers among them, and some of the Christians were having to struggle for just the necessities of life. However, despite it all, they could have the peace of God to settle their hearts amid all the difficulties they encountered.

The peace of God passes all understanding. It is beyond anything we can ask or think. It surpasses all our imaginations. Think of the most terrible situation you can imagine; then think of the peace you would want as you went through that trial. In actual experience, the peace of God is far greater than anything you could ever imagine or understand. The peace of God actually carries the faithful believer through the very midst of trial and tribulation.

The work of it- calms us in the storms and assures us as we seek to fulfill our spiritual responsibilities in life. It assures us that God will deliver, sustain, strengthen, guide, and provide as we walk along the pathway of life. Peace is a sense that all is well because God is on the throne when things do not even seem well.

The way of it- The way of God’s peace is the best way to live in life. If a person is living without Christ as Savior, and without this peace given from God that passes all understanding, life is not what it could be for them if they personally knew the Lord. As we consider our opening two verses, prayer is a very important part of knowing God’s peace. Know the Lord personally, live in obedience to His will and you can know this wonderful peace.

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

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Snow Hill Baptist Church

No Regrets -
My Dysfunctional Family and the Grace of God

By Dean Honeycutt
Mitchell County

I grew up in a dysfunctional family which is why I write articles under the heading “No Regrets”. My father was an alcoholic and he made some decisions that ruined his life and the relationship he had with me. I often wondered why my family was so messed up. I wanted to fix things and I prayed for years my dad would stop drinking. When a child does not enjoy holidays because their dad is drunk something is bad wrong. My mom would try so hard to keep things normal for our family but the older I got dad’s drinking problem became very difficult for us. When a young boy must kick his father out of the house or pull him out of the Christmas tree he has fallen into and hide his keys to keep him from driving he often wonders why his family is falling apart and why God does not do something about it. For years I would pray that my dad would stop drinking and I often wondered if there was any hope for him.

There was a time in my life when I did not care about my dad, and I did not want to be around him especially when he had been drinking. My dad had a lot of regrets. Alcohol had destroyed his family, his marriage, his career, his relationships, and his health. It took everything from him. It stripped him of everything. I tried to forget my problems and get as far away as I could, but it seemed no matter what I did or how far I went I could not escape the reality of my family and the problems my dad was always causing.

God began to do a work in me and my dad. I wrote my dad a letter and forgave him for everything he had done, I also verbally told my dad I forgave him. How could I hold a grudge against my father for their sin when I am a sinner as well and have sinned against God? And God has forgiven me for my sin. How could God forgive me if I could not forgive my dad? I remember the day dad lying in a hospital bed and looked at me and said, “I am sorry.”

About three years before my dad went to heaven God changed his life. God saved my dad, and he stopped drinking. He did not pass from this life as an alcoholic. He is redeemed. And I finally had the relationship with my father I had longed for. We went camping and had some great times together. My dad could not go back and make the “wrongs” right. But praise the Lord what is forgiven is forgotten by God. Isaiah 43:25” *I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.*”

We all live with regrets. The reason families fall apart is because of sin. We live in a fallen world that is devastated by the curse of sin. Sin in us and decisions we make result in regrets. The wages or consequence of our sin is death. Sin is not God’s fault. Sin is our fault. Our sin and selfish decisions also cause our families to suffer.

There is hope for us and our families. I cannot change another person’s actions or decisions, but I can choose to follow God and be a disciple of Jesus Christ. I can choose to love God and to love and forgive others. I can choose to limit my regrets by the decisions I make today for me and my family. Thank you, Lord, for loving me and forgiving me. God does care about us He cares about your family and God does want to help you. God will listen to a believer’s pray and God in His faithfulness will answer. We must trust God even when we do not understand what He may be doing in us or for us. Because God is always for us. Romans 8:39, “*Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*”

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



Aglow International Lighthouse

Marion Aglow Hears About
“Apostacy versus Apostolicity”

By Marion Stephan
McDowell County



When we read Jesus’s description of the “end of the age” in Matthew 24, we tend to focus on apostasy, says prophetic teacher Dr. Howard Morgan. We fear the “departure away from God, away from the Bible, away from the Kingdom, into darkness, demonic darkness, sexual darkness, political darkness” that characterizes apostasy. However, these end-time events are actually a sign that we can “lift up [our] heads; the King is coming.”

Dr. Morgan is a messianic Jew and the founder of Howard Morgan Ministries and Kingdom Ministries Incorporated. He spoke these words in a message to the Marion, North Carolina Aglow Lighthouse at its September 9 meeting. He asserted that it is our responsibility, as believers, to focus not on apostasy, but on “apostolicity,” on proclaiming the Kingdom. People are worried, anxious, and mistrustful of authority. However, “there's only one person to trust - the King of Kings - and there's only one source of information, the Holy Scriptures.”

He noted that John the baptizer, the apostles, Abraham, and Jesus were all sent out by God. We, too, should be proclaiming the Kingdom wherever the Lord sends us. The Holy Spirit gives us gifts, and we have the responsibility to use them.

In fact, Dr. Morgan pointed out, the penalties for not stewarding our gifts are severe. Jesus is often portrayed as “just gentle and meek and sweet and kind.” However, Matthew 24:45-51 gives a vivid picture of “the wrath and fury of God.” When the master of the house comes home unexpectedly, the slave who “begins to beat his fellow slaves, and he eats and drinks with those habitually drunk” is cut into pieces. Only the “faithful and sensible slave,” who has carried out his responsibilities, is rewarded.

We all have gifts “ready to be opened.” Various obstacles can hinder us from stewarding our gifts. Some of us have opened a gift in the past, and it “got shut down” because we “weren't received” or “were told no, can't, don't.” We measure our success based “on how people responded . . . rather than what the Holy Spirit is saying.” If so, our “metrics are wrong.”

Our efforts can also be held back by mistakes we have made in the past. However, we should tell ourselves that “my failures in the past do not define me. If they did, then none of us would have a future.” We “would only have a past, and you cannot go forward [by] looking in the rearview mirror.”

If the Spirit calls us to “go to XYZ,” we may be concerned about whether there will be hot showers or about the kinds of food available. We might argue, “I don’t think I can bring enough cans of tuna fish.” However, “the enemy, the battle, the raging that is going on does not allow us to be seeking for our own comfort. God will make you comfortable.”

We can also be uncertain about what our gifts and our callings are, or how to use our gifts. These are “all great questions to ask to get started.” We can consult “pastors and leaders, people you trust and people you respect.” Dr. Morgan urged listeners to ask themselves, “What's your passion? What do you want to do? What do you enjoy doing?” Then “invite Jesus into it, because he's the Lord of everything.”

“You're a soldier if you're here today,” Dr. Morgan reminded the Aglow attendees. “. . . Now you can turn around and say ‘I don't want to fight,’ but you're going to answer to Jesus for that . . . This is about what you did with the gifts that were given you. What did you do with the life that was given you? What did you do with the calling that was given to you? “

He urged the listeners, “Be faithful stewards of what God has called you to do. Be the leader to which God says. ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant.’”

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

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Bear Creek Baptist Church

The Heavens Declare The Glory Of God

By Bruce Cannon
Mitchell County

Job 12:7-10 *“But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee: and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the LORD hath wrought this? In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind.”*

Once again the Lord is getting ready to make western North Carolina a very color-filled, beautiful place. Already the fall colors are beginning in the higher elevations. How amazing! What a palette of colors the Lord uses to decorate the trees! How amazing are His eyes and heart for beauty!

And if He will do that for Himself and for us to enjoy, what more will He do for those who love Him? Paul wrote in Romans 8:32, *“He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”*

As we look at the beauty of the trees let us remember there is a divine being, the LORD, who loves us so much and watches over us just as He does the trees. Jesus Himself taught, *“Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith? And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”* (Luke 12:27-32)

Are we not much more important in the Lord's eyes than the grasses of the field, the colors of the trees, and the sparrows? Absolutely! So as we see the fall colors, or the beauty of a sunrise or sunset, or the beauty of a starry night or the moon that is so beautiful to gaze upon remembering that there is a God who loves us more than words can say. He wants to walk with us through life! He wants to encourage us, give us peace, make our lives full of joy and let us sense His presence in our lives fully. He gave His only begotten Son for our salvation!

As I write this article I am enjoying the Lord and want badly for you to enjoy Him as well. Tell Him you love Him right now. Tell Him how thankful you are to know that He is with you and will always be with you. Walk with Him. Pray to Him. Read His Word. And, as you do these things feel His amazing love for you. And, whenever you see the fall colors do not take them for granted. Remember there is a God who does all of this for us every year as a small demonstration of His love. Amen!



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

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Roan Mountain Baptist Church

"What's Got You Afraid?"

By Russell McKinney
Mitchell County

A boy took a shortcut across a certain field after dark. He was wary about the trip because his mother had warned him not to try to cross that field in the darkness. On this occasion, however, he was so late for supper that he decided to ignore her advice and take the chance.

When the boy got about halfway across the field, the wind picked up, the leaf-barren trees started making creaking noises, and he became frightened. Instinctively, he accelerated his walking pace. That's when he started hearing footsteps behind him.

The sound of the footsteps made him stop in his tracks, but he was far too scared to turn around for a look. He did notice, though, that the footsteps stopped when he stopped. As he stood there listening for sounds that he was no longer hearing, he thought, "I'm just being silly. There's nothing behind me. My mind is playing tricks on me." Then he resumed walking. But as soon as he did, he heard the footsteps again. He tried speeding up his pace, but the footsteps matched him. Even when he broke into a full run, they did too.

Finally, after the footrace had reduced him to exhaustion, the boy quit running and turned around to meet what he was sure would be a gruesome fate. To his surprise, though, there was nothing behind him. As he stood there trying to figure out what was happening to him, he came up with a new plan. He would start up again with a brisk walk, but this time he would keep his head turned around so that he could see behind him. Sure enough, when he started walking, he heard the footsteps resume even though there still wasn't anything behind him.

For several yards, the boy kept walking and looking back until suddenly the truth dawned upon him. And what was that truth? The "footsteps" he was hearing were nothing more than the sound that was produced by his corduroy pants when the material between his legs rubbed back and forth as he walked or ran. Yes, in the end, it was corduroy that had scared him to death!

Many things in life are genuinely scary, and I'm not for one second trying to minimize their threat. However, I think we can all agree that a lot of things that scare us amount to little more than corduroy once all the dust settles. We Christians must always keep in mind that Jesus has promised to never leave us nor forsake us (Matthew 28:18-20) and to guide us as our Shepherd (Psalm 23; John 10:11-18). Those promises stand good for trips across darkened fields as well as all sorts of other situations. So, Christian, let me encourage you to take the fear that you are experiencing right now and turn it over to Jesus. When you do, you might just realize that what's had you scared amounts to little more than corduroy.

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



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Obedient Heart Fellowship

Enduring Words and Wild Olives

By Jim Huskins
McDowell County



"The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever." (Isaiah 40:8)

One of the core doctrines of the Bible is that God does not change and that what He says will never be rescinded. The devil approached Jesus at the end of His forty-day fast and tempted Him to sate His raging hunger by turning stones into bread. Jesus' response, found in Matthew 4:4, is to quote Deuteronomy 8:3: *"Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."*

One lesson here is that we are better able to resist temptation when we know God's perspective. Jesus was tempted three times. Three times He quoted the book of Deuteronomy. This is no surprise because Deuteronomy is part of the Torah: God's instructions for living are found in the first five books of the Bible. Jesus knew that Torah defines what it means to live a Godly life.

This exchange between the devil and Jesus is, also, a powerful affirmation that all of God's Word stands forever. Our sustenance is every word that comes from God's mouth. Not some of them! This clear and powerful statement flies in the face of teaching promoted by many churches. Most modern doctrine is predicated on the assumption that major portions of God's word were either changed or nullified by Jesus and/or the Apostles. One of the most deceptive devices for discarding so much of God's Enduring Word is the false teaching that we are now living under a so-called "new" covenant.

In the book of Genesis, God offered Abraham a covenant relationship. Chapter 15 states terms under which He would set apart a people for a holy purpose. This group would be Abraham's descendants through his grandson, Jacob. Verse 18 reads: *"On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, 'To your offspring I give this land....'"* From that time, every promise of God is made to the Nation of Israel. Nowhere in scripture does God promise to redeem anyone other than Israel. God promised Abraham that his offspring would be a blessing to all nations.

During the Exodus, God expanded and clarified the covenant. He told Israel that if they would obey Him and walk in His ways, He would be a husband to them, bless them with every good thing, and settle them securely in the Land He promised to Abraham. The Israelites agreed to these terms, but they were quick to break their marriage contract. Over the next thousand years, Israel was unfaithful to its vows. God divorced and dispersed the Northern Kingdom, and He sent the Southern Kingdom into seventy years of Babylonian captivity. Throughout all their unfaithfulness, God sent prophets to call His people to repentance and restoration.

One of those prophets was Jeremiah. In Jeremiah 31:31-34, God says that He will make a "new" covenant with Israel. Nowhere does God say that He will change the terms of the existing covenant. Those terms are spelled out in Torah. The difference is that God's Torah will be written on every person's heart. *"No longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me."* We are not yet living under that "new" covenant. If we were, everyone would know God and His instructions for living without being told. The fact that Jesus gave the Great Commission—our job is still to teach Christ's ways—is proof that the "new" covenant is a future event.

The "new" covenant will begin after Jesus defeats the enemies of God and establishes His Millennial Reign. That Reign will begin with something called the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. The "new" covenant will start with marriage vows just as did the Sinai covenant. At the end of the Millennium, heaven and earth will vanish, and New Jerusalem will descend out of heaven. That Holy City has twelve gates, one for each tribe of Israel. It does not have a gentile gate, and no one will enter who is not part of the Nation of Israel. Thank God that Jesus—Abraham's Offspring—became a blessing to all nations. His perfect sacrifice allows you and me to be adopted into God's family.

Paul says in Ephesians 2:12, *"Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ."* Galatians 3:7 says, *"Those of faith are the sons of Abraham."* Through faith in Jesus, we are joined to the Nation of Israel and share in the promises made to Israel.

This divine adoption is called "grafted in." Grafting is a horticultural term. Fruit trees are one type of plant in which branches of one variety can be joined to the rootstock of a different variety. Olives are a fruit that is dear to God's heart. He compares Israel to an olive tree that He has long cultivated to produce good fruit. The fruit He desires is faithful obedience to His Son and His instructions for living. In Matthew 7:19, Jesus says, *"Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."*

Romans 11:17-23 makes it clear that being born into God's cultivated olive tree—Israel—is not enough. Blood descent from Abraham will save no one who does not produce the good fruit of faithful obedience. Verse 24 says that faithful Gentiles—wild olives—are grafted into Israel.

"The word of our God will stand forever." Jesus died to redeem Israel. Part of that redemption is making a way for us of the nations to become part of The Nation—"brought near by the blood of Christ."

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Jim Huskins is pastor of Obedient Heart Fellowship.

Pleasant Hill Baptist Church

Christianity: The New Big Bad Wolf

By Alex Cummings
Burke County

White Christian nationalists, gun-toting bible-thumping Christians, Christian extremists, Christian nationalists, far-right Christians, rightwing evangelicals, Christian conservatism, and more. These are all common phrases we see spewed about in the media lately to brand Christians in a negative light.

A recent NYT article has pushed the false narrative that the Republican Party has found the “right vehicle and packaging for their white nationalism, religious nationalism, nativism, craven capitalism, and sexism”.

An article by The New Yorker discusses “white Christian nationalism” and its influence on recent Supreme Court decisions on guns, abortion, school prayer, and environmental regulations. There’s even a book titled “The Flag and the Cross: White Christian Nationalism and the Threat to American Democracy”.

Proverbs 14:34 reads *“righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people”*, there is no middle ground, there is one or the other. I think we can all tell pretty quickly, where the articles above fall.

Even the Catholic faith is not immune to the media’s false narratives and barrage, The Atlantic goes into how rosaries and firearms are appearing on social media accounts of “Church militants”. Later in the article, it discusses how this leads to radicalization and terrorist attacks.

Wait, hold the phone, because we’re Christian and we support our 2nd amendment, and we love our country, we’re on a pathway to radicalization and terrorist attacks? Let’s take a moment to look at the staggering facts about Christian persecution around the world (stats from Lifeway):

- 1 in 7 Christians faced persecution in 2021 which amounts to 360 million people in total
- More than 16 Christians were killed per day because of their beliefs
- Afghanistan, the Taliban are literally hunting and killing Christians to this day
- North Korea holds close to 70,000 Christians in labor camps
- China closed 3,000 of 5,110 Churches in 2021 under the false narrative of COVID restrictions
- Nigeria witnessed the deaths of 4,650 Christians in 2021

2. John 15:19–20 reads *“If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they keep my word, they will also keep yours.”*

Matthew 5:10-12 reminds us *“Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. “Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way, they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”*

Both of these verses remind us that God is pleased when his people show that they value him over earthly things and that they remain faithful amid opposition and persecution. We are not alone; Jesus and his disciples were persecuted for their unwavering faith. Matthew reminds us that we are LOVED by God and no matter what type(s) of persecution we face, our reward is the beautiful, glorious heaven.

Revelations 2:10-11 warns us *“Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear; let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.”*

Now, let’s get a little personal for a moment and look at ourselves in the mirror. I for one LOVE God, love my family, love my country, and avidly support the 2nd amendment because, without this amendment, the rest will topple. So, because of this, I’m labeled as a white Christian extremist by some. Interesting, let’s look at everything I do in my life:

- Avidly attend Church and volunteer for every event we host
- I work with our youth every Wednesday night to do community service projects for those in our community that need assistance
- I’m a volunteer firefighter, I don’t get paid to put my life on the line but I do it because I love my community and I wanted to serve and protect it. I’m the person who runs into burning buildings to save a life no matter their gender, color of their skin, religious beliefs, or political association
- My family donates thousands of dollars every year to charities
- Our family sponsors a child overseas in Africa to ensure he has basic needs covered
- My full-time job is working for a healthcare SaaS company that helps find funding for patients in financial need to cover their medical bills so they don’t go bankrupt
- My family makes care packages for the homeless including hygiene products and gift cards for food/drinks

If doing all of this above makes me some off-label derogatory name as stated in the first paragraph, then I guess I am. The one I’m certain of, God is pleased and that is truly what matters the most to me.

Alex Cummings is an NC transplant from the northern woods of Upstate NY and has lived in NC for the last 13 years with the love of his life Krista and two beautiful daughters. The Cummings Clan resides in beautiful Morganton, NC, and attends Pleasant Hill Baptist Church. Alex is the marketing manager for a SaaS technology company - HPA, A Cognizant Company.



Lakeview Missionary Church

How to Focus on Jesus

By Christopher L. Scott
Moses Lake, Wash.

For a short period my wife worked two-part time jobs, I had three-part time jobs, and we had a toddler we were taking care of. Due to COVID, we weren’t able to place our son in daycare, so we took turns sleeping, working, and watching our son. There were lots of “Hi” and then a quick “Bye.” Life was hectic. It became difficult for us to carve out time to spend together as a family.

While my family was especially busy during that time, life is always busy. It’s easy to get caught up in our everyday life and forget to focus on our Savior Jesus Christ. The author of Hebrews reminds us to focus on Christ:

“Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:1-2, NASB).

Here are a few practical ways we can run the “race” and fix “our eyes on Jesus.”

Read His Word. We need to read his Word every day. Not read a devotional, listen to a sermon, or read books about the Bible, but read God’s Word directly. It can be as simple as reading one paragraph a day or one chapter a day from the Bible. And while you do that, use highlighters and colored pens to note what stands out to you, what it means, and how to apply it.

Gather with His people. Find a way to attend a church service no matter how big or small it might be. Make it a priority to gather with Christ’s people because as Paul said, *“Christ lives in me”* (Galatians 2:20)”. So when you gather with Christ’s people you are gathering with Christ. When we spend time with other believers we are spending time with Him. In addition to being in a church service on Sundays, we can join a small group during the week. That gives us more time to enjoy fellowship with other believers through discussion, studying His Word, and praying for each other.

Serve in His church. Another way to focus on Christ is to serve in His church. Because we are all one body (1 Corinthians 12) we all play a part in serving His church. It could be helping with kids in the nursery, passing the offering plate, moving chairs for the church services, mowing the church lawn each week, or cleaning the church.

As we go about our busy lives let’s focus on Christ by reading His Word, gathering with His People, and serving in His church.



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





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

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New Writer

“Dark Nights of the Soul”

By Cody T. McCain, Sr.
Burke County



John 11:39-44 (The Story of Lazarus) and Acts 5:17-21

The number four has a significant meaning in John 11:39-44, describing the death of Lazarus and his miraculous restoration to life by our Christ. Lazarus – meaning "God has helped" – was dead a total of four days before Jesus came to raise him. Genesis 1:14-19 describes day 4 of creation as the day in which God created the sun, moon, and stars, establishing the means for keeping time, distinguishing between seasons, and for direction in travel. Four in Biblical numerology is known as the "number of creation" from which the four cardinal directions (North, South, East, and West), seasons, and time derive their origin. Whether it is day or night, God has provided a means of receiving direction and time by using these "heavenly bodies."

Lazarus in John 11 became sick, died, and was buried in a dark and isolated tomb, where he remained for four long days. Yet this story has a profound parallel to our lives in that, like Lazarus' name, we have the declaration of God over our lives of Him being our "present help" in the person of His Holy Spirit which He's sent to dwell on the inside of us. However, despite this fact, God still allows us to enter a season of "night" or a time of darkness (like Lazarus' grave). Saint John of the Cross - a renowned early church father - referred to this time in a believer's life as a "dark night of the soul," a position that feels much like a tomb: dark, isolated, cold, and uninviting; a place we normally and ordinarily would not enter. Yet Jesus allowed Lazarus to enter a “dark night of the soul” by allowing him to die! Upon hearing the news of Lazarus’ sickness in the town of Bethany, Jesus could have very easily made the short journey to heal his beloved friend. Instead, Jesus goes to Judea and waits two more days before going to Bethany. Why would He do such a thing? It was for the glory of God! The miracle of Jesus raising Lazarus back from the dead not only shows the resurrection power of Christ but also symbolizes how as believers we too will encounter “Lazarus seasons” as well; times that seem hopeless and filled with darkness. But just as Jesus allowed Lazarus to lie in the tomb for four days (with four being the number of creation and direction) God allows us to remain in those “night seasons” of our lives to give us direction (since He is the ever shining light) and to do creative work in our hearts and minds (as He is the Creator of all that exists) that would show forth His glory and thrust us into the next dimension of His purpose and plan for our lives! Many times in scripture, some of the greatest miracles and instances of God-inspired instruction came DURING THE NIGHT! An example of a nighttime miracle – that provided direction and created a greater level of faith within hearts and minds – occurred in Acts 5:17-21.

Persecuted and thrown in a lonesome dungeon, Peter and the other apostles experienced a “dark night of the soul.” Yet it was during the night when God manifested a miracle of not only freeing them from prison – because of an angel’s guidance – He also sent a message of direction to the apostles (through the same angel) which said: “Go, stand in the temple and tell the people the whole message about this new life.” When they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and went on with their teaching (Acts 5:19-21). During the night, the apostles received direction and experienced the creation of a greater level of faith, obedience, and zeal for carrying out the assignment for their lives! Just as the disciples entered the temple at daybreak, our “daybreak” out of our night seasons should be a revealing of the work God has done inside of us during the “night”! And like Lazarus, we will be able to bear witness to a greater manifestation of God’s glory and might in our lives when we emerge from our “dark nights of the soul.” When the enemy desires that we think that these types of seasons are going to kill us and separate us from the presence of God, we must be forever mindful that no matter how dark the night, Jesus’ light is perpetually BRIGHT and is faithful to be a “lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path” (Psalm 119:105), even when it seems bleak! In these times, God seeks to reveal Himself even more that we would trust Him and allow Him to work in our hearts and minds in whatever way necessary so that we would move to the next place in Him! So, fret not the night, you have His light ever shining bright, to give you insight and to create within your heart and mind a level of faith, obedience, trust, and fortitude to live a life worthy of the calling that you have received! Be encouraged people of God!

Cody T. McCain Sr. is the owner, funeral director, and embalmer of McCain Funeral Home & Cremations, LLC located in Morganton. He, along with his wife Shaunda, have a passion to serve their community with the love, integrity, and excellence of Christ.

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Climb Every Mountain

By Steve Carter
Tupelo, Mississippi

Being forever, a highly conditioned athlete, I did not hesitate in taking on the challenge of backpacking on the Appalachian Trail (A.T.). This established, extremely difficult walking path tested my mettle in ways I couldn't have imagined. The lessons learned, often the hard way, benefited my walk with Christ, and did the same for my sons, Matthew and Mark, who accompanied me on most of my "treks."

On training outings, without my children, I learned some pitfalls to avoid. Anyone who lets their ego, rather than careful planning, organize the trip, will be taking the chance of watching (or joining) exhausted people toppling off the trail and tumbling down a mountain. While "enjoying" some snow hiking with a group of teenage boys from church, Mark yelled out "Matthew fell off the trail." After clawing, and twice falling on my way back across the ice, I pulled him up off a tree limb to safety. Years later Matt returned the favor by, several times, grabbing the back of my pack just before exhaustion sent me into a "nosedive" over the edge. This is the kind of thing best avoided! The Smokey Mountains don't care one way or another how difficult they are to travel through. Go ahead, show up unprepared, just make sure to bring a phone and a lot of money for the rescue squad.

I introduced Matthew to the A.T. when he turned ten years old with Mark joining us a few years later. I took no chances in coming up short on anything, so my pack weighed in at about 70 lbs. In those days I weighed in at about 180 lbs. and this usually led to an aching back and tingling toes, the next week! My boys never packed in more than 15 lbs. and had not a care in the world!

Things got a little tricky when trying to plan meals and adequate water. What hydration you can't carry must be dipped out of a stream or coaxed from a mud hole. Before drinking any of it, the liquid must be boiled or run through a purifier. That is unless you enjoy some very nasty digestive tract problems! Finally, before hitting the trail, it's time to search all over creation to find meals that don't weigh a ton, that your kids will eat, and we all know how much fun that can be!

On this, Matthews's first trip to the "big hills," we were shuttled up to and dropped off at our chosen spot. Following a friendly wave goodbye to our driver and with a firm grip on our walking sticks, we began "hoofing" it north toward my truck.

Being well rested and excited the first day drifted by with no problems. With plenty of daylight left, we camped near a small pool being sustained by a waterfall, which in turn, fed a trickling stream.

Matt wanted to wade in the pond, so after I checked it out for any sign of danger, he enjoyed the water and mist coming off the waterfall. After supper, we climbed into our bags and woke up to a damp sunrise. A little coffee and cola washed down our junk food breakfast before we trekked into a new day of beautiful country and aching feet.

By late morning we started the nine-mile section that took us back to my truck. Joining us on what turned out to be a mostly downward walk, was a lop-eared dog of questionable heritage who seemed happy for our company. By mid-afternoon, we came upon a gravel road, and due to my poor sense of direction, (and inadequate planning) we turned the wrong way! Soon enough though a kindhearted soul pulled up, figured we had gone astray, and loaded us and the dog into the back of his truck and took us to mine.

Following a phone call to assure our shuttle driver that we had made it off the mountain, we started the long trip home. As we pulled out, I noticed "old yeller" sitting in the back of a forest rangers' truck, with a big smile on his mangy face. He had reason to be happy, because finding something to eat here had to be easier than in those mountains.

What an adventure that trip turned out to be! There were many more to follow, but those are stories for another time.

Let's go over some of what God taught me that weekend in Georgia. With the responsibility that comes with caring for yourself and a kid or two (whether it be backpacking or living daily life), I found little margin for error. Living in this fallen world leaves us open to numerous disasters. With hard work and careful planning, this life can be pleasant enough so long as God plays a big part in it. Throwing a few things into a sack and heading off to camp out is just plain dumb! The same goes for taking on this life and its potential for disaster without God's presence. In the absence of God's guidance, it's impossible to avoid unnecessary trials, some of which can cripple you.

There is no upside to falling down a mountain. If God hadn't inspired Matthew to watch over his "Pop" rather than hurry on down the trail, who would have caught me?

The Triune God will cheer us through our victories and defend us when under attack by our common enemy, Lucifer. Personally, I see no reason for "going it alone." Plan, train, and be careful to avoid temptation. Bad stuff is going to come our way. Our plans, regardless of how well thought out, will need God's help if we're going to stay on "the trail" and live our lives in a way that is an inspiration to fellow travelers and pleasing to God.

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

And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive. Matthew 21:22



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He Really is the Best

By Regina McIntosh
Yancey County

I know I don't always do the right thing
Sometimes life just gets in my way
I know I don't always pray the right prayer
Sometimes doubt leaves me in despair
I know I don't always leave love in my path
Even though Jesus would make a way past
The sorrow, the confusion, the darkness
So that His love would shine all through me

I know that I can't always bring His grace
So that others feel His light, His embrace
I know that I can't always shine His love
Into the darkness, gentleness from above
I know that I can't always kiss away the hurt
Assuring that no one ever feels like dirt

Still, I try...
I reach beyond my fears, my tears
Sing songs of hope, laughing through the years
I try to make others see His light in my heart
Burning away the darkness, reassuring dreams
Silencing the worry and uplifting those in need

Still, I try...
I know I don't do enough, but I give
From my heart and soul, I breathe His promises
Encourage feelings of faith, devotion, and trust
Loyalty to the One who makes a way for everyone
To come to the amazing God who created us

I try to give back, even though I'm so small
I serve a Mighty GOD who can do anything at all
He is light and love – He is grace from above
He makes a way for each one of us – delivers
Redeems, reassures – saves us to the uttermost!

Humbly and without anything notable to give
I come to you, my friend, with only one request...
Please give Jesus a chance – He really is the best!

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

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Counting The Days

By Steve Bietz
Burke County

Well, here comes October, ready or not. Each October I face another Birthday. These days, I find myself remembering what the 60 Minutes correspondent, Andy Rooney, stated in his "A few minutes with Andy Rooney" commentary back in 2006. Andy Rooney said: "If I seem a little down, it's because I had a birthday recently. Whoever decided "Happy Birthday" was a good thing to say to someone who just got a year older? A birthday doesn't do anything for the person having it, except remind him or her that they are just one year closer to the end of it all. If you're 49, why should turning 50 be an occasion for joy or celebration? I think of being old a lot. There are so many things that remind me of it. For instance, mirrors. Looking in the mirror when I first get up in the morning. Looking in the mirror just before I go to bed. Looking in any mirror, any time reminds me of how old I am."

Mr. Rooney continued a few more minutes with his commentary, but you get the point. He was not a fan of birthday reminders at his age. He was 87 at the time.

I'm 20 years younger than Mr. Rooney as he gave this commentary on the 60 Minutes television program in 2006. But I find that mirrors point out just how many days I've been, well, looking in the mirror.

And then I consider what the man Moses wrote in a Psalm, the only Psalm that bears his name. In Psalm 90, Moses prays and asks the Lord: "*So teach us to number our days, so that we may gain a heart of wisdom.*" (Psalm 90:12) Numbering our days, yes these days I do that every time I see myself in a mirror. The Bible reports that Moses lived till he was 120 years old, so he had a few more days to count than I suspect all of us.

I'm not sure what Moses thought of celebrating birthdays, but that does not appear to be his point in his prayer we know as Psalm 90. Moses focuses on the lifespan of mankind in that we will return to dust. It's a call to bring our iniquities to the Lord so that we might be forgiven. The concept of knowing that your days are numbered implies a knowledge that we are finite; that they will one day come to an end unless the Lord returns first. Moses asks God to teach us to count our days so that we should use them wisely and not take them for granted. When God teaches us to number our days, we will be more prone to listen and seek him for wisdom on how to best live our lives. We need God's wisdom to lead us now and onward into a life that is to come.

Moses also said in Psalm 90, "*We finish our years like a sigh.*" Are we just tired of counting the days... maybe? We do know that the passing of time means nothing to the eternal God. And if you and I have that wonderful abiding relationship with our Heavenly Father, then He promises to provide us the incomprehensible gift of eternal life. Only God sees the end from the beginning, but we should pray for the grace to act as if we saw the end. We need to meditate on life's brevity, so that we may be wise in employing the time that God gives us.

Steve Bietz, Pastor, Morganton Seventh day Adventist Church.



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Hungering and Thirsting After Righteousness

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



The Living Savior and Lord know the inner workings of our heart, soul, mind, and being. He knows the depth of our souls. He sees right through you and me. Any of our attempts: to hide from Him or shield our truest and deepest intentions, motives, and priorities from Him; or our feeble strategies to hide our evil thoughts or pamper our sensitive emotions are useless before the Lord. Jesus sees right through any of those right into the deep God-giving and God-created desires of our hearts and soul. If you are living for yourself—He sees and knows! If you are living for your flesh—He sees and knows! If you are prideful, arrogant, and self-serving—He sees and knows!

And here is what the Lord God does when He sees our sin—He grieves and laments over our sins. His anger rages over our choice to reject both His Lordship's claim and His offer of salvation, peace, and security. He yearns for us to fall upon our knees in confession and acknowledge our absolute need for Him, His grace, and His mercy. He draws near to us and repeats His gracious offer to accept and receive His forgiveness and cleansing through the blood of Christ. He pleads for us to turn from our sins and rebellion and follow Him.

If we respond to Him and lay our lives before Him, open up our hearts to His redeeming love, and both remove and turn from our sins, then the fulness of His redeeming love will be poured out upon us. However, if one does not turn to God, their sins will find them out and will surely turn on them—leading to destruction. The results of our choice are clear.

In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus declared, *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”* He said that those who seek after righteousness because of their absolute hunger and thirst for God and His righteousness will be supremely blessed. Those who crave after the things of God and the ways of God; that is, those who seek after Jesus with all of their heart will surely find peace, contentment, satisfaction, and fulfillment in Him. Those who honor the Lord with everything that they have and are will surely find rest and assurance in His strong hand of salvation and righteousness.

God has created and designed each of us, because we are made in His image, to hunger and thirst after Him and His righteousness. It is only as we pursue a right relationship with God in Christ will we be satisfied!

In ancient Judaism, righteousness meant “to acquit, vindicate, and restore to a right relationship.” And so, the righteous are those who pursue and maintain the right relationships—with God and with the people around them.

You genuinely hunger and thirst for righteousness when you make God’s way the only way. You will be supremely blessed when you die to self and pursue reconciliation in broken relationships. You will be healed when you lay down your own wounds, feelings of anger, fear, or hatred, and choose to bless God and others. You hunger and thirst after righteousness (right relationships) when you desire to bless others for their sakes and not as a means to meet your own needs.

In his book, *A Hunger for God*, John Piper says “If you don't feel strong desires for the manifestation of the glory of God, it is not because you have drunk deeply and are satisfied. It is because you have nibbled so long at the table of the world. Your soul is stuffed with small things, and there is no room for the great.” He goes on to say, “The strongest, most mature Christians I have ever met are the hungriest for God. It might seem that those who eat most would be least hungry. But that’s not the way it works with an inexhaustible fountain, and an infinite feast, and a glorious Lord.”

How right you are, Mr. Piper. We must drink deeply from God’s grace and mercy—and with an insatiable thirst, we fill ourselves with His presence. Having been filled, we then pour out His grace, mercy, forgiveness, and compassion upon those we see that are trapped in helplessness and hopelessness; upon those who are crumbling under the weight of guilt and shame; and upon those who are held in bondage to fear and Satan’s lies.

We hunger after God’s call to unity and fellowship—and with the emptiness, poverty, and brokenness of spirit (Matt. 5:3), we mourn our own unrighteousness (Matt. 5:4) and submit our use of God’s power and authority to pursue unity and fellowship in the Body of Christ. With the compassionate eyes of Jesus, we see the pain and wounds of our brothers and sisters in Christ—and rather than leave them to the misery of their own self-induced isolation and aloneness, we come alongside and choose to be present with them. Out of Christ’s love and out of a godly desire to build them up to all righteousness, we speak God’s truth to them and pour out His love upon them...and we are satisfied in Christ!

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.





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Humor

By Buddy Freeman
Madison County



Groucho Marx says of his wedding. “I was married by a judge.” I should have asked for a jury.

A boss yelled at one of his workers, “Dave, I have taught you everything I know, and you still don’t know anything.”

The superior of the Jesuits in New York City was visiting the nursing home where the sick and elderly priests live. The superior was told that “the Jesuits in his area were getting older and older. We have so many aging Jesuits that there isn’t any place to put them. There isn’t room to put another elderly priest.” To which an elderly Jesuit shouted out, “Father, we are dying as fast as we can.”

A little girl, who had recently become the big sister of a new baby brother, listened to the story about the Wise Men’s gifts to the Baby Jesus. She thought for a moment and then said, “Well, I guess gold and all that stuff are all right, but I’ll bet Mary really wished somebody had brought some diapers.”

An old man and woman were married for many years. Whenever they fought you could hear them throughout the community. He would shout, When I die, I will dig my way out of the grave and come back and haunt you for the rest of our life.” The neighbors were afraid of him. Well, he died. His wife had a closed casket at the funeral. After the funeral, a concerned friend asked her, “Aren’t you afraid that he will dig himself out of the grave and come back to haunt you?” The wife laughed and replied, “Let him dig. I buried him face down. I know he won’t ask for directions.”

Yogi Berra says, “Always go to other people’s funerals, otherwise they won’t come to yours.”

After her four-year-old put on her shoes, Mom noticed that the right shoe was on her left foot while her left shoe was on her right foot. “Honey”, she said, “you have your shoes on the wrong feet.” “No, I don’t, Mommy,” the child answered confidently. “You can’t fool me. I know these are my feet.”

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



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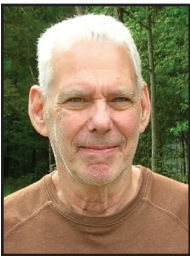


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Bible Briefs

Occupational Therapy

By Robert Garner
Rutherford County



To The Accounts
Micah 6:11: “*Shall I count them pure with wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights?*”

To The Astronauts;
Nehemiah 9:6: “*Thou, even thou, art LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their hosts, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee.*”

To The Athletes;
1 Timothy 4:8: “*For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the new life that now is, and of that which is to come.*”

To The Biologists;
Colossians 1:16: “*For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities or powers, all things were created by him, and for him.*”

To The Bankers;
Psalm 62:10: “*Trust not in oppression and become not vain in robbery: if riches increase, set not your heart upon them.*”

To The Children;
Proverbs 20:11; “*Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right.*”

To The Chorus;
Isaiah 12:5; “*Sing unto the LORD; for he hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth.*”

To The Farmer;
Genesis 1:12; “*And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind, and God saw that it was good.*”

To The Fortune Hunters:
Matthew 13:44; “*Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.*”

To The Kings and Judges:
Psalm 2:10 & 11; “*Be wise now therefore, O ye Kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.*”

To The Lawyers;
Proverbs 12:17; “*He that speaketh truth sheweth forth righteousness: but a false witness deceit.*”

To The Musicians & Dancers;
Psalm 150:4; “*Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with the stringed instruments and organ.*”

To The Movie Stars:
1 Peter 5:6; “*Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.*”

To The Parents;
Proverbs 29:15; “*The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.*”

To The Pastors:
Jeremiah 23:1; “*Woe be to the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the LORD.*”

To The Physicians;
Luke 4:23; “*And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself.*”

To The Professors:
Ecclesiastes 12:12; “*And further; by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.*”

To The Scientists:
Isaiah 55:9; “*For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts [higher] than your thoughts.*”

To The Students;
Proverbs 19:20; “*Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end.*”

To The Teachers
Job 27:11; “*I will teach you by the hand of God: that which is with the Almighty will I not conceal [from you].*”

To The Soldiers:
Ecclesiastes 3:8; “*A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.*”

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

“*And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the LORD, and not unto men. Knowing that of the LORD ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons;*” Colossians 3:23-25.

Your comments 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.

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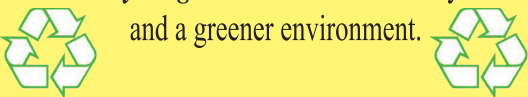


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A Banana Split on My Mind

By Dr. James L. Snyder
Ocala, Florida



I must confess I heavily lean towards being a workaholic; I just love working and keeping myself busy.
Years ago, I discovered that the busier I am, the less liable I am to get into trouble. No matter the trouble, I just don't like it.

Sitting at my desk working on a project is the theme of my life.
The other day I took a little break, got a cup of coffee, sat down, and caught up with the news on TV. Just as I was ready to turn off the TV, there was a commercial for some ice cream company, I don't remember which one but the focus was on a banana split. I didn't have too much interest and just returned to my office. As I was working, I started thinking about that banana split. I couldn't remember the last time I had a banana split, but it has been quite a while. Why that commercial buzzed in my head is beyond me.

I shook my head and returned to my work, but it didn't last long. I had a banana split on my mind.
If The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage knew I was thinking about a banana split, she would have something to say about it. I just shook my head and chased those banana-split thoughts right out.

It didn't last long, and a song began dancing in my head, "Tra la la, one banana, two banana." Where that came from, I have no idea. I had never heard that song before in my life, or at least I cannot remember ever hearing it.

I sat back in my chair and began thinking about that delicious banana split and how I would enjoy it.
Not too long ago, an ice cream truck was set up not far from our house. I remember one of the things they had to offer was a banana split. At first, I didn't think too much about it, but now it was beginning to dance in my mind like never before.

Unable to focus on my work, I began thinking of how I could sneak out, and go and get one of their banana splits. Then, of course, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage would have nothing to do with this. I'm on a special diet that does not include banana splits, at least in her opinion.

If I could sneak out and get a banana split without her finding out, that would cause me to ease back on my thinking about banana splits all day long. The trouble is, how do I sneak out without getting caught?

I thought about it and could not come up with any solution. Certainly, there has to be something I could do to get out of the house without being questioned by her Majesty.

Since my office is in the home now, I do not have the freedom I once had. I have to devise a foolproof plan for The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage.

I've never had this happen before, but I was becoming obsessed with a banana split. Why? I have no idea why it obsessed me like this. After all, it's not an Apple Fritter!

Maybe I can go to the post office and pick up the mail? Or, maybe my wife would like me to pick something up at the grocery store? Maybe I need to get gas in my truck?

The ideas flowed in my direction, and I hoped to devise the perfect plan. After all, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage has perfect plans for everything. If only I could set her down and have her explain how she would handle this situation and how in the world I could fool her and go get my banana split.

Suddenly, my wife appeared at my office door and said, "I have a headache, and I'm going to go to bed and sleep this off. Maybe you can get your own lunch today."

Talk about being handed a golden goose; my plan came together. I could sneak out while she was sleeping and get that infamous banana split I'd been thinking about all morning.

Waiting a few minutes after she went to bed, I very carefully snuck out, got into my truck, and drove to the ice cream truck. I sat there and enjoyed a wonderful banana split. Then, as I was eating, I sang, "Tra, la, la, one banana, two bananas." I was rather ecstatic as I drove home, parked the truck, and went inside the house still singing. Then, as I went inside, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage was standing there, looking at me with both hands on her hips, and said, "And where were you?"

Trying to change the subject, I asked how her headache was, but it did not work, as usual. So I decided to tell her the truth and take my punishment like a husband.

As I humbly returned to my office, I thought of what King Solomon once said. Proverbs 12: 22, "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord: but they that deal truly are his delight."

Although I sometimes think that lying is a strategy to get me out of trouble it always has the opposite effect. I'm not smart enough to be a good liar. Also, to be a good liar you have to have a very good memory which I don't. Telling the truth is one thing that delights the Lord.

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 jamesnsnyder2@att.net. The church web site is www.whatafamilyofgodfellowship.com

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The Death, Life, And Christian Faith Of Queen Elizabeth II

By Jim Denison

Queen Elizabeth II, the longest-reigning monarch in British history, died today at the age of ninety-six. This news is understandably center stage for the United Kingdom, which has been preparing for their queen’s passing for some time. Television anchors changed into black attire to communicate the news. The UK Parliament and legislatures in Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales are being adjourned. Plans are already underway for the queen’s funeral, which is expected to take place ten days after her death.

In the United States, the media has been covering her impending death all day. As I write, outlets across the political spectrum are carrying the story of the beloved monarch’s homegoing, The UK’s favorite monarch.

Why do Americans so venerate the queen of a country against whose king we once rebelled?

One reason is obviously her uniqueness as a queen and as a person: Queen Elizabeth II is not only Britain’s longest-reigning monarch but their favorite. In a poll conducted for The Sunday Times in 2015, she was voted the United Kingdom’s greatest monarch, followed by Queen Elizabeth I and Queen Victoria.

Television shows like The Crown have made her story accessible to millions of Americans, many of whom are young enough to be her great-grandchildren. Her unfailing dignity, grace, wisdom, and perseverance have been on display for seven decades in the public eye. She is beloved, and deservedly so.

But there’s more to the story.
“There shall be a king over us”

In 1 Samuel 8, the elders of Israel came to Samuel with the demand, “*Appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations*” (v. 5). Why did a nation governed by the King of the universe (v. 7) insist on an earthly king?

They wanted a king to lead them: “*There shall be a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us*” (v. 19–20a). They wanted a king to resolve their disputes, protect them from each other, and guide their nation like “all the nations.”

They wanted a king to protect them: “and fight our battles” (v. 20b). Saul was, therefore, an appropriate choice due to his stature: “*From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people*” (1 Samuel 9:2). When he then led them to defeat the Ammonites (1 Samuel 11:5–11), the people united behind his rule (Vv. 12–15).

The Israelites expressed basic human nature. There is something in us that wants someone in our lives we can trust and venerate, an example we can follow and emulate, a strength we can make our own. For seven decades, Queen Elizabeth II has been that person for her people.

She led them through dark days and crises and gave them a sense of solidarity and security when they needed her influence the most. For example, her televised address during the coronavirus pandemic, assuring her people that “we will overcome it,” gave them hope in a hopeless time. She encouraged them: “We should take comfort that while we may have more still to endure, better days will return. We will be with our friends again. We will be with our families again. We will meet again.”

She was right.
“God help me to make good my vow”

While Queen Elizabeth II has been the quintessential monarch, she knew that the King of Israel is the King of the universe (Revelation 19:16). He will never die and his reign will never end. She, therefore, made his strength her strength. On her twenty-first birthday, she told the nation: “I declare before you all that my whole life whether it be long or short shall be devoted to your service.” She added, “God help me to make good my vow, and God bless all of you who are willing to share in it.” At her 1953 coronation, she stated her desire that “for the years I may, by God’s Grace and Mercy, be given to reign and serve you as your Queen.”

In The Faith of Queen Elizabeth: The Poise, Grace, and Quiet Strength Behind the Crown, biographer Dudley Delffs explains her enormous popularity: “Numerous factors contribute, including Her Majesty’s intelligence, humility, humor, poise, and grace under pressure. She is authentically herself. The Queen exudes a kind of confidence that cannot be contrived. In addition, she has sustained that poise for over seven decades and through numerous crises, both personal and political. At the heart of this confidence, we glimpse Her Majesty’s personal faith in God.”

Delffs reports that for her ninetieth birthday, the queen participated in the publication of a book titled, The Servant Queen and the King She Serves. The book was published by Bible Society UK; over 100,000 copies were given away and used as faith-based conversation starters by Christians and churches all over the world. It proved so popular that the Bible Society had to print another 150,000 copies to meet demand.

“An inspiration and an anchor in my life”
In her annual Christmas broadcast for 2014, the queen stated, “For me, the life of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace . . . is an inspiration and an anchor in my life.” Last month, the queen issued a message to the Lambeth Conference (a gathering of bishops of the Anglican Church) in which she testified: “Throughout my life, the message and teachings of Christ have been my guide and in them I find hope. It is my heartfelt prayer that you will continue to be sustained by your faith in



times of trial and encouraged by hope in times of despair.”
Now Queen Elizabeth II is in the presence of the One she trusted and served so faithfully.
May we honor her life and legacy by emulating her faith, to the glory of God.
NOTE: For her brief biography in historical context, please see “The life and legacy of Queen Elizabeth II,” by Dr. Ryan Denison.

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

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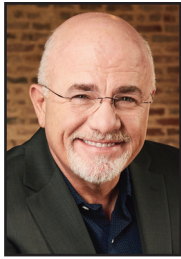
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By Dave Ramsey



Dear Dave,

My wife and I just bought a new home, and we only need one or two more things to furnish the living room. Over the weekend, we found a couch and love seat set we both like for \$3,000. The owner of the store said he would take 15% off the price if we get a store credit card and pay for it that way. We are in pretty good financial shape, and can afford to pay cash for the furniture, but what do you think about the idea of taking advantage of the 15% off offer, then paying off the card immediately and closing the account? - Jackson

Dear Jackson,

Playing with snakes is always a bad idea. Sooner or later, you're going to get bitten. Everyone thinks they're the exception to the rule, or they're somehow winning or getting rich by doing stuff like this. It doesn't work that way. So, stop playing around with debt products. This guy's just trying to hook you and make more money.

Your idea might sound good on the surface to a lot of folks, but the problem is the vast majority of those same people don't have the discipline to follow through on a plan like this. Having that store account, even for a short time, would be too much of a temptation. Another issue is many places like this hit you with a fee when you pay off the card. They'll fee you to death on other things, too, if you're not careful until you end up wishing you'd never even seen the place.

If it were me, I'd just talk to the owner again and let him know I'm taking my business elsewhere unless he discounts the furniture 15% on a cash purchase. There's no way I'd take out a stupid credit card for a place like that whether I had the cash on hand or not!—Dave

Dear Dave,

I finished college a couple of years ago, and I have a good job making \$65,000 a year. The only debt I have is about \$5,000 remaining on a car loan, and I am paying that off as quickly as possible. At the same time, my mom and dad need repairs on their small house, and I am not sure they can afford to fix things. They both work hard, but they don't make a lot of money. Plus, they have some debt. I have enough saved to pay for fixing their roof, with plenty left over. What do you think about the idea of pausing to pay off my car to help them? Samantha

Dear Samantha,

You're a caring young lady with a great heart, who's also making good money. There's no reason you can't do both things. Help your mom and dad with the roof, then turn around and finish knocking out that car payment and rebuild your savings. From what you've said, it won't put you in a financial bind, right? I'm really proud of you for wanting to help your folks this way.

I know your mom and dad work hard. And they're obviously good people to have raised a daughter like you. But I want you to think about one thing. If you make a habit of fixing their lives without them having a hand in fixing their lives, this scenario could become a nightmare for everyone.

I'd go ahead and help them, but the only way I'd do it is if they promise to let you help them address the reasons they don't have any money — and if they agree to get financial counseling. I can tell you love your mom and dad a lot. And I'm sure they work too hard to be broke. I'm not talking about fussing at them or shaming them, I'm talking about sitting down and having a loving discussion about the issues and what they can do to start making positive financial changes in their lives.

The fact that your folks have worked their entire lives, and can't come up with the money for roof repairs on a small home, tells me something's wrong. The fact that they don't have any money is the symptom. The problem is they've made poor decisions and mishandled the dollars they earned. Even if you don't make a lot, you can still have a little cash set aside for emergencies if you manage it well.

— Dave

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

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The Orchard at Altapass

Final Month For The Orchard At Altapass

By Kate Groff
Mitchell County

The Orchard at Altapass shuts the red barn door and silences the music for another year on October 30—the last day of its 2022 season. It’s been good thus far—one more month to go.

October kicks off with Appalachian folk singer-songwriter Ash Devine on Saturday the 1st. Next up on Sunday is another Asheville band—The Scatterlings—with their Americana sound. Then it’s onto bluegrass with Never Too Late and Highland Highlights with a bit o’ this and that and a smattering of old-timey tunes coming the next weekend on the 8th and 9th.

The Dollar Brothers signal midmonth with a bluegrass appearance on the 15th, and we’ll all rewind to the good times with Rewind Goodtimz on the 16th. Music on the 22nd features Slight Departure. And duo Seth and Sara step up on the 23rd. Both return musicians, both individual styles. Both always performing to a cacophony of applause.

We round out the music at the Orchard for 2022 with Homegrown on the 29th. Sam McKinney takes us out on the 30th.



All performances are in the pavilion from 3-4:30 and are always free; dancing is encouraged. And don’t forget the final four music jams at the Orchard are on Thursdays from 1 to 3:30. Always free. Everyone welcome.

But it isn’t all music, music, music. Robert Sours of Sours Mountain Homestead Farm returns on the 15th with his family’s handmade goat skincare products from 10 to 4 in the red barn. Perfect for stuffing those stockings hanging on the fireplace mantle.

And on Saturday, the 22nd, we welcome back the quirky hand-carved walking sticks of Steve Duncan that will make walking into a new season a fun-filled adventure. Julia Duncan brings back her books of poetry, any of which would make an excellent holiday gift for that special person. They’ll both be in the red barn from 11:30 to 1:30.

There are apples, all heirlooms and all delicious, still on the trees for picking or purchase and “heyrides” every Saturday (12 and 1:30) and Sunday (noon). Bring your lunch and enjoy it under the bright green umbrellas, or pick up a special at the grill, open Wednesday-Friday, 11 to 3; Saturday-Sunday, 11 to 4. And don’t forget to top it off with a scoop of deliciously cold ice cream.



Located at 1025 Orchard Road near Spruce Pine at mile-post 328.3 on the Blue Ridge Parkway, the Orchard is a not-for-profit working orchard and educational venue. Hours are 10 to 5, Wednesday-Sunday. Family- and pet-friendly. Wheel-chair accessible. Buses welcome. For information, please visit www.altapassorchard.org.

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

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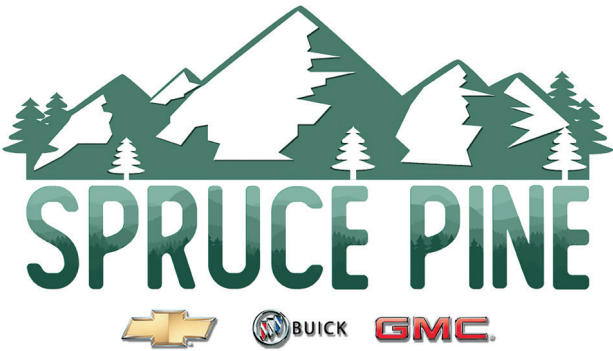


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Following the Leader

By Steve Williams
Mitchell County



Following the leader used to be a game we would play as children. The Leader would tell you what to do. The main thing was to follow the leader and pay close attention to his instructions. A question we need to be sure of is; Who or What is doing the leading in our lives? If people were, to be honest, many would have to say that they are leading themselves. Again this is an important question because whatever or whoever we depend upon for direction determines our thinking, attitudes, wishes, desires, and ways. Many people today are guided by their emotions, and as a result, they lack the stability that only comes through dependence upon God's Word. When the Lord is our guide, He gives us the clarity and strength we need to live as He desires—with confidence and trust in Him.

When God rescued the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage, He didn't leave them to find their way to the land He'd promised to give them. No, but the Bible tells us in Exodus 13:21-22, "*The Lord was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night.*" He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from the people. They were always complaining about something they didn't like. Although they were traveling through unknown territory, they would never get lost as long as they followed the pillar of cloud and fire.

Today we have God's written Word as our infallible guide for life's journey. The Lord has graciously revealed how He thinks and what He desires so that we can know how to live in a manner that pleases Him. In addition, He has given His Holy Spirit to those of us who have trusted Him to be their personal Savior. The Spirit imparts an understanding of God's Word, gives guidance, and enables us to follow and obey. It's important to align our thoughts with the Lord's because our thinking determines how we live.

If we rely on our own ideas rather than God's truths, we'll end up on the wrong path and waste valuable time. When the Israelites took their eyes off the Lord and focused on the obstacles, they rebelled against His instructions and refused to enter the Promised Land. As a result, they ended up wandering in the desert for 40 years until that entire generation died. Many people today are wandering in the desert of life due to not following the true leader of this world, Jesus Christ.

To be guided by God, we cannot live automatically without giving Him a thought, rely on our emotions for guidance, or look around and imitate what everyone else is doing. Nor can we deliberately go our own way like the children of Israel did. If we've trusted Jesus as Savior, we must also trust Him as Lord and yield to His leadership and direction by opening our Bibles to see what He has said.

Reading God's Word every now and then will not be sufficient if we seek to live as He desires in a world opposed to Him and the truths that we believe. We must allow God's Word and God's Spirit to lead us in the uncertain day that is before us. Words of Wisdom:

- I don't have the strength or wisdom to get through a single day without guidance and grace from God. Tony Dungy
- The truth is we are all searching and looking for guidance, that's why it is important to search God's Word before we move forward in life. N/A
- A man's pride can be his downfall, that is why he needs God's guidance. N/A
- Children require guidance, so if you're a child of God let Him Guide you. N/A

Something to think about: A man was taking his family on vacation. When they came to the road he needed to turn on there was a sign that read, Bridge Out. He said it would be OK. His wife said you better go and ask someone which way we should go. He said never mind we be able to make it. So he went down the road and sure enough, the bridge was out. So he had to turn around and go back the way he had come. Now when he got back to the main road again, on the back of the sign that read (Bridge Out) it says, WELCOME BACK STUPID. Guidance is important and when we fail to take God's Guidance and allow Him to lead our lives, we will make some stupid turns in our lives.

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

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Have you taught your children
On the masters' sweet name to call.*

*Worldly treasures to my dad
They never meant a thing
T'was worth more than any diamonds
In church to hear him sing.*

*We work our lives away at best
Providing food and clothes
And every other thing they need
So much more only Heaven knows.*

*Then when it comes down to the end
Do they know about the Lord
Gold and silver won't pay their way
At last to enter our Father's abode.*

*Don't waste away the time you have
On earthly things that all decay
Leave everlasting treasures
That can not fade away.*



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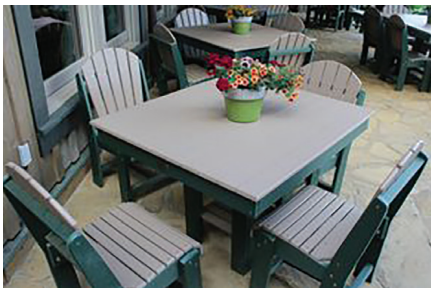
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Foundation Forward

Anna Smith Strong

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.

Anna [Smith] Strong was born on April 4, 1740, in Setauket, New York. She and Selah Strong married in 1760. During the Revolutionary War, the British controlled Long Island, New York, and forcibly occupied the Strong's manor home.

Anna and her children were compelled to move into their cottage, and Selah was imprisoned for being an assumed spy. Ironically, it was Anna who was the spy. She was a member of the Culper Spy Ring and was given the moniker of [agent] 355.

George Washington established the Culper Spy Ring to convey information mainly to him. The spies were to report the movement of British troops and matériel between New York City, Long Island Sound, and Connecticut, then pass the findings to George Washington.

Anna's duty was to signal others when information was ready to be retrieved and passed to another spy. She accomplished this by hanging a petticoat on her clothesline. This signaled that other spies were in place to provide and receive awaiting messages. Anna also hung handkerchiefs scattered among all the other drying clothes. The number of handkerchiefs coincided with the pre-numbered coves where a messenger was waiting in the Long Island Sound.

Anna's messaging system was simple, discreet, and effective. The Culper Spy Ring was also responsible for passing information about many essential actions, including treason by Benedict Arnold. Through unassuming efforts, this covert process carried inherent grave dangers. If the inconspicuous clothes drying method had been discovered and deciphered by the British, they would have hanged Anna like other captured spies, such as Nathan Hale.

When the Revolutionary War ended, Anna and her family regained their property and moved back into their estate house. Several years after the War, spies such as Austin, Roe, and Brewster conducted a gathering at the Roe Tavern in Setauket to reunite the Culper Spy Ring members. Not only did Selah escort Anna to the Tavern, but George Washington also attended the reunion to recognize, praise, and honor the Culper spies.

In time, it was learned that "The Culper Spies achieved more than any other intelligence network during the War." As a singular and forgotten patriot, it is now known that Anna placed herself and her family in peril because of her absolute love for America.

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

Dr. David Streater is the director of education for Foundation Forward. He is a retired college instructor and administrator, and a retired probation and parole officer/administrator. David is a criminologist who has an acute history interest, served in the Navy, and is a resident of Burke County, NC.



Evergreen Church

Not Ashamed

By John McCoury
Roan Mountain, Tennessee


“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed — a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: The righteous will live by faith.” Romans 1:16-17 This quotation from Habakkuk that Paul uses is the great fact that he is expounding in the gospel. He is not ashamed of it, and that is a way of saying that he is proud of it.

Paul especially is not ashamed of the gospel in Rome because the Romans appreciated power, just as Americans do. The Romans prided themselves on their power. They had military power that could conquer all the nations who stood in their path; they had a tremendous program of road-building; they had some of the greatest law-makers of history; they had the power to write literature and create art. But Paul knew that the Romans also were powerless when it came to changing hearts. They were powerless to eliminate slavery. They were powerless to change the stubborn, hostile, hateful hearts of men and eliminate violence. Paul says that is why he is so proud of the gospel — because it is the power of God to do those very things that men cannot do. We never need to apologize for the gospel. It is absolutely without rival. Paul is not ashamed of the gospel because it reveals righteousness from God. Righteousness is an old word that we don't understand very much. I would like to substitute for it the word worth, a worth before God. A sense of acceptance before God that He has given to you. You can't earn it, you certainly don't deserve it, but it is given. God really accepts you because of the gospel, because of the good news of the work of Jesus Christ on our behalf. Therefore, it is something that you, or I, or anybody else can have, and it is complete, perfect.


The last thing Paul says is that this righteousness is received by faith. It is not something we can ever earn; it is something we can take any time we need it, and that is good news. Our worth before God is not simply something we receive once, by faith, at the beginning of our Christian lives. It is also something we remind ourselves of every time we feel depressed, despairing, discouraged, defeated, etc. God has loved us, restored us, and we have perfect standing in his sight. He already accepts us and loves us as much as he possibly can; nothing more can be added to it. That is the righteousness that is revealed in the gospel, by faith, to all who believe, no matter what their background or training may be. Father, I pray that I may understand how hopeless, how dark and bitter my condition would be were it not for the gospel of the grace of God. Help me to know that nothing could have saved me from the wicked machinations of the evil one had it not been for the intervention of the gospel of grace. When we consider the magnitude of God's gift of unearned, undeserved righteousness, are we responding with gratitude and worship? How does it affect the habits of our hearts and our actions?

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





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Enjoying Everyday Life

Find the Love You've Been Looking For

By Joyce Meyer

The Bible teaches us that it's God's will for us to help hurting people. In John 13:34-35, Jesus says, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (NIV). Matthew 22:37-39 says, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself."

The love message is the power of the Gospel. It's so simple: Love God and love your neighbor as you love yourself. We often think we need someone to love us, but what we really need is someone to love. The world is desperate for real love, so it isn't hard to find someone who needs to be loved.

We live in a society that drives people to selfishness. So much of the advertising we see and hear influences us to want more and more and to never be satisfied with what we have. But the more selfish and self-centered we are, the less power we have to do good and help others.

The good news is we have what we need in Christ to overcome a selfish "What about me?!" mindset and lifestyle. We have the power of God's love! It's the answer to every dilemma and problem in our society today. And as Christians, our goal is to represent Christ in the world and show His love.

What True Love Truly Is

Love is not just a feeling, a theory, or a nice word. It's action—it's the way you treat people...what you do for others. Love will always cost you something: time, energy, effort, money, giving up your pride, doing what's right when you don't feel like it, and keeping a good attitude when you don't get your way.

Loving the way God loves means you love when there's nothing in it for you; it's all about giving out and not expecting anything in return. We're called to outreach, not in-reach. Real love is about dying to self and living to love others.

Before you can love others, you have to experience God's love in your own life, because you can't give away something you don't have. Then you have to be willing to ask God to teach you to love the way He loves. When you do this, God will enable you to reach out and help someone else. I know this works because I've lived it.

My Journey to Finding True Love

I used to be selfish, and self-centered, always thinking about how I could get my way. And I was miserable. See, I loved God and wanted to love people, but no matter how hard I tried to be sweet and nice to everybody, all of my trying was getting me nowhere. I was cranky, hard to get along with, and impatient. God showed me the problem was that I didn't like myself because of the shame of my past. I grew up in an abusive home, and I felt guilty, condemned, and ashamed because of it. I had to accept God's love for me before I could love anyone else. So I decided to study God's love in the Word, pray for God to change my heart, and confess what His Word says about His love for me. Every day I would say out loud, "God loves me," and I would say it over and over to purposely keep this truth in my heart throughout the day. After a year of doing this, I finally got a revelation about God's love for me.

Now I can trust God's love for me and love others the way Jesus taught us to love. I don't do it perfectly all the time, but I've come a long way and am making progress every day. My prayer is, "God, show me how I can help others. Make me a blessing everywhere I go. I want to live to love You and others."

Every day I look for ways to add value to people I come in contact with. I can honestly say that learning how to love others with God's love has made me the happiest I've ever been! The truth is you can't be selfish and also be happy or have peace.

Make it your goal each day to pursue God's love and then give it away. First Corinthians 14:1 (AMPC) says to "eagerly pursue and seek to acquire [this] love [make it your aim, your great quest]." So go after it with all your might, and ask God to make you a blessing everywhere you go! You can do something to help someone. You can live to love, just like Jesus.

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



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Accepting in Jesus

By Joe Sturz
Shenandoah, Va.



When we repent of our sin (Acts 2:38) and believe in Jesus Christ (Romans 10:9-10) dying on the cross to pay for our sin and follow Him (I Corinthians 15:3-4) we are accepted in the Beloved (Ephesians 1:3-16). We are adopted into God's forever family (Galatians 4:4-7) and Jesus Christ is our:
--Savior and Lord (Luke 2:11; II Peter 2:20),
--servant (Isaiah 53:11; John 13:4-8; Philippians 2:5-8),
--brother (John 20:17; Romans 8:29; Hebrews 2:11-12),
--friend (Proverbs 18:24; John 15:13-15; James 2:23).
So let us who are true Christians (John 5:24) rejoice in our rich relationship with Christ wherein He is our: friend, brother, servant, Lord, and Savior.
Brother Joe "accepted in the Beloved" Sturz [Friday, September 9, 2022
www.sturzchristiancounseling.com Facebook YouTube
P.S if while reading this a thought occurred to you that someone you know could really benefit from this message, please feel free to forward it to them.

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



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Make Peace With Yourself

By Glenda Ward
McDowell County



“Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ...and purify your hearts...” (James 4: 8).
“Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up” (James 4: 10).
Finding comfort in knowing God – is taking care of yourself! It is ok when we are not ok. We do not have to figure out how to get through life’s dark storms and back into the light of life alone. If you have had enough and you feel you just cannot keep going; you're tired, too discouraged, too hurt and angered to keep pushing forward STOP! And REST! God will take care of you. If your mind and body has had enough, let God in. Stop pushing through and REST. Let God nurture you through quiet time in prayer, reading, and meditating in His Word.

Make your favorite cup of coffee or tea, drink it slowly. Light a candle. Read a Psalm and make it your prayer. Spend time for yourself in God’s Word and listen for Him to comfort you. What YOU BELIEVE MATTERS! Each of us has a personal life story in which we are the main character. Who am I? What is my purpose? Where do I belong? Where do I go from here? We are not born with these life stories. We are shaped by different influences over the years. Media we watch and listen to, people we look up to and follow, and our community – the people round about us all teach us how to live our lives. They show us what we should value, how to view and read people around us, and how we should steward the resources that we have been given that are at our fingertips. To put it bluntly the strongest influence in our lives should be the story God gives us – The Bible – the Story of Jesus Christ. God gives us the answers to our core life questions. He shows us where our true hope, joy and fulfillment is.

God promises a permanent solution to save all of humanity through a future King – Jesus Christ who will lead in the way of God Himself. God’s promised Savior Jesus Christ came to the world as a child who is the Messianic King – God’s promised One. Jesus Christ began His ministry at the age of 30, talking about the Kingdom of God, and teaching that to live for God is to reject living for self and to embrace God’s sovereign authority. Jesus Christ teaches of Salvation from sin and entrance into the Kingdom of God which can only come to us through Himself – Jesus Christ and Him alone.

In Search of Personal Truth

The entirety of Scripture works together to show a bigger picture of Truth. Through it we learn that our identity, purpose, and belonging is rooted in our being a part of the community of God. In your life story will you engage yourself in the one that matters most? The battle may be hard. But be determined to make God and His Word your focus. Give yourself permission to cry and humble yourself before God. Use Psalm 5:1-3 as your prayer: *“Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation. Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God: for unto thee will I pray. My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.”*

Lay your request before God and wait in expectation. Moment by moment make a conscious (and many times, painful) choice to surrender your desires to the transformative power of our heavenly Father. It will happen if you truly trust Him. You will feel incredibly empowered. Wait in expectation using prayer as your guide. There will still be hard moments and tears, but great signs of progress! Humbling ourselves means recognizing that our worth comes from God alone. It is leaning on His power and His guidance, not our own independent effort. We do not deserve His favor, but He reaches out to us in His love and gives us worth and dignity.

Embrace a new outlook that leads to enduring change. Start taking steps toward consistency that helps. Use the wisdom that leads to victory. Grow closer to God through your process. Make peace with yourself.

- Draw close to God:
- (1) *“Submit yourselves therefore to God”* (4:7). Realize that you need forgiveness and be willing to follow Him.
 - (2) *“Resist the devil”* (4:7). Don’t allow him to entice and tempt you.
 - (3) *“Cleanse your hands ...and purify your hearts...”* (that is, lead a pure life) (4:8). Be cleansed from sin, replacing it with God’s purity.
 - (4) *“Let there be tears, sorrow, and sincere grief for your sins”*(4:9).
 - (5) *“Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up”* (4:10) *“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time”* (1 Peter 5:6).

God is able and willing to bless us according to His own timing. Obey God regardless of present circumstances and in His good timing.

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.



Billy Graham and Queen Elizabeth II

As the world mourns the passing of Queen Elizabeth II, we remember her friendship with Billy Graham that spanned over six decades.

Billy Graham initially drew the notice of Queen Elizabeth when he held his first international Crusade in London in 1954. Many expected Billy’s Crusade to fail – the media hailed him as an American salesman of sorts.

However, thousands came to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ during those weeks in London. When Rev. Graham returned to the UK in 1955 to hold Crusades in Glasgow, Scotland, and London’s Wembley Stadium, Queen Elizabeth invited him to preach at the chapel at Windsor Castle.

Over the years, Billy Graham preached multiple times to the royal family. In his autobiography Just As I Am, he wrote, “Her official position has prevented her from openly endorsing our Crusade meetings. But by welcoming us and having me preach on several occasions to the royal family at Windsor and Sandringham, she has gone out of her way to be quietly supportive of our mission.”

Billy Graham was always impressed by the Queen’s faith. “I always found her very interested in the Bible and its message,” he said. “After preaching at Windsor one Sunday, I was sitting next to the Queen at lunch. I told her I had been undecided until the last minute about my choice of sermon and had almost preached on the healing of the crippled man in John 5. Her eyes sparkled and she bubbled over with enthusiasm, as she could do on occasion. ‘I wish you had!’ she exclaimed. ‘That is my favorite story.’”

When Queen Elizabeth visited the United States in 1983, Billy Graham was invited to attend the state dinner held by Ronald Reagan in her honor. “She is unquestionably one of the best-informed people on world affairs I have ever met,” the evangelist said. “I have always found her highly intelligent and knowledgeable about a wide variety of issues, not just politics.”

Billy Graham’s favorite picture of Queen Elizabeth and her husband, Prince Philip, was a formal portrait taken of the couple to celebrate her 40th year on the throne in 1992. After it was published in the Sunday Telegraph, Rev. Graham wrote to ask if he might have a copy of the photo for his home, if protocol allowed. He was answered with a signed and dated copy of the photo.

In 2001, Billy Graham was named as an Honorary Knight Commander of the British Empire. British Ambassador Christopher Meyer conferred the honor on the Queen’s behalf at a ceremony in Washington, D.C. Upon receiving the honor, he said, “I especially want to ask you, sir, to convey to Her Majesty the Queen, my deepest gratitude for the high honor she has graciously bestowed upon me this evening. I accept it with humility and unworthiness, and I take it as a symbol of the common historical ties that have bound our two nations together in war and peace.”

While the world has lost a truly amazing world leader, we celebrate her legacy and praise God for her faith in Jesus Christ and her life well-lived.



Real Treasure

By Caron Cline
Burke County



On August 3rd, 1492, Christopher Columbus, an Italian explorer, set sail with 90 other men in search of fame and fortune. Many European nations sponsored expeditions in the 15th and 16th centuries in hope of adding land and other treasures to their coffers. Columbus was convinced that he could find a direct waterway from Europe to Asia. He finally convinced King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain to sponsor the expedition. They, in turn, promised that he could retain 10% of any riches found, and receive a noble title and the governorship of any lands discovered. Columbus set sail and made landfall on October 12, 1492. Unfortunately, he had not reached the East Indies but instead a Bahamian island, more than likely El Salvador. There was no vast treasure and although Columbus sailed from island to island, the expedition was unsuccessful in terms of his expectations. There are still those searching for treasure in the 21st century. Amazingly, 14 real treasures in the world are listed as having never been recovered and adventurers are consistently seeking them. Many seekers are hoping to get rich quickly, but more than that, they love the thrill of the hunt. The adventure is rewarding enough. Some people hunt for treasure as a hobby; others search for it as if their lives depended on it. Everything from a 2000-year-old Menorah stolen in AD 70 by the Romans from the temple in Jerusalem to Confederate gold to Forest Fenn’s lost stash has captured the attention of thousands. Forest Fenn was a Vietnam Vet and a treasure hunter who was diagnosed with cancer in 1988. Believing he was going to die; he filled a chest with valuable items and buried it in the Rocky Mountains. Only Fenn knew exactly what was in the chest. When he beat the disease, he published a poem full of clues for finding his treasure. More than 65,000 are reported to have searched for this unknown treasure and at least 5 people died in their quest for wealth. Why would anyone risk their lives in the Rocky Mountains without being certain of what was in that chest? We have access to a greater treasure than any worldly wealth; a treasure that can radically change our lives and bring countless riches and yet we rarely ever scratch the surface in search of it. What is it? Wisdom! Where do we begin the search for such treasure? The map is readily available and is commonly known as the Bible. Proverbs 3:13-18 states that wisdom is more valuable than silver, gold, or jewels and brings riches, honor, long life, peace, and a multitude of other blessings. However, the key to understanding the map is a personal relationship with the One Who is the personification of the wisdom of God; Jesus Christ. In Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. (Colossians 2:1-3) As we abide in Him and His Word abides in us, the door of a vast storehouse of insight, understanding, and discernment is opened. Choosing God’s wisdom will always result in the blessings of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. There is no greater treasure in all of this world!

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



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By Nancy Malik
Avery County

What is Halloween? 505 years ago, this Halloween, The Holy Eve, as it was once called, history or His Story as I like to call it, was made. Martin Luther, a priest, wrote out ninety-five questions for the Catholic church to reply to and nailed them to the church door. These questions were of nonbiblical, mandatory ‘indulgences’ made by the Catholic church. They were not mentioned in the Bible. A new era was born as the church woke up. It was called ‘the Reformation.’

This year, 2022, we are still experiencing freedom in our Christian faith because of his sacrifice. But Halloween has turned from a Holy Eve of remembrance of Christian gathering in homes to prepare for All Saints Day, a day of remembrance of past Christians for their love and sacrifices. Today it is mostly costumes, candy, ghosts, and witches. The Irish potato farmers were wiped out in the late 1800s and brought their traditions with them that changed Holy Eve.

Why is the date October 31st so important? Luther devoted the rest of his life to the truth of The Word. By taking this strong stand for truth, he was considered an outlaw and was jailed, his reputation destroyed, and yet this truth he spot-stood by itself as the God-inspired gift that it is.

He also was mentioned for bringing in an evergreen tree and putting candles on it to celebrate Jesus’ birthday.

Happy Holy Eve, 2022. May our loving God bless you on this Holy Eve.

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.



Speak the Word; Watch the Power of God

By Kurt Bomar
Avery County



Mark 7: 32 “There some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged Jesus to place his hand on him. 33 After he took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man’s ears. Then he spit and touched the man’s tongue. 34 He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, “Ephphatha!” (which means “Be opened!”). 35 At this, the man’s ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly.”

This beautiful story of healing brings to mind three important elements that have relevance to us today.

First, notice Jesus took the man aside. This wasn’t done to draw attention to the healing but rather strictly for the compassion Jesus had for this man. As we minister to the needy we should be careful to keep our fingerprints out of public view. May our only motivation be compassion for the suffering person.

Second, Jesus touched him. He could have just spoken the words. But if He had, the man wouldn’t have heard them! Thus He met the man where he was. He was deaf, he needed a touch. I don’t think we often understand the power of physical touch. Touching shows that we identify with the suffering person and that we are not above them. It shows compassion that cannot be matched by mere words.

Jesus looked to Heaven. Jesus wasn’t relying on His own power to heal this man, He looked to His Father in Heaven for this gift of healing. The Bible tells us that Jesus “emptied” himself of His divine powers while on earth and wholly relied on His Father for His power. We’ve got to remember that it’s not about us, it’s about Him. We, as Christians, have at our disposal the riches of Heaven and our Father is just waiting for us to ask Him to move in the name of Jesus. Why are we so afraid to do it?

Finally, He spoke. This is the hard part. We don’t want to speak healing because we’re afraid it won’t happen. Remember that Jesus told His disciples to “speak” (not pray) to the mountain and it would be cast into the sea. If we speak healing and it doesn’t happen, that’s not our problem. We followed Scripture and left the results to God. But if it does happen...it could revolutionize our spiritual life!

Finally, this was physical healing. Perhaps we don’t see too much of that these days, but if we follow this pattern: touch people, relate to them where they are, and speak the word of God, the spiritually deaf ears will be opened and lives will be changed. Take a chance, and see what happens!

Kurt Bomar is pastor of Walnut Grove Church.

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.
Romans 10:17

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Hello Darkness

By Tim Tron
Burke County



Another picturesque Saturday morning found my car weaving through the hairpin turns along Shulls Mill Road. My destination was to meet with others to go hiking. The college was hosting the first football game of the year, so some wanted to start earlier than usual to be back in time for the start of the game. For once, in what seemed an eternity, life on campus was returning to some sense of normalcy. The sky above the canopy of trees that shadowed the road along the mountainside was a brilliant azure blue. The wind passed over my body refreshing and washing away all the cares of the previous week. The air was finally getting the nip in it that foretold of the coming fall. – yes, all was right in the world for the moment.

It was going to be a wonderful morning of fellowship and enjoying God’s creation.

Members of our party started to arrive. The usual greetings and hugs were passed around. I laced up my boots as we prepared to load up and head out. Just as we were about to embark, my phone rang. The number was from my wife. She knew where I was, so her calling was of some concern. She wasn’t the type that would call to interrupt times of fellowship unless it was important. The voice on the other end of the line was frantic. Immediately my mind began preparing for the worst. “There’s water all over the basement. Something is leaking, and it’s already running into the hallway carpet near the basement door.” My first fears were relieved in hearing that it wasn’t someone in the family hurt or worse. Trying to calm my wife’s fears, I assured her that I was heading home immediately.

As I hung up, the others already knew what my words confirmed – that my attendance for today’s hike would be put on hold, if not canceled altogether. Everyone understood, even though the mood had been quickly dampened. As we said our “goodbyes,” just having finished our “hellos,” I rushed off to head back home. The questions quickly began to arise in my mind regarding the call. Would the basement be flooded to the point it might cost thousands of dollars to fix? Was it going to be possible for me to fix it? Was this just another trial that was testing my patience and resolve? Would there be something to be learned from all this? Was this just a continuation of the growing attacks by the darkness?

The Simon and Garfunkel tune popped into my head at that moment, “Hello darkness, my old friend. I’ve come to talk with you again.”

Winding my way back through the turns of the mountain road, I couldn’t help but think how this incident with the potential flooding at my house fit perfectly into something that was becoming more and more obvious in recent weeks – how it seemed we were under increasing attacks by the darkness of the world and beyond. Like a demon serpent slithering its way into our lives, hiding beneath the shadows waiting to pounce, nobody seemed to be immune. While this situation that awaited me was nothing life-threatening, and for that, I was sincerely grateful. It was more demonic in what it had prevented than what it was destroying. Evil couldn’t penetrate where God dwelt, so it managed to do it another way to halt our fellowship. It seemed once again darkness and I were meeting face-to-face. Yet, it wasn’t something that drove fear into my soul, for in my heart, there was a new spirit, one that didn’t fear death or darkness. “*The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*” When we follow Christ, we follow the light. We turn away from things of the darkness, “*And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.*”

Driving afforded me the time to reflect on this idea and how its continued progression had grown in recent weeks. I began praying as I drove and first thanked God for the glorious morning. Then, without pause, I asked Him to be there for us all because alone, we are nothing. We can do nothing on our own, for without Him, we are helplessly lost. Then the verse from Ephesians came to mind in my prayer, “*For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*” My prayer continued, asking God to give us the mind, the stature, and the strength to face those waves upon waves of attacks from evil. To call upon the LORD for our strength, for Him to be there for us to lean on, and for the power to withstand what seems to be a never-ending flood of darkness in our lives and world. And lastly, my prayer asked that whatever I faced at home, that God would provide me the wisdom and patience to accept and overcome whatever obstacle that we faced as a family. Amen.

Over the last month, there has been an endless stream of news, stories, and revelations of people suffering from the afflictions of those dark principalities prevailing against them. From the perfectly sane brother in Christ who lost his mind to the young pastor who became afflicted with Listeria of the brain that left him in a deep coma, the news of bad things seems to never end.

There is the ministry staff under attack because of Satan’s cunning manipulation of relationships of the flesh. Meanwhile, a missionary who has spent his life serving those unfortunate inhabitants of villages in third-world countries providing medical care was recently diagnosed with terminal cancer. It doesn’t make the nightly news anymore, but some churches still have to cancel services because COVID continues to ravage rural populations. Young athletes are dropping dead

for no apparent reason, having had all their shots and boosters.

But it doesn’t stop there.

There are those students who are part of my campus ministry that are succumbed to all manner of maladies. Some, new in the faith, struggle against their addictions. Others, stalwart believers working amazing outreach, suffer from physical ailments, the likes of which the Apostle Peter mentioned when he wrote, “*Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you.*”

And the list goes on and on.

We can be overwhelmed by such a never-ending flood of bad news, or we can stop and remember that we are not alone. As Paul wrote in Romans, “*For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor power, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*”

Persevering through the trials of life, we are taught many lessons. One important one that has been with me from the beginning is that no matter how wicked something seems, there is always something good that comes from it. “*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*”

Now that may sound a bit overbearingly optimistic to some of you, or maybe most of you. But hear me out. When the storm passes, and if we are still here to awaken to another day, we can be thankful for just surviving. But there is more to it than that. We can also see how those seemingly life-shattering disasters brought people together and allowed survivors to witness the work of believers coming to their aid, praying over them, and showing them what hope looks like. Then some lose their minds, and suddenly their families learn what it is to have to lean on the everlasting arms of Christ. For them, their faith is emboldened like never before. They learn how important prayer and supplication can become when they are faced with an evil so bold, and so determined that it takes over their beloved, leaving them helpless. Some say that the ground is made level at the foot of the cross. Sometimes, it takes a ground-leveling event to get our attention.

Another story is of an elderly woman who is told she has hours to live. The family is called in, from the extended family whom she has never seen to the great-grandchildren she has never met, all come in to say goodbye. Three days later, she is healed completely astounding the medical staff, and she is sent home. The family is renewed. Old severed ties are made anew. Spiritually, the family is forever changed.

Then lastly, there is the ongoing saga of Pastor Ryan Marlow, a father of three young children. His wife, Megan, shared his story on social media, and now it’s not just his congregation praying for their healing; it has grown to thousands upon thousands of people praying to God to heal this man.

At one point, Ryan was pronounced dead. They began planning for organ donation surgery. Megan went home and began mourning the loss of her husband. Two days later, at the time of the planned operation to harvest his organs for organ donors, Megan was on the way to his room riding in the elevator when she received a call from one of Ryan’s nieces. His niece had been in Ryan’s room showing him some videos of the family singing, and they noticed his foot twitching. A sign of life? Most medical experts will tell you that it is not uncommon for there to be physical movement without brain activity. Knowing this, Megan went to his room and began to hold his hand and kiss his arm, telling him all the things she wanted to say before he passed. His heart rate increased. Was this another sign, or was she just being overactive?

It was then that Megan knew she had to say something.

She immediately left his room and stopped the OR team standing outside his door. She insisted that they run more tests and halt the surgery to harvest his organs. A few hours later, unbelievably, they confirm that there is brain activity after all. As of the writing of this story, Ryan is still alive. Megan is still providing updates, and thousands of people are praying for a man they had never met and a mother and her three young children. But, as Megan has said in her video updates, God answers prayer in his own time and in his own way.

Ironically, the trials and darkness we all face can become the light to those around us. The bystander can witness the evil that attacks our lives and watch how miraculously we endure to face another day. What is important is that we share how we didn’t do it alone and that all things are possible with God. As with the story of Ryan and his family, complete strangers are now witnessing a young mother and her peace with knowing God is in control, no matter the outcome.

When I arrived home later that morning, my disaster was nothing more than a clogged drain. Once it was relieved, the flood had been averted, and all was well. The prayer for help had been answered, and my stature and patience were never pressed beyond a few loving words. All was not lost. Once more, scripture reminded me, “*The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.*”

Yes, darkness, sarcastically, I call you my old friend, but really, I know who you are. “*Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.*” You were never, nor will you ever truly be, a friend. You will always be a sign of the wickedness that exists in a fallen world.

Go not alone into this world to face the darkness. God is with you if only you call upon Him to be at your side. Don’t be overwhelmed by the world, but allow Christ to flood into your soul, and you will find comfort in the eye of the storm.

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Your Government Page

NC Senate District 47



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

In June, the North Carolina Senate passed House Bill 149 – Expanding Access to Healthcare, a bill that included Medicaid expansion along with reforms to both Certificates of Need (CON) laws and restrictions on Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs). Republicans in the state legislature have been opposed to Medicaid expansion from the beginning. Before the Republicans gained a majority in the General Assembly, Medicaid in our state was mismanaged, burdening taxpayers with billion-dollar shortfalls year after year. Over the past decade, fortunately, Republican leaders in the General Assembly have corrected this course and our state has now had eight consecutive years of solid Medicaid budgets without cost overruns. It is unlikely that the federal government will change its 90 percent cost share for Medicaid and, in addition, has offered up enticements to states that have yet to expand Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act, such as an additional five percent federal cost share for our state’s traditional Medicaid enrollees, equating to a one-time, two-year infusion of an additional \$1.5 billion to our state. In this new landscape, we believe expanding Medicaid is a good state fiscal policy.

However, for Medicaid expansion to work in our state, supply-side issues, such as shortages of hospital beds and healthcare providers, must be addressed. Unfortunately, various stakeholders have fought these reforms. Currently, hospitals and other healthcare facilities are required by state law to obtain a CON before opening or acquiring a new facility or adding new equipment. The CON process is lengthy, cumbersome, time-consuming, and expensive. Reforms in the bill that address CON laws include a new application process that focuses on the quality of care to be provided and a commitment to improving access to care for underserved populations. This serves to make our state more attractive to healthcare providers, healthcare facilities, and hospitals who want to do business and compete here. AdventHealth is building a 67-bed hospital because NC State Medical Facilities Plan listed the need for 67 beds in the Buncombe, Graham, Madison, and Yancey Counties service area, illustrating the constraints of CON in our state. Long opposed to CON reform, the North Carolina Healthcare Association (NCHA) recently released a proposal advocating for CON repeal for psychiatric and chemical dependency beds and exemptions for operating rooms in ambulatory surgical centers which meet certain criteria. I have long advocated for and sponsored legislation to grant APRNs full practice authority. Their ability to do so would lower costs and expand access to healthcare across our state, particularly benefitting our rural areas. However, the NC Medical Society is still firmly opposed to any reforms.

If Medicaid expansion is to become a reality in North Carolina, so must the laws governing CON and APRNs. As always, please share your thoughts with me on these or other issues related to the state government by emailing me at 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 October, full of fun fall activities, the changing of the leaves, fairs, and of course, Halloween! On September 15, I had the opportunity to visit Merck, in Durham, and present their company and DPR Construction with a million-hour award for no injuries or illnesses that resulted in lost workdays. This is a prestigious award, and you could feel the energy and comradery of both management and the employees. They all truly cared about one another and the importance of safety and health in the workplace.

The N.C. State Fair kicks off October 13. On October 10, I will participate in Media Day and then take the opportunity to explore the fair, meet with Agriculture Commissioner Steve Troxler and maybe, even enjoy a turkey leg. The N.C. State Fair is open October 13-23 at the N.C. State Fairgrounds in Raleigh.

In late October, I will be making my way to Western Carolina University for the opening of the new steam plant. While I was a member of the N.C. House of Representatives, I helped secure funding for the replacement and design of a new facility. This steam plant is critical to the functionality of Western Carolina University because it provides heat and hot water for the entire campus. I am honored to speak at the opening ceremony not only because I was part of the group that secured the funding for this venture but because in my capacity as Labor Commissioner, my department will oversee the inspections of the boiler in the future thanks to our Boiler Safety Bureau.

Have a wonderful October and I hope you enjoy family time, carving pumpkins, apple cider and trick-or-treating. Happy Halloween!

NC House District 86



Rep. Hugh Blackwell
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North Carolina’s Smart Budget and Tax Policies

North Carolina is recognized as one of the most competitive states in the nation for its taxpayer-friendly budget and tax policies. These policies began in 2011 when North Carolina Republicans became the majority party in both houses of the state legislature. They then began to implement changes that have since been recognized by several independent national rating entities that study which states have made wise decisions that in turn impact economic growth and the state’s desirability both for its citizens and businesses. First, we reduced our sales tax and avoided ever-rising state gas taxes. Then, we have continued to reduce the individual income tax rate while at the same time significantly increasing the standard deduction to result in more individual and family income not being taxed at all. Future plans are to incrementally decrease individual income tax to 3.99% by 2027.

Regarding the corporate tax rate, the rate is falling to 2.5%, with North Carolina ranked first for the lowest corporate tax rate in the southeast. Compared to the entire United States, North Carolina has the lowest corporate tax rate of all states that actually have a corporate income tax. We anticipate a further decrease to a 1% corporate tax rate by 2028. We continue to emphasize reducing business taxes because, after all, businesses provide the jobs our citizens depend upon for their livelihoods. Moreover, as more businesses locate or expand in our state, the competitive effect helps increase wage and salary levels for workers across North Carolina.

Companies choose to invest in North Carolina also because of its budget practices. One of the most critical of our new policies is to save sufficient monies in our “rainy day fund.” It is the process of setting reserve funds aside to allow for future economic downturns or recessions. Such a “rainy day” fund provides a cushion against sizable spending demands or reductions in revenues that can arise from an emergency such as a hurricane, flooding in our mountains, or even something such as Covid-19. In fact, the existence of our well-funded “rainy day” savings has allowed North Carolina to make it financially through Covid without either furloughing state employees or cutting needed services. Rather than increasing taxes or enacting austerity measures as was done before 2011, we each year save part of our revenues to be sure we are prepared for such potential demands. These savings also can combat the effects of a recession because increasing taxes or cutting spending most often worsen an economic downturn. Smart tax and budget policies provide a sense of security and stability for companies and North Carolinians alike and are vital to the positive economic development of our state. In turn, I am convinced these policies to account for the high rankings of North Carolina as a place to both live and locate or expand a business.



The Orchard at Altapass

Orchard Welcomes Sam McKinney

By Kate Groff
Mitchell County



Sam McKinney has joined the Orchard at Altapass family of employees as its first Sustainability Coordinator following his two years as a member of the Orchard’s board of directors. In this position, he will assist with planning and implementing development strategies, which will support operations and mission-focused programs. He’ll network with area communities to create opportunities to engage with and understand the Orchard’s importance to protect, preserve, and educate about this region and its people.

Sam has lived in the area all his life and spent the last five years at Baxter Health, leaving as Interim Supervisor. “Growing up in Altapass, the Orchard was a big part of my early life. Charlie McKinney, who originally owned and lived on orchard property, and is still the subject of “hayride” storytelling, was my sixth great grandfather. My great uncle Deward Hefner managed the Orchard in the 1940s-50s, and my grandfather picked apples there as a teenager,” Sam said. “To be able to continue my family’s legacy of being involved at the Orchard means everything to me.”



Executive Director Beth Hilton said, “Sam, in his role as Sustainability Coordinator, will assist us in making sound program decisions that will guide us as we become a stronger organization. All of us at the Orchard look forward to working with him as we move into the future.” Sam and his fiancée, Kylie Massey will be married on the Orchard grounds in November.

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



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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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Buladean Presbyterian Church - Buladean Presbyterian Church will be celebrating its 100th Anniversary! On Sunday, November 6th, there will be a celebratory service with special guests at 11:00 am, followed by a fellowship meal and birthday cake.

This milestone warrants a great celebration as we look back at the history of the church and those that made contributions to make the church what it is today. We want past and current members and friends of the church and their families, and the community to attend the service and be part of the celebration. Join us on Sunday, November 6th at: 217 Blevins Branch Road, Bakersville, NC 28705. Pastor Garland Honeycutt.

Grassy Creek Baptist Church - There is a drive thru food pantry every 2nd Monday from 10am- 12pm at Grassy Creek Baptist Church

Spruce Pine Farmers and Makers Market - Every Tuesday 4-7 PM, weather permitting 337 Oak Avenue

Yancey County

Mark your calendar for the return of the **West Burnsville Baptist Church** Christmas Pageant scheduled for December 1 - 4! More information in next month's paper.



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The Age of Educated Ignorance

By Chris Rathbone
Mitchell County



We are supposed to be living in the age of education and information. The unlimited access that modern man has to knowledge is quite amazing. At the touch of a keyboard or phone screen, one can access just about anything on any topic. The tools that you and I have access to have changed since we were kids going to the library to check out books on subjects. Remember checking out all those books to help complete a research paper or project?

The ability to further one's education has also changed. Most regions around us have community colleges that are very affordable to just about anyone of any age who wants to earn a degree. Students can even attend what is called early college and already be working towards or have a degree when they leave high school! Scholarships are available to help young people go to college. We have grants, loans, online classes, on-campus classes, hundreds of institutions for higher education, etc, etc. The resources for education are almost limitless. With all this knowledge available, one would think things in this world would get better! But every time I watch the news or listen to a politician I realize that our world is full of educated idiots. One can have several degrees of higher learning but still be oblivious to the truth. The problem seems to be wisdom (common sense) not knowledge. Wisdom is the ability to use the knowledge that one has gained in a discerning way that benefits one's self and those around them. Children, our world is in trouble...

The issue in today's world is the fact that man is educating himself without seeking the wisdom of his Creator. *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding"*. Proverbs 9:10 We are told to trust the science on climate change or covid but ignore basic biology when it comes to gender and homosexuality/lesbianism. For the most part, it's the same highly educated "scientist" who promotes it all.

For example, just today I read a news article about where a state has passed a bill that keeps biological males from competing against females in sports. A journalist asked the governor about him signing the "controversial" bill. He replied, "There's nothing controversial about this bill. We know the difference between a man and woman in our state!"

In our world, one can choose to be one of many genders or even no gender at all. "Non-binary" it is called. There are reports of children identifying as an animal in the classroom and school boards are trying to force teachers to go along with the nonsense, even to the point of placing litter boxes in the classroom to accommodate this foolishness. We are the only species on the earth that ignores biology on these subjects. Homosexuality/lesbianism is promoted by college professors as normal regardless of the science. Politicians and news media celebrate it all and belittle and ridicule anyone who disagrees with the "science". Those who are supposed to be the most highly educated among us are the ones who ignore the very educational principles they claim to uphold. The issue is not the education that one has in their head, but the sin that one has in their heart.

Paul wrote to Timothy concerning the last days in which you and I are living: *"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despiser of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God: having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, EVER LEARNING, AND NEVER ABLE TO COME TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH."* 2 Timothy 3:1-7

The last days are characterized by highly educated people (ever learning) who despite their education cannot discern what is right and common sense because of sin in their hearts. *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction."* Proverbs 1:7

Education apart from the wisdom that our Creator gives will always turn into sin and ungodliness and blindness to common sense. The only hope for this world is Jesus.

John 14:6 *"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me."*

John 8: 31-32 *"Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."*

When we come to know the truth in Jesus, then we will be spared from this age of educated ignorance!

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

Continue to pray for those who are suffering, for the Marlow family, and many more. In all these things, we pray, in Christ's Holy Name, AMEN!
Thanks be to God.

Timothy W. Tron lives in Collettsville, NC. with his family. He is currently the Systems Administrator for the Computer Science Department at App. State. Timothy is the former Director of the Trail of Faith in Valdese, where he still volunteers and helps with tours. He is the author of a new Christian series, "Children of the Light", with the first book being, "Bruecke to Heaven", revised as "Bridge to Heaven", and his recent book, being the second, "The Light in the Darkness". He is an active blogger, artist, and musician. Timothy also has a BSEE from UF, and is a Lay Speaker. He is currently acting as the Faculty/Staff Liaison for the Ratio Christi campus ministry at App. State. He can be reached at trontw@appstate.edu You can visit his website at <http://www.timothywtron.com/> or see more of his writings [HERE](#).



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Thou Shalt Laugh



By John Martin

I WILL ASCEND INTO HEAVEN, I WILL EXALT MY THRONE ABOVE THE STARS OF GOD...

I WILL SIT ALSO UPON THE MOUNT OF THE CONGREGATION, IN THE SIDES OF THE NORTH...

I WILL ASCEND ABOVE THE HEIGHTS OF THE CLOUDS, I WILL BE LIKE THE MOST HIGH!!

AHEM!

OH, OH!

JOHN MARTIN

By Terry Cheek Th.D.
McDowell County



Thank you for joining me as we return to God's Word and the exposition of Romans. For this essay let's begin with verse 5 where we read *"Through Him we have received grace and apostleship"*. Paul tells the church in Rome that Jesus is the source of his apostleship, but he does not stop there. All of the apostles had received grace and apostleship "for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name, among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ". Paul reminds the church that Grace comes before apostleship and salvation before service. Each one of us has read these words of Christ "Come unto me" before "Go ye unto all the world." Commitment to the truth of God's Word must come before commitment to any task we feel passionate about. Our attitude must be "obedience to the faith." Our assignment is to "all nations." Our authority is "His name." We have before the church our Lord's pressing commission to spread the gospel around the world.

Notice with me from verse 6 that Paul ends the verse with "the called of Jesus Christ" and is speaking it to the saints of Rome. Notice the called are located by Jesus Christ in Rome in Paul's case. Whether it is in Rome, New York, Chicago, Marion, Morganton, or Spruce Pine the called of God are located by Him. He knows those whom He has predestined.

Picking up with verse seven *"To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints."* Do you realize every born-again blood-bought child of God is a saint in God's eyes? That is a very deep thought to ponder. You are already numbered among the saints. The word for a saint in the New Testament means "sanctified one," one who has been set apart by the Holy Spirit and called inwardly by Christ to Himself. If you have put your trust in Christ, you are a saint. You are set apart. There is reason to rejoice and there is also reason to recognize responsibility. This isn't a responsibility like your career, your family, or your debts. This is a responsibility that we happily embrace because of our relationship with God the Father through Jesus Christ the son.

I will close this month with this. Finally, in this section, Paul expresses his traditional greeting in verse seven. *"Grace to you and peace"*. In Old Testament times the Jews greeted one another the same way they do today: Shalom aleichem, *"Peace be unto you."* The response to the greeting was Aleichem shalom, *"Peace also to you."* Our Jewish friends say prayers for the peace of Jerusalem, and the Jewish benediction for centuries has been this: *"The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace"* (Num. 6:24-26). This peace is *"not as the world gives,"* said Jesus in His final will and testament before leaving the world (John 14:27). Paul wished grace upon them. The Greek word Paul used for grace was Charis, Charis speaks of the grace, favor, and goodwill of God and Christ as exercised toward men: where charis is joined with eirēnē, peace, or éleos, mercy, and the like in salutations, it includes the idea of every kind of favor, blessing, and good, as proceeding from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul wanted the church to remember the peace that comes from knowing Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Paul wanted them to experience it through the heavenly window of grace.

Until we meet again, in print or in person may God keep you firmly in His grip.
Work Cited

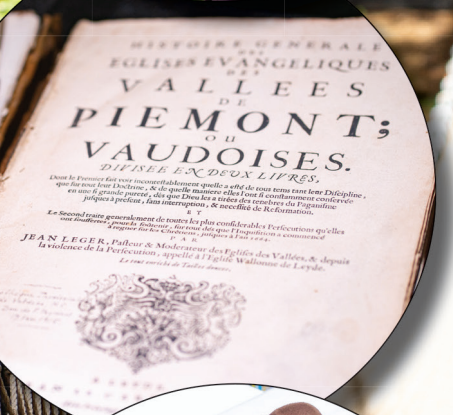
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Terry Cheek is the founder and broadcaster of The Inspiring Word media ministry. He and Lori are members of Blue Ridge Church of Marion N.C. You can contact Terry by email at theinspiringword@gmail.com.

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Artist Showcases Work at Local Non-profit

By Sydni Hall
Burke County

Inspiring and impactful artist and community enthusiast Jackie Deaton has touched the lives of many at Burke United Christian Ministries through her artwork.

Her professional career did not start as an artist, but her passion was always there. Deaton began her post-graduate career as a nurse. She worked for many years alongside her husband, Paul Deaton, who was a surgeon for more than 40 years. She always had a passion for art but didn't realize until later in life that she was destined to be an artist.

Deaton began her art career by painting murals at the former Waldensian Bakery in Valdese and other local storefront locations. She remembers the joy it brought her when she saw the faces of families that passed by her work and how it inspired her.

"I feel like all kinds of doors opened for me through art," Deaton said. "I have been able to meet so many people in the artist community."



Deaton's art featured an abundance of color and various stories in the Bible.

Alongside her husband, Deaton was one of the original board members at BUCM. In her role, she was asked to create inspirational artwork at the facility that welcomed clients and visitors.

With a passion for art and her strong Christian faith, she worked to create meaningful artwork at BUCM.

"I was one of the original board members and I was asked to be in charge of the art here [BUCM] and I was a little frantic about it," Deaton said. "I wasn't sure what to do with the space ... We had different artists, myself and Paul as well that donated money and art ... It was important to me that the art had lots of colors. Color is very important in art."

Deaton's work has been on display at BUCM for many years, inspiring many clients and guests that have passed by. She has decided it is time to bring her work home so she can one day give it to her grandchildren.

"I have 11 grandchildren, and I have always wanted to do something for them," Deaton said. "I had always wanted to keep the pieces from BUCM together, but now I want to give these pictures to them."



Did God Really Say...?

By Dennis Love
McDowell County



The Bible opens with what may be the most dangerous question one can find in the Bible. It is a question that can potentially render the rest of the Bible meaningless. In the beginning, God did not give Adam hundreds of rules. There was only one very simple rule: Don't eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

"And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die." (Genesis 2:16-17)

It was a simple enough command: "Don't eat the fruit of this one tree." The consequences were clearly explained: "If you disobey, you will die." (Not physically, but spiritually) It should have been easy enough to obey. The garden was loaded with plenty of trees bearing an abundant supply of wonderful fruit. Adam and Eve really didn't have a reason to eat from this forbidden tree. But they did, and you know the reason why.

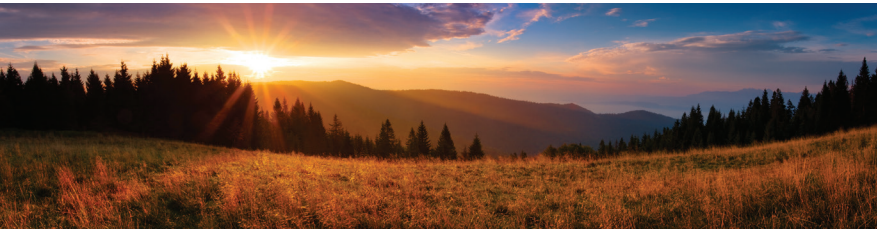
Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, *"Did God really say, you must not eat from any tree in the garden?"* (Genesis 3:1)

These four words raise dangerous uncertainty about the authority of the Word of God. (Did God really say?) These four words even raise suspicion about the goodness of God. (Did God really say?) And these four words can cause one to assume that God's word is up for debate. (Did God really say?) These four words resulted in Adam and Eve doubting what God said, and the end result was a defining moment for them and all mankind. Doubt can be dangerous to us, and damaging to others when we fail to heed the Word of God.

"Did God really say...?" Yes, He did, and He meant what He said. If someone asked you. "Is the Bible the Word of God?" most of us would immediately say yes! However, the world today is telling us no! I asked Google this very question and the first thing that popped up were these words. THE BIBLE IS NOT THE WORD OF GOD. After reading these words, I realized something--Satan is still asking the dangerous question, "Did God really say...?"

Is the Bible really the Word of God? You'd better believe it. How do I know? I know because God used it to radically change my life, and if you know Him as Lord and Savior, He has changed yours too. "Did God really say...?" Yes, He did, and He meant it then, and when He speaks to us from His Word, He still means it today!

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



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Crossword

Crossword 277

ACROSS

1 The ____ is not held secure, the sail is not spread (Isa 33:23)

5 he gave a loaf of bread, a cake of ____ (2 Sam 6:19)

9 Then God said, "Let the ____ produce vegetation (Gen 1:11)

13 whatsoever hath _____, that shall ye not offer (1,7) (Lev 22:20) KJV

14 But if he be ____ than thy estimation, then he shall present (Lev 27:8) KJV

15 The twenty ninth book of the Old Testament.

16 The _____ trees cover him with their shadow (Job 40:22)

17 Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur and ____ the five kings of Midian (Num 31:8)

18 I came near unto ____ of them that stood by (Daniel 7:16)

19 ____ man can live and not see death? (Ps 89:48)

20 they which went up also from Telharesha, Cherub, ____ (Neh 7:61) KJV

21 They ____, "The Lord needs it." (Luke 19:34)

23 I hold ____ to your statutes, O LORD (Ps 119:31)

25 "You ____ were with Jesus of Galilee," she said (Matt 26:69)

26 know that you have no authority to ____ taxes (Ezra 7:24)

29 topaz, and the diamond, the ____, the onyx (Ezek 28:13)

32 their sailors came alongside to trade for your ____ (Ezek 27:9)

34 saying, ____, Eli, lama sabachthani (Matt 27:46)

36 you must cancel any debt your brother ____ you (Deut 15:3)

38 ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you ____ (Matt 11:28) KJV

39 the hour cometh, ____, is now come, (John 16:32) KJV

40 from the hand of the wicked, from the ____ of evil (Ps 71:4)

43 lies down, like a lioness who ____ to rouse him? (Gen 49:9)

44 a vine, and brought forth branches, and shot forth ____ (Ezek 17:6) KJV

46 Saul and Abner son of Ner had ____ down (1 Sam 26:5)

49 he entered the temple ____ and began driving out those who were (Luke 19:45)

50 We _____ whenever we are weak but you are strong (3,4) (2 Cor 13:9)

54 in ____, Zeboim and Neballat (Neh 11:34)

57 The body is a ____, though it is made up of many parts (1 Cor 12:12)

58 Sir, come down ____ my child die (John 4:49) KJV

59 30th book of the Old Testament

60 If anyone ____ to be first, he must be the very last (Mark 9:35)

61 will men take _____ of it to hang any vessel thereon (1,3) (Ezek 15:3) KJV

62 rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, ____, slander (Col 3:8)

63 forthwith they sprung up, because they had no ____ of earth (Matt 13:5) KJV

64 You were in ____, the garden of God (Ezek 28:13)

65 the most upright worse than a ____ hedge (Mic 7:4)

66 Likewise every good ____ bears good fruit (Matt 7:17)

Down

1 You will overthrow every fortified city and every ____ town (2 Kings 3:19)

2 a gentle tongue can break _____ (1,4) (Prov 25:15)

3 Multitudes who ____ in the dust of the earth will awake (Dan 12:2)

4 exiles who lived at ____ Abib near the Kebar River (Ezek 3:15)

5 make its plates and ____ of pure gold (Ex 25:29)

6 The law is only _____ of the good things that are (1,6) (Heb 10:1)

7 let them also _____ love thy name be joyful in thee (Ps 5:11) KJV

8 David sent them to you to explore the city and ____ it out (2 Sam 10:3)

9 Teach me, O ____, ____ follow your decrees (4,2) (Ps 119:33)

10 there before me was a man riding _____ horse (1,3) (Zech 1:8)

11 Bel bows down, ____ stoops low; their idols (Isa 46:1)

12 by us who ate and ____ with him after he rose from the dead (Acts 10:41)

19 Therefore disaster ____ overtake him in an instant (Prov 6:15)

20 the poison of ____ is under their lips (Rom 3:13) KJV

22 The good shepherd ____ down his life for the sheep (John 10:11)

23 king of Tyre had furnished Solomon with cedar trees and _____ trees (1 King 9:11)

24 To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. ____ (Phil 4:20)

27 with the words of David, and of Asaph the ____ (2 Chr 29:30)

28 he himself gives all men life and breath and everything ____ (Acts 17:25)

29 "All these I have kept since I was a ____, " he said (Luke 18:21)

30 twenty he goats, two hundred ____, and twenty rams (Gen 32:14)

31 Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor ____ (Luke 12:24)

33 he was riding upon his ____, and his two servants were

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with him (Num 22:22)

35 seven of every kind of clean animal, a male and ____ mate (Gen 7:2)

37 I particularly ____ you to pray so that I may be restored to you soon (Heb 13:19)

38 "At midnight the cry ____ out: 'Here's the bridegroom!' (Matt 25:6)

40 ____ your sword upon your side, O mighty one (Ps 45:3)

41 gather your children together, ____ hen gathers her chicks (2,1) (Luke 13:34)

42 the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman and the ____ (Amos 9:13)

43 there was a continual ____ given him of the king (Jer 52:34) KJV

45 here were plentiful supplies of flour, fig cakes, ____ cakes (1 Chron 12:40)

47 wicked men have ____ among you (Deut 13:13)

48 In you, O LORD, I have taken refuge; let me never

be put to ____ (Ps 71:1)

51 Jesus was in Bethany in the home of a man known as Simon the ____ (Matt 26:6)

52 angels hastened Lot, saying, ____, take thy wife (Gen 19:15) KJV

53 the ____ forest has been cut down (Zech 11:2)

55 As _____ man who casteth firebrands (1,3) (Prov 26:18) KJV

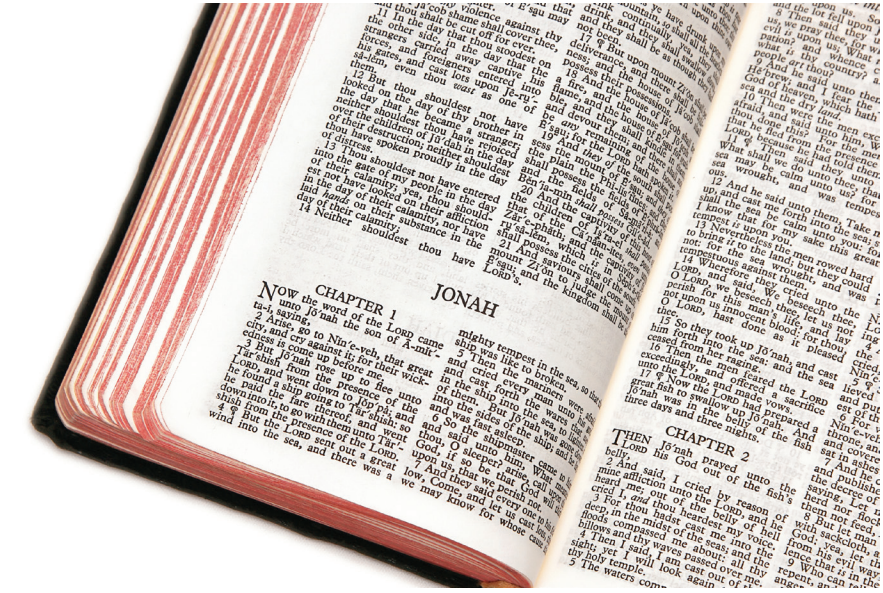
56 they will ____ out the bread by weight (Lev 26:26)

57 loose the bands of wickedness, to ____ the heavy burdens (Isa 58:6) KJV

60 she began to ____ his feet with her tears (Luke 7:38)

61 picnic pest (Prov 6:6)

Solution on page 14



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Valdese, NC 28690

Mon - Fri: 8 AM - 5:30 PM
Sat: 8 AM - 2 PM Sun: Closed



A RECENT REVIEW
"I went there for the first time today and was greeted by Chris, a very knowledgeable, kind, and helpful fellow who took me right to what I was looking for, gave me good transplant advice and a military discount for veterans! It was worth the travel from Conover and I will be back for fall plants, for sure!"
Ruth B., Google Review

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