



BLUE RIDGE CHRISTIAN NEWS



Roan Mountain Baptist Church

Through Many Tribulations

By Russell McKinney
Mitchell County

"We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God." (Acts 14:22, N.K.J.V.)

David Livingstone was born in Scotland to poor parents. His family was so poor that he went to work in a cotton factory when he was only ten years old. Despite his poverty, he managed to get an education and eventually become a doctor.

At that point, Livingstone could have gone into practice in Scotland and made an easy life for himself. But that's not what he did. He chose, instead, to go to Africa and become a preacher/doctor.

Livingstone's work took him deep into the heart of Africa, to places where no white man had ever been. He poured his life into the people of that continent, and in so doing became a living legend among missionaries. Even though he died penniless, he was honored by being buried in London's famous Westminster Abbey. A missionary society in West Africa once wrote to Livingstone and asked, "Have you found a good road to where you are? If not, we want to know how to send other men to join you." Livingstone wrote back, "I don't know what you mean by 'other' men joining me when none have come as yet. If you have men who will only come if they know there is a good road, I don't want them. I want men who will come even if there is no road."

Christian, the tasks that are set before us in this life aren't always easy. As a matter of fact, some of them can be downright brutal. And the Bible makes no apologies for this. As our text verse says, we must enter the kingdom of God "through many tribulations." Please understand, though, that it's not the tribulations that save us or merit our entrance into the kingdom. No, our salvation and kingdom citizenship rest solely upon our belief in Christ as Savior. The point is that we Christians needn't expect easy lives just because we are God's people. Sure, we'll all make it into heaven in the end, but the road that takes us there will be marked by many tribulations.

Oh, and did you notice that the word used is "many"? That means the tribulations will be numerous and will come in all shapes, sizes, and varieties. For example, the famous preacher J. Wilber Chapman said that heaven was never so near to him as on the night when his firstborn child lay dead.

So, Christian, do you have some situation in your life right now that you would classify as a tribulation? Are you having to endure something that isn't pleasant?



Are you having to live with a very trying circumstance? Well, take heart in two things. First, your experience makes you normal. When the Bible says that we must enter the kingdom of God through many tribulations, you aren't the exception. Second, never forget that you are headed to a better place. Rather than just going around in some sadistic circle, you are on your way to heaven.

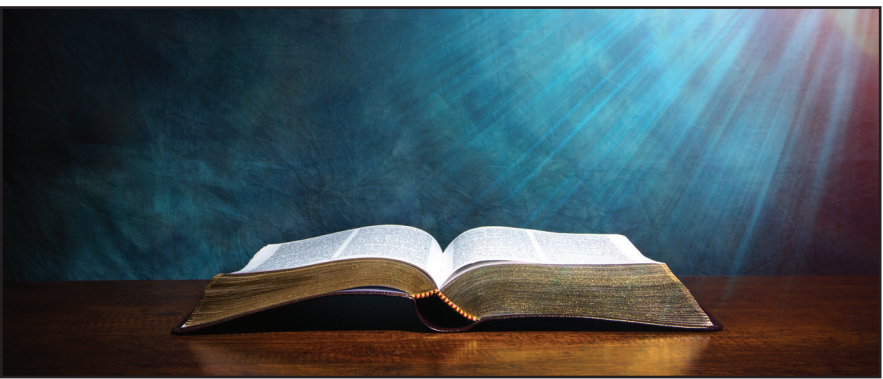
There was a Christian woman who grumbled all the time about her life. Her prayers were dominated by complaints and her thoughts were consumed by exaggerated ideas of how bad her situation was. Whenever someone asked her how she was doing, they soon regretted asking when she started whining about all her problems.

One night this woman dreamed that she went to heaven and met Jesus. But when she saw Him, she didn't fall down before Him in praise, adoration, and worship. Instead, she said, "Jesus, I'm so glad to get this chance to talk to You face to face. I just want You to know that my cross is too big for me to bear."

To that, Jesus asked, "Would you like to trade it for another one?" "Yes," the woman answered excitedly, "I'd like that very much!" Jesus then took her to a special room in heaven and said, "This is the room for crosses. You look around in here until you find one you like."

In her looking around, the woman saw tall crosses, heavy crosses, ugly crosses, and twisted crosses. In her estimation, though, all of them looked too difficult for her to carry. Finally, she found a small, easy-looking cross sitting all by itself in a corner of the room. She said, "That's it, Jesus, I'll take that one right there. That's a cross I can bear." Jesus said, "You're right, it is; that's the one you brought in."

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



More Than a Feeling

By Timothy W. Tron
Burke County



We walked up the mountain top wading through a sea of tall summer grasses. There were no trees, only highland meadows. You could reach your arms out to your side and runs your fingers along the tops of the stalks as you walked, tickling the palms of your hands as you passed. Around us, the clouds had descended until we walked in an atmosphere that was calming and bewildering at the same time. The heat of the day quickly dissipated as the mist enveloped our small hiking group. It was as if we were walking through a dream. Were we still on earth, or had we suddenly found ourselves walking in Heaven? The Pauline statement came to mind, *“Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.”*

Wading through the tall summer grasses heading to the summit of Sled Hill always provided a sense of achievement. Once there, towering above the little hamlet of New Harmony, one could purvey the entirety of the small village from the height of the hill. While it was only a hill, it felt closer to God. Several years later, I would find myself on a much taller mountain, in the Cottien Region of the Alps, nearly 10,000 feet up. There, for a few minutes of life, a hiking companion and I communed with God. It was a feeling that words cannot adequately describe. To feel his presence and to be so near – yet, so far to go. The sense of touching the stalks of grass to the feeling of being in God’s presence shows us how our body’s translate sensation into emotion. An almost imperceptible path is created from the input of feeling to the emotion of feeling. In our walk of life, the terrestrial realm, our perception of reality influences our thoughts whether we want it to or not. For in this world, we may find ourselves seeking God but focused on the wrong target, as Paul Washer would say. He compares it to looking through the scope of a rifle. Closing one eye and aiming toward the target, we might find the crosshairs in the scope and errantly focus on them. But the better marksman allows his eye’s focus to go beyond the crosshairs and to fix upon the target. It is the same with how we should perceive our terrestrial life on earth. While we are in the body, we are not where we ultimately want to end up. Our goal – Heaven, of course.

Yet, there is so much to get through to get there. We face so many obstacles, so many challenges, that alone, we cannot achieve them. Our bodies are amazing. God’s creation is not only in everything we see but also in who and what we are. But how does our sense of touch, our feeling of the world around us, affect our ability to reach our goal or to prevent it?

The sense of touch is the only sense not related to a specific organ and is therefore known as a General Sense. All the others, the sense of sight, hearing, taste, and smell, are called Special Senses. To touch something is to feel it with the sensory receptors in our skin. Our skin, the largest organ of our body, is our body’s way of communicating with the world around us. Each moment in our life, we are, in some way, somehow relating to an object or atmospheric presence which we interpret through our flesh.

As we type on the keyboard, as I am doing now, there is a certain tactile feel to the keys on the keyboard. When we read, those of us born before the digital era prefer to feel the palpable feeling of paper on our fingers as we turn the page or hold the book. Something is satisfying about the activity of reading that requires the act of turning a page. Likewise, there are many attributes in our daily life that we take for granted, but they would give us discomfort if they were presented to us without our knowing. One example is the switch from plastic straws to paper. There is something unusual to the feeling upon one’s lips and tongue to a paper straw, when all one has ever known, is a plastic straw. It is this awkwardness that is similar to how we should always find the things of this world when they go against the will of God, but I’m getting ahead of myself. For now, let’s focus on the fact that feeling and touching things in the world around us is a significant part of our everyday life.

The scriptures clearly warn us, *“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”* It seems that more and more every day, we face obstacles meant to trip us up. Desires of the flesh are

continued on page 8

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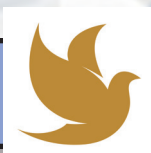
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“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace: that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation: that saith unto Zion. Thy God reigneth!”

Isaiah 52:7 KJV



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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

opcmikecloy@gmail.com

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

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

Berry Chapel Baptist Church

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

Pastor - Steve Williams

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

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And Jesus Christ is Lord!

The Rock Church

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

Pastor - Micah Narlock

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

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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 & Orchestra,
Adult Bible Study, Youth
Discipleship, Preschool &
Children's TeamKid

Mount Carmel Baptist Church

195 Gouges Creek Rd.
Spruce Pine NC 28777

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

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First Baptist Church of Spruce Pine

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

Dr. Rocky Branch Senior Pastor

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

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

Pine Branch Baptist Church

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

Reverend Bobby Joe Greene

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

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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

We are a Healing and Deliverance Tent Ministry.
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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 a hill spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ through: Worship, Fellowship, Education, and Nurturing Service

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Bible Briefs

100% Prayer Success

By Robert Garner
Rutherford County

“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you,” Col 1:9.

Throughout the world, the true child of God, Christian brothers and sisters are united in the body of Christ Jesus. We have the wonderful authority of prayer support for each other. What’s my proof of prayer support for each other? Give us this day our daily bread; forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amazing! We pray for each other every time we say The Lord’s Prayer. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever, Amen.

As we consider Mathew 6:9; *“Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name;”* Job 33:4 should also come into our minds – *“the spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty has given me life.”* Our life’s guarantee of 100% Prayer Success requires three specific things, the gift of genuine salvation (see BRCN False Doctrines of Salvation), wisdom and knowledge. All three must be given to us. Ephesians 1:17, *“the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, that He may give unto you [us] the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.”* The wisdom we need is not the wisdom of the world, *“for the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God,”* 1 Corinthians 3:19.

Our Lord is not concerned for things we want; His concern is for the things we need. All the things we need are found in The Lord’s Prayer. Repentance, forgiveness to others, spiritual food the scriptures, physical hunger relief, and the ability to fight the evil temptations to commit sin. Mark 14:38, *“Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The [Holy] spirit truly is ready [to defend us], but the flesh is weak.”*

The Lord’s wisdom and knowledge guarantee prayer success. Ask the Lord for wisdom and knowledge! We must apply that understanding to our prayer issues. James 1:5, *“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not [no criticism]; and it shall be given.”* We must learn to apply God’s wisdom and knowledge given to us about the subject matter of our prayers.

The wisdom and knowledge of the scripture will always address the problem for us. Job 33:3 has the answer; *“my words shall be of the rightness of my heart: and my lips shall utter knowledge clearly.”* Remember those troubling besetting sins and failed excuses? Job 21:14 gives us the reason; *“therefore they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.”*

Helen Griggs, wrote the hymn; “Gone, gone, gone, yes my sins are gone. Buried in the sea, yes that’s good enough for me”. We cannot bury our sins and “Just forget about it”. Isaiah 59:12, *“for our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us: for our transgressions are with us; and as for our iniquities, we know them.”* Sins can separate us from God Almighty, and our prayer requests. Suggestion, read all of Isaiah 59:1-21. Pray to the Lord. Seek me with all your heart and you will find me, Jer. 29:12-13.

We should pray in the morning, noon and evening. Pray without ceasing, incessantly.

Cry aloud to God almighty, pray in secret in your closet and your father will reward you. Psalms 55:17, 1 Th. 5:17, Mathew 6:6. *“In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you [and I],”* 1 Th 5:18.

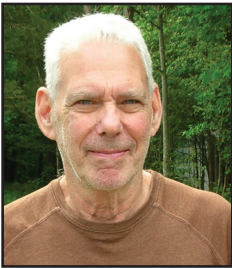
Did you notice that I missed the most important detail of The Lord’s Prayer at the beginning of this Bible Brief? The request for God’s will upon our life, “Thy Will Be Done”, as in heaven, so in the earth. Perhaps at prayer times, we all desire that our will be done, which may not be the will of God for our prayer issue. Trust the following verse with all your heart and soul; be not ye, therefore, like unto them: *“for your father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him,”* Mathew 6:8.

Perhaps you’ve heard about the Christian convention with hundreds of attendants who all prayed for the healing of a sick member associate? The member died the following week. If physical healing of the human flesh was possible, why does everybody eventually die? *“What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?”* Psalm 89:48.

When our loved one faces death, disease, or accident and succumbs to it, is God not listening to us? Has God failed in His ability to heal our loved ones? No! The word “sick” in the following verse is (Kamno - Strong’s G2577) meaning to “grow weary”. James 5:15 has to do with Spiritual healing, a prayer to forgive the sick from their sins and raise him to salvation. James 5:15, *“and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.”*

Never think of a loved one as deceased. See your loved one alive in heaven living forever in the glorious presence of the Lord Jesus. *“We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him as true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ, This is the true God, and eternal life,”* 1 John 5:20.

Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done!
Your comments are always appreciated. Contact email; valleygravel@outlook.com



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

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Chaplains Serve in Missouri After Flooding

By Lizzy Long

After the Billy Graham Rapid Response Team (BG-RRT) sent 10 chaplains to eastern Kentucky due to deadly flash flooding, they found neighboring regions suffering from the same storm system.

That's why they've added a deployment to St. Louis County, Missouri, where the National Weather Service reported nine inches of rainfall in under 24 hours between July 25 and July 26. The record-breaking rainfall caused rising floodwaters that trapped residents in their homes.

>> Update: The BG-RRT expanded its deployment in eastern Kentucky to Breathitt County, where seven chaplains are serving.

Storms spread days apart causing St. Louis County to experience multiple events of flash flooding last week, submerging some houses in seven feet of water. July 26 was recorded as the date with the highest rainfall in the St. Louis region since records began in 1874. In six hours, there was more rainfall than it normally receives in July and August combined.

News reports say at least one person died, and six children were rescued from a local daycare.

Chaplain coordinators Cathy and Dale Nordgaarden and a team of chaplains are ministering. A Mobile Ministry Center, a vehicle used as a safe haven for conversations, is also parked in the community.

"As we see the many lives impacted because of this historic rainfall in St. Louis County, Missouri, our hearts are heavy for those who have suffered great loss," said Josh Holland, international director of the BG-RRT. "Our crisis-trained chaplains will be there to listen, comfort, and pray with people as the area begins the recovery process."

Over the next several weeks, chaplains will be partnering with Samaritan's Purse, BGEA's sister ministry that organizes volunteers to clean up homes. Together, the ministries will help locals get back on their feet.

Please keep all those affected by the flooding in your prayers.



A man helps two people walk through floodwaters after their car got stuck in St. Louis, Missouri. The same stubborn weather system caused intense downpours in St. Louis and Appalachia that led to devastating and in some cases deadly flooding. (Allie Schallert/St. Louis Post-Dispatch via AP, File)



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Why God Needs Your Business

By Tina Wolfe
McDowell County



I’ve been on a wild adventure with God learning to take my Sundays into Mondays and beyond. Amid a pandemic, economic turmoil, and political chaos, I left a secure, regularly paying job because God told me to leave. I couldn’t pretend I didn’t hear Him or that I misunderstood him—no, that signal came in loud and clear.

About a year before the pandemic, I signed on to an immersive coaching program, Kingdom Driven Entrepreneurs created by Shae Bynes. She introduced me to a whole new way of doing business with God, not just for God. Her books, *Doing Business God’s Way* and *Grace Over Grind* helped answer my question, “How do I serve and honor God in my work as passionately as I do at church and home?” Or in God’s word, (Rom. 12:2) *“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.”* We are not meant to compartmentalize our faith. We are called to be God’s representative in our work whether we work for a company or we own it.

Let me explain.

My faith was at what you might call a plateau. My church life was rich and fulfilling and my home life was evidence of God working miracles as I practiced obedience to Him (learning that my way of handling things wasn’t exactly working out as I planned). Something was missing. I felt so deeply that He had more to teach me and the one place I struggled was at work. I understood that God was calling me to show up with my faith in the one area of my life where it was being regulated by others—or so I thought at the time.

I had been struggling in my corporate roles as communications and marketing director. My desire to live out my faith in all areas of my life was creating conflict. What I was writing based on the mission statements and core values of the organizations and businesses was not lining up with what leaders were doing and the way they were conducting business. The practices were completely natural and accepted in the world’s way of doing business, but God’s way of doing business is on a completely different scale and level. And I wanted His way. The incongruities pricked at my conscience. I would prayerfully and professionally point out the incongruities I was experiencing and was often labeled as “difficult” and “not a team player” or “just didn’t understand how things were done.”

The question I had been asking myself was, how do I live in this world of business with its worldly practices of white lies, justifications, hidden agendas, and half-truths, and not be of it? In the last 10 years, it became glaringly evident that my ability to let it go as ‘just the way things are done’ was more than I could bear—I needed God’s help. We are trained in the world of business to be politically correct instead of learning the difficult lessons of learning to rebuke in love, hold people accountable by calling them up to their best selves, and honoring the truth wherever that leads us with God’s grace and mercy. I realized that the Holy Spirit’s convicting me on these things and the damage it was doing to people was to prepare me to receive the answer to my nagging question. (God is so wise and patient with me.)

Over a decade, God and I had conversations on how to handle conversations, how to present new ways of doing things, and how to clear up inconsistencies—seeking a Godly way of expressing my concerns. Mathew 6:33 became my daily devotional and the apostle Paul became my Biblical mentor on what God had to say about work. It was a profound learning experience for me as many times, I admit, I didn’t get it right. But I was consistent in seeking the Lord’s guidance in how he wanted to me show up in the marketplace. I began also listening to Jordan Raynor’s devotions and podcast, Word Before Work. I learned that God has a lot to say about our work and how, like everything else we have, is a gift from Him—to bring Him glory.

God understood that I needed to experience these things and “work out my faith” with Him to learn how to show up with my faith in the marketplace. Colossians 3:23-24 became my mantra, “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 to the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.”

The Marketplace is an integral part of our spiritual work. Along with the verses mentioned above, Proverbs 16:3 tells us to *“Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established.”* Genesis 2:15 says, *“The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.”* Genesis also shows us that God worked, setting an example for us, during the first six days of creation. And Psalm 90:17 says, *“Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us and establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, establish the work of our hands.”* Paul chose to work because he knew that setting an example with his behavior and actions helped build trust and relationships. He did so with the honor and integrity that God provides through his grace.

When we commit as Proverbs 16:3 instructs us to do He promises to establish our plans. This isn’t a one-time occurrence or a verse hanging on the wall. This calls us to seek the wisdom of the Holy Spirit in all of our business affairs from our business plan to our vacation policy. As Bynes says before every podcast, “This isn’t business as usual.” This is a commitment that ensures the promises of Scripture for you and your business. This is what it means to live in this world but not be of it.

What is a Kingdom Driven Entrepreneur?
(*from *Doing Business God’s Way*)

“A Kingdom Driven Entrepreneur is different from what you may be accustomed to experiencing among believers in the business world.

Kingdom: God’s rule and reign (the King’s way of being and doing things), the realm of heaven, and the government of God

Driven: Propelled or motivated by



Entrepreneur: One who organizes and operates a business (or businesses), identifying a need or desire and filling it in the marketplace

“When we talk about being a Kingdom Driven Entrepreneur, it means that your entrepreneurial endeavors are motivated by seeing an increase of the Kingdom of God on earth, and they are propelled forward by seeking first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness.

“Once you decide to be a Kingdom Driven Entrepreneur, you simply will not be able to imagine doing business without partnering with the presence of an awesome and limitless God. Isn’t it an honor to know that the Creator of the Universe, the only one who sees all and knows all is interested in working with you in your business? He desires to create with you, guide you, provide for you, and draw you (and others) closer to Him in the process.”

I am now joyfully serving small businesses and operating my consulting business as a Kingdom Driven Entrepreneur. The best part is that I can truly be a part of His work in the lives of people every day. I don’t rush to follow trends, I don’t have to stress about making tough decisions, and I have an ‘awesome and limitless God’ as my partner and CEO. I am inclined to believe that I am not the only business professional whose spirit is convicted to honor God in their professional life. If you desire more of God in your business and work and are interested in diving deeper into Shae Bynes's book, “*Doing Business God’s Way*” contact me.

Tina Wolfe is a long-time resident of McDowell County with a passion for helping business owners operate from a Christian, servant-led perspective. She is a follower of Christ, a wife, and a mother. As a business owner, marketing professional, and journalist, she has studied Christian business models and worked with business coaches to learn how to effectively operate in a worldly business environment from a Godly perspective. She believes that when we dare to serve, we succeed in life, and business



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constantly bombarding us. When we think we've conquered one, the enemy finds another weakness to exploit and tempts us in ways we could have never imagined. How many of you have a phone, also known as your "Device?" Isn't it odd that it requires seemingly constant attention? Whether it's the little bells going off reminding you someone has texted you or your need to look something up, to which we now say, "Just Google it," the battle is real. Those devices can present images that lure us into desires of the flesh or worse. Once again, scriptures warn us, "*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*"

We must be ever watchful. But we don't have to go it alone. "*Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?*" "*This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh... If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.*"

But how do we know we are walking in the spirit? Can we feel it? Does it make us feel a certain way? C.S. Lewis put it like this, "The real thing is the gift of the Holy Spirit which can't usually be—perhaps not ever—experienced as a sensation or emotion. The sensations are merely the response of your nervous system. Don't depend on them. Otherwise, when they go and you are once more emotionally flat (as you certainly will be quite soon), you might think that the real thing had gone too. But it won't. It will be there when you can't feel it. May even be most operative when you can feel it least."

But being in the body and absent from God creates a problem. Those seemingly limitless sensations we experience each minute of our life can either add to our sanctification or take away from it. It all matters on where you are in your faith. Hebrews 11:1 says, "*Faith is the substance of things hoped for, evidence of things unseen.*" So, how can we comprehend Heaven as real when all that we know is what we can sense through our earthly context? Of course, it requires one to believe what cannot be seen, which in itself is an act of faith. As Jesus told Thomas when he had just finished inspecting his risen body, touching the holes from the nails in his wrists, to thrusting his fist into the hole in his side, "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

But there is something else that reassures us that we are walking in the right direction through various moments of confirmation; the Holy Spirit. The Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit all seek to know us. When we accept Him into our lives, we are made anew. "*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;*"

When we walk as Christ, we learn to hear his voice and direction. The Great Comforter, the Holy Spirit guides us. It is then we can finally discern when to take those feelings of this world and use them to help us focus on our goal – life eternal.

Although we will experience all manner of troubles and trials to reach those mountain tops in our lives. "The flesh is weak" reminds us that not only does it so easily give in to temptation, but it also fails us as time passes. Age becomes the great equalizer, and the aches and ailments grow in number. But we find as our faith grows that it all fades away when we are in His presence.

For those fifteen minutes of my Alpine journey, sitting on the edge of the world and looking out upon a valley below, we felt washed in the glow of God's Grace. Those aches and pains that it took to reach the summit had vanished, washed away like our sins by the blood of Christ. Below us, a valley stretched to the horizon. Like the veins of life, the rivers course through its tortuous rocks and cliffs. Waterfalls echo voices of distant saints gone on before. Before us soared a raptor, finding the thermals; at home in his place before us as we sat and watched him as the wind blew past our place of repose. I closed my eyes and savored the multitude of sensations and feelings that flowed through me at that moment. Communing with God can never grow old.

Then, in the blink of an eye, it was time to leave, but like those tiny, minuscule glances of Heaven on earth, it was worth a lifetime of torment. If a man were but for a second shown what Heaven would be like, he would forever, for the rest of his breathing days, would gladly shed blood, sweat, and tears to just once more find that moment of eternal bliss. Those moments like these become the confirmation of the truth that our eternal home awaits us. It makes Jesus' words to his disciples even more precious when he said, "*In my Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.*" Stretch your arms out wide and embrace God's creation every day in your life. Let your fingertips caress the tall grasses of the high mountain meadows, savoring those sensations, but be forever mindful of the ultimate goal. For we must allow our senses to be heightened for all the right reasons and, in so doing, will guide our footsteps ever closer to eternity in the presence of God the Father. And remember, "*Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?*"

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.

Life Lessons

By Doug Harrell
Mitchell County

As I write this Life Lessons my mind is going back over some of my life experiences over the past seventy-nine years. I am thankful for a childhood that was filled with good memories, fun times, and also a work ethic that was instilled at an early age. I am thankful for being brought up in a church setting that taught me the values of strong faith in God with Christian values that have stood me in good stead over the many years of my life. I dream about days when the vast majority of people I knew or heard of were in church on Sunday, that believed in the teachings of the Bible and that there was not even a question about the sex of a child, that marriage was not even thought of unless it was a man and a woman, that there were grades A through F in school and that you received what you worked for.

I have just been reading about the latest vote purchases that are taking place in our country. Folks that borrowed money to go to school are having the debt wiped away. What about all those all through the years that have worked hard and repaid a debt owed? How does this action affect them? Where has the pride of being independent and taking care of yourself and your family gone? Granted, we need some social programs to help those that are in real need, but have we crossed the threshold of socialism to the degree that we are doomed as a result of the movement?

Have we reached a point where having pride in America and pride in being an American is taboo? Are we just sitting on our butts and waiting for China or some other country to come to take us over? Is there no longer pride in doing a good day's work and getting paid, and having the resources to pay our bills and pay them on time?

I know this has been a series of questions rather than really writing about life experiences, but we are truly at a crossroads in our country that is going to determine if that great country is going to remain one nation under God's guidance and direction, that has enabled this to be the greatest nation that ever existed. If we want to remain a free people that have the ability to provide for and protect ourselves we sure need to get out and vote in mass this fall. If we fail to do this and fail to make substantial changes in our government we are doomed to cease to exist as you and I have known over the years.

I guess the moral of the story for this life lesson is that if it is to be, it is up to me, and that is you and me. We can sit on our Christian haunches and do nothing and we are doomed, or we can wake up, put on the armor of God, take up the sword of faith and prepare for victory in Jesus by being soldiers of the cross. It is time to not expect someone else to do it. We must prepare to build with one hand and have our sword in the other hand. The enemies will not be silent nor will they cease to push their agenda down our throats if we allow it. As Paul Revere is said to have called out years ago, the British are coming, the British are coming, it is now, evil is coming, evil is already here! Pray for God's guidance as we fight to maintain our Christian heritage and values. To God be the glory!

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



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Seasons Of Change

By Steve Bietz
Burke County

Transition. September can certainly be described as a time of transition. Our kids transition from summer vacation to going back to the classroom in a school. We see the days growing shorter in September as the temperatures begin to cool as the first day of Autumn approaches. Fall begins on September 22nd this year as the sun crosses the celestial equator moving southward. No matter how much we love one particular season, at some point, it ends and we must welcome a new one.

Just like the weather seasons, we also face changes and transitions in our lives which bring shifts and adjustments. I believe God's Word is key to understanding and dealing with transitions.

One promise that we see in scripture should be a constant reminder of courage when we face the seasons of change in life. Psalm 102:27 informs us that God does not change. While seasons shift, God Himself remains the same. He is forever faithful. It helps to remember those truth anchors you and me in times of transition and change. Also, we see that in Christ we are changing daily. *"Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day."* (2 Corinthians 4:16) So changes in seasons usually bring drastic changes as we transition our routines and lives. However, in Christ, we know that we are already changing daily.

At times, God can be preparing us for change and transition without us even knowing it. In Samuel 16: 5-13, we read David's story of change and transition. David was a shepherd boy, the last born in his family, with brothers who seemed to have kingly abilities that would make them appear statesman-like. Yet God chose David to be the next king of Israel. David was preparing for the change and transition without even knowing it as he watched over sheep and protected them from bears and lions. He led sheep in preparation for leading the children of Israel.

We see other transitions in scripture. Paul's transition from persecutor to preacher. The disciples of Jesus go through a season of change as they transition from being humble fishermen to becoming fishers of men. And the story of Joseph as he transitions from being a prisoner in Egypt to becoming the Prime Minister of Egypt. One consistent theme I see in all of these transitions is that the God of Heaven was with each one as they went through the changes. That same God is faithful to be with us today in our season of transitions.

In my own life, I expected to be immersed in the Corporate world until my retirement. I owned a printing company for 25 years, never dreaming of a transition. I was completely unaware that running a business with employees, deadlines, financial decisions, etc etc, was actually God's way of training me to be the Pastor of the Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church.

We know that God has plans for each of us to transition into His disciples as we stay connected to God in prayer and the Word. *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."* Proverbs 3:5,6

Steve Bietz, Pastor, Morganton Seventh day Adventist Church.



Founding Fathers and other Influencing Citizens.
How They Served Our Country
—Dr. John Witherspoon

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.

On February 5, 1723, John Witherspoon was born in Yester, Scotland. Being a prodigy, John was reading at four and started college at 13. He graduated with a master's degree at 16 from the University of Edinburgh and his doctorate at 23 from the University of St. Andrews.

Witherspoon, being a charismatic minister, was persuaded by several Founding Fathers that he was needed as the president of the College of New Jersey, now Princeton University. Even though John and his wife initially resisted, they sailed to America in 1768. During his tenure, John wanted Princeton to be a premier university. As a result, Witherspoon made changes, including scholarships for the poor, and community involvement, expanded the curriculum, and taught all students to be ideal and notable leaders. For example, John personally mentored James Madison, who helped shaped the United States Constitution and became the fourth United States President.

Witherspoon loved America from the moment he arrived and educated students about democracy. As a new member of Congress in June 1776, John voted for independence and was “the only clergyman to sign the Declaration of Independence.”

When the Revolutionary War reached the campus, Witherspoon suspended classes. The British burned the University, including the library, destroying many of Whitherspoon's scholarly works. This tormented John, but not compared to the anguish from his son's death at the Battle of Germantown.

Witherspoon forged ahead while rebuilding the University and participated in the convention that endorsed the United States Constitution. In addition, John was active on many committees, including one that recognized New Jersey as the third state.

During the next several years, John's wife died. He later remarried and took on additional duties such as criminal justice reform, vital statistics, and the cause to abolish slavery.

During his life, Witherspoon saw success and strife. He oversaw building a renowned university, educated judges including the Supreme Court, congressmen, a vice-president, and his student, the fourth president of the United States, James Madison. Another milestone was Princeton hosting the Continental Congress, where the Peace Treaty of 1783 announced; "America as an Independent nation.” Witherspoon, becoming blind, died at his New Jersey farm on November 15, 1794, at 71. John Witherspoon is saluted as "The man who shaped the men who shaped America”!

Please visit your Charters of Freedom setting in most western North Carolina counties. A Charters of Freedom setting consists of the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. They are on permanent display analogous to the Charters of Freedom in the National Archives, Washington, DC. Please visit our website (FoundationForward.com) to learn more about our existing settings.

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

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



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By Glenda Ward
McDowell County



As the months ahead bring us from summer vacations to the beginning of a new school year and the beginning of our fall season, amid all life’s changing events there is only one thing that remains constant in life. It is our ultimate leader who will never change. “*Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever*” (Hebrews 13:8).

We are not to be carried away with varied and strange teachings of strange doctrines. It is good that the heart is established with grace. Some teachings were that of keeping the Old Testament ceremonial laws and rituals as being important for salvation. However, these laws were useless for overcoming a person’s evil thoughts and desires (see also Colossians 2:23). The laws could influence conduct, but they could not change the heart. Lasting changes in the conduct of a person begin when the Holy Spirit lives in each person’s heart. However, New Christians should not expect instant maturity in Christianity. Although we have a new nature, we don’t automatically have all good thoughts and attitudes when we first become a new person in Christ. But, if we keep listening to God’s leadership and guidance, we will be changing all the time.

As you look over the last year, what changes for the better have you seen in your thought process and attitudes? Change may be slow, but your life will change significantly if you trust God to change your life. No keeping of laws or rules will earn you salvation. The Good News is that God reaches down to man and we respond. Man-made religions focus on human effort; Christianity focuses on Christ’s work. Our salvation depends on the power of Christ’s death and resurrection. Following a long list of religious rules can make a person appear moral, but religious rules cannot change a person’s heart. Only the Holy Spirit can do that. True Christian behavior – putting on the new nature by accepting Christ and regarding the old nature as dead; we change our moral and ethical behavior by letting Christ live within us so that He can shape us into what we should be. The Christian’s real home is where Christ lives (see John 14:2-3). We are to set our affection on things above and look at life from God’s perspective and seek what He desires. By seeking what God desires, we have the power to break free of our obsession with worldly pleasures.

Act now with a change in heart established with grace to be prepared for Christ’s return. Christ gives us the power to live for Him now, and He gives us hope for the future – He will return.

We are to remember that Christ is always the same and will judge every teaching according to the gospel of God’s Word. Jesus Christ is the anchor to our soul – the very One who secures for us the eternal hope of heaven and steadies us while the world seems to be on such shaky ground. As Christians, we should share our heartwarming and beautiful reflections on the steadfastness of Jesus Christ in our lives.

You are never alone – Jesus will never fail or desert you. Pray for an overwhelming sense of peace and confidence as you face changes that may come your way this season. Jesus is a steadfast companion, loyal and true, the same yesterday, today, and forever.

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.

Well Done
By Regina McIntosh
Yancey County



I ask God to help me
When I can’t seem to pray
The sorrows are all around me
I just don’t know what to say

I ask God to show me
When I can’t find the way
Darkness compels me
To seek out the light of day

I ask God to guide me
When I’m lonely and afraid
Fear is like a monster
To discourage and dissuade

I ask God to relieve me
When I’m feeling so much pain
Heartaches are distressing
There seems to be nothing but rain

I ask God to accept me
When I’m unworthy of His mercy
Forgiveness is my yearning
Worries bring so much controversy

I ask God to protect me
When I’m restless and uneasy
Troubled by the darkest dread
Repulsed so I’m feeling queasy

I ask God to never leave me
When I’m not sure what to expect
Discouragement is all around
Reminding my heart of its defect

I ask God to always love me
When I feel so unlovable, so forlorn
Like I can’t make it here
In a world where I cry and mourn

I ask God to answer my prayers
When I need grace to survive
The tests of life, the darkest times
So that I can live and thrive

I ask God to always abide
When I can’t see the light
Shadows of despair surround me
Raining down like the dark night

I ask God to fill me
When I need love so alive
That I will always give away

Love that will delight, revive

I ask God for His Son
When I knew He was the only One
Who could truly make a way
To hear the words, “Well done!”



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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Todd's Techy Tips

Smartphones Will Send Your Soul to Hell!

By Todd Abraham
Athens, Tennessee



It's hard to imagine I've been writing this article for 8 years now! Of all the different articles and information we've shared over the years, the one true constant article that is in every issue of Heartbeat Christian News is Todd's Techy Tips. Why? Because God gives me the content for it every single issue and it's critical to anyone who wants to go to be with the Lord forever after they die. It may seem redundant but very necessary for me to tell you that smartphones are the number 1 idol in the world today. And what I'm about to write is going to punch some of you in the proverbial face but you need to hear it! And no, I do not have a smartphone in case you were wondering.

Smartphones will send your soul to Hell! Idolatry is a violation of one of the ten commandments. That hasn't and never will change. If your smartphone is an idol to you then you either know it, have known it and, either way, God won't tolerate it; period! If you are currently conscious of the fact that it is an idol to you, then you have space to repent and change your ways and get rid of it. Don't even begin to tell God that you can't live without it, because that is a bold-faced lie. If the Lord has convicted you of the idolatry of that wicked little device in the past and you pushed past that to the point that it's still an idol but you don't feel convicted of it, you are in a very dangerous place, my friend. You are in a place spiritually of grave consequences because God may have turned you over to a reprobate mind. A Christian who has been turned over to a reprobate mind is wrong but God allows them to think they are right in their own eyes. And, unless God gives you repentance, you will die and go to Hell thinking you are right up to the point when you draw that last breath.

Let me be bold as a lion here. Proverbs 28:1 *"The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion."* If you say you can't live without a smartphone, you are a liar. If your smartphone is your idol and to most, it is, including those who call themselves Christians, you are an idolater. Revelation 21:8 *"But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."* God doesn't accept any excuses for sin and disobedience; only repentance. To repent means to change your ways. You cannot lie to God. He knows your every thought, and intention and your conscience is the voice of God inside you. God is fed up with all these Christians thinking they are fooling Him when the whole time, they bask in that little idol. God hates idolatry! People lived for thousands of years without those stupid little devices. It is Satan's chief form of freewill mind control and the chief weapon he is going to use to control the world.

Galatians 6:7 *"Be not deceived; God is NOT mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."* Psalm 90:8 *"Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance."* You aren't hiding anything from God friend. Despite all that easy greasy grace being preached by all these false, man-made preachers out here, God ain't changed a bit! He's still the strict, obedience-demanding God He always has been and that won't ever change. And if you think I'm blowing smoke friend, you better ask yourself this question. If God is the One who called and ordained me to do this newspaper with no formal training or experience in the newspaper business at all. And if this newspaper is successful for nearly 9 years and God confirms the Word that I preach through it with signs following. And if God hears and answers my prayers and that is confirmed by others besides myself. Don't you think you oughta listen to what I have to say? God is about to put a hurting on this whole smartphone industry before the end comes so people will be forced to make a conscious choice between smartphones and idolatry or forever in heaven with God!

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

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Shelter from the Storm

By Steve Carter
Tupelo, Mississippi

Along with a couple of hundred other endurance athletes, I rode my bicycle out of Billings into the brisk Montana sunrise. During a morning of anxious glancing into my mirror, I saw whipping grass and heard distant thunder closing in behind me! Having ridden in the rain all I cared anything about, I picked up the pace and sprinted twenty miles on into camp.

“Camp” turned out to be a sports complex that included a football field and baseball diamond. I hustled to set up my tent, then ran for the showers! After getting cleaned up, a gust of wind knocked me backward a time or two while I fought my way to the food line. Just as I grabbed my chow, the skies opened up and pandemonium ruled! I saw bikers headed for a shelter of any kind. I glimpsed people diving under the equipment truck, while others crawled beneath tents. In desperation, a few soaking wet people ran in three directions at once, nearly colliding with each other and making no progress at all! While dodging flying trash cans, plates of food, and unsecured tents, I laughed as real skinny bikers raced to the four corners of the earth chasing their gear.

I turned a circle looking for a place to eat and noticed several bikers running up a slight hill towards an enclosed building. Trying to save my meal, I sprinted after them, two steps at a time, into a room that had chairs and tables set up. Soon, joining a flock of drenched bikers with their wet food, in walked a party of well-dressed people. We quickly noticed refreshments and decorations setting on a counter and realized we had “crashed” a family reunion! Not wanting to impose, I quickly finished my meal and bounced back down the steps looking for another place of refuge from this Montana monsoon.

Still hungry and finding no room under the trucks, I spied a baseball dugout and ran into it like a shortstop who had just let the winning run slip through his glove! A few enterprising souls, including a fellow Mississippian, had snagged a box of chocolate eclairs and a large canister of hot chocolate for moral support. In the true spirit of “Brothers of the Road,” they invited me to partake in their stash. Being the friendly type, I sugar-loaded with the rest of the refugees, while watching things fly by!

After, the storm settled down several bikers had to backtrack in a support van to retrieve rides they had abandoned on the roadside. I mean, think about it. Tossing a touring bicycle into a ditch is not a good thing. But when you and your bicycle both end up in a ditch, compliments of a bolt of lightning, things are much worse! While those 10-15 hapless souls played “where did I toss my bike?” the Good Samaritans among us helped put camp back together.

Following a good night’s sleep, I crawled from my sleeping bag expecting to find some of yesterday’s misery hanging around. However, a beautiful blue Montana greeted me and after changing a flat tire (typical), I hit the road with a five-mph tail wind helping me along.

On this day I rode alone for safety’s sake on the narrow road that didn’t have a “bikers’ lane.” Suddenly an R.V. zoomed by so close that the only thing between him and my arm was a jacket. His turbulence almost knocked me over! Going down would have led to either being crushed beneath his wheels or bounced down the roadside, both of which could have killed me! I thought this bozo had not seen me, but it turned out he had tried to run me off the road! Rider conversion at the next rest stop told of this lunatic buzzing everyone, so we put the Montana State Troopers on his trail and heard nothing else from him.

Dodging rain, blazing heat, lunatic drivers, lost bicycles and the occasional leaking tent are to be expected when on this type of adventure. All this stuff fades quickly in the overall scheme of things and they don’t usually send us scampering to God for shelter. My life experience taught me it’s the unexpected, life-defining trials that either send us running to God or cause us to completely cave in under their weight. Pay attention to what I’m saying here my friends, some of this is likely headed your way!

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and crippling injuries are just a couple of things first responders suffer from. Our servicepeople, at times, are left mentally scarred, because, unlike Jesus, medical professionals can only help, rather than completely heal their sometimes-unseen wounds.

Families are left wondering “what could I have done,” in the wake of a loved one’s suicide, a broken marriage, or wayward children. The heartbreak of standing vigil by a hospital bed watching a beloved wife slip away. These and other “life-crushing events,” are usually more than partially committed believers can hold up under.

Even the “sheltered” among us, myself included, cannot comprehend the agony of parents who lost children to a deranged gunman in a Texas school or family eating lunch in an Indiana shopping mall. With Jesus, it is horrific to deal with, without Him, impossible.

Those who fail to draw close to the comfort only Jesus can offer, carry agony they were not intended to bear and cannot endure.

Shelter from the Storm-Join me there.

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

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Evergreen Church

Potter and Clay
By John McCoury
Roan Mt., Tennessee



This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: “Go down to the potter's house, and there I will give you my message. So I went down to the potter's house, and I saw him working at the wheel. But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him.” Jeremiah 18:1-4 We have talked about the many things God uses to teach his people, these remarkable visual aids which appear from time to time in this book whereby God imparts lessons to this prophet. Jeremiah was sent down to the potter's house, and there he saw three simple things, conveying to him a fantastic lesson. You may have observed the same things that Jeremiah did, for the art of making a pot has not changed through the centuries. The wheel is now turned by an electric motor, but that is about the only difference. Even this is still controlled by the foot of the potter. The clay is the same as it has always been. The potter is the same, with his capable hands, working to mold and shape the clay into the vessel he has in mind. What did Jeremiah see in this lesson? First, there was the clay. Jeremiah knew, as he watched the potter shaping and molding the clay, that he was looking at a picture of himself, of every man, and every nation. We are the clay. Both Isaiah and Zechariah, in the Old Testament, join with Jeremiah in presenting this picture of the potter and the clay.

In the New Testament, we have the voice of Paul in that great passage in Romans 9, reminding us that God is the Potter and we are the clay. So Jeremiah saw the clay being shaped and molded into a vessel. Then some imperfection in the clay spoiled it in the potter's hand, and the potter crumbled it up and began anew the process of shaping it into a vessel that pleased him. Jeremiah saw the wheel turning constantly, bringing the clay against the potter's hand. That wheel stands for the turning circumstances of our life, under the control of the Potter, for it is the potter's foot that guides the wheel. The lesson is clear. As our life is being shaped and molded by the Great Potter, it is the circumstances of our life that bring us again and again under the potter's hand, under the pressure of the molding fingers of the Potter, so that He shapes the vessel according to His will. Then, Jeremiah saw the potter. God, he knew, was the Great Potter, with absolute right over the clay to make it what he wanted it to be. Paul argues this with keen and clear logic in Romans 9: “Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, Why did you make me like this? Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for special purposes and some for common use?” (Romans 9:20b-21) Of course, he has. The vessel is shaped according to the image in the potter's mind. So Jeremiah, by watching, learned that an individual or a nation is clay in the Great Potter's hands. He has a sovereign right to make it what He wants it to be. He has the skill and design to work with the clay and to bring it to pass. If there is some imperfection in the clay, something which mars the design and spoils the work, the potter simply crushes the clay down to a lump and begins again to make it yet a vessel according to His own mind.

Thank you, Father, for creating me and shaping me. I trust that you are sovereign in all that you do and that your purpose for me is good. What are three principles we may learn from the visual aid of potter and vessel? Are we learning to be grateful for the Potter's molding of our earthly vessels?

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



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

Crossword Solution

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Family of God Fellowship

When Is It Okay to Be Snarly?

By Dr. James L. Snyder
Ocala, Florida



Normally, whatever normal means, I don't get agitated by many things. I can keep my cool under the most bizarre circumstances. Nothing gets under my skin, and I can take everything with a grin.

I can't remember the last time I lost my temper and got mad. I've been married for over 50 years, so I have experienced everything that I possibly can experience. After making it through these many years of marital bliss, I can handle anything.

My week was going rather well, and I was close to completing my projects for the week. Then about halfway through the week, things began to go awry. I was getting behind on my projects, and I didn't think I would ever catch up.

I like to have my work done on time, and I work very hard to do just that. But for some reason, I lost the rhythm of my work, and it wasn't going like I would like it to go. So I must say, I was getting agitated for the first time in a long time.

It was a moment of frustration as I tried to unwind from some of the problems that had developed in my projects. In the middle of that, the telephone rang.

For a moment, I thought of not answering the phone and just letting it ring. If it was something important, they would leave a message, and I could get back to them.

For some reason, my autopilot kicked in, and without much thought, I answered the phone.

"The warranty on your car is just about to expire," the person on the phone said. Then he began the long speech about what he could do to renew my auto warranty.

When I came to, I realized it was some kind of a scam, so I told him I wasn't interested and then hung up the phone.

It wasn't going very well, and I couldn't straighten out the problem, but I thought I was close. It took me much longer, and I didn't know what else to do.

Then the telephone rang again. I tried not to answer, but in my state of mind at the time, I wasn't in control, and I automatically answered the phone.

The person on the phone was introducing me to my updated Medicare options. At first, I couldn't follow what he was talking about. Instead, my mind was focused on the projects I was working on.

According to the person on the phone, all I had to do was answer a few questions, and they could sign me up for additions to my Medicare at no cost to me.

I replied as calmly as possible and told him I was not the least bit interested in what he had to offer. Then I hung up the phone and went back to my job.

It took me a few moments to get back into my routine and sort out some problems I was having. I still couldn't figure out what was wrong.

Then the telephone rang. Again!

At this point, my agitation level was beginning to rise. It's been a long time since I've experienced this kind of thing.

As I answered the phone, the person on the other end asked me a whole lot of questions about my health. Do you have diabetes? Do you have arthritis? Do you have pain in your back? And he went on and on and on.

I asked why he was so interested in my physical well-being, and he said that it was part of Medicare and he wanted to ensure I had all the coverage I deserved. "Why are you calling me now?" I said as angrily as I could control.

"I am just responding to your inquiry online." When he said that, something flipped in my head.

At that point, I let loose all my snarly attitudes at the time. I was at the point where I could not control my snarlyitis. I gave him a piece of my mind that I hadn't used in a long time.

I angrily hung up the phone, turned around, and there was The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage looking at me with both hands on her hips.

"You sure had a snarly attitude on that phone call. Who in the world were you talking to?"

I then explained the phone calls I had been getting that had disrupted my working environment that morning. "I think they are all scams," I explained to her.

That brought me to a point of wondering when it is okay to be snarly. After all, I did not call them; they called me. And they called me about something I had no interest in whatsoever. And they kept calling me.

As far as I know, this situation was the perfect situation to express a snarly attitude. I don't always have such situations, so I'm an amateur when it comes to being snarly.

Thinking about this it occurred to me that sometimes people need to be responded to with a snarly attitude.

I then remembered what Jesus said in John 8:44, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."

Sometimes people just need to hear the truth.

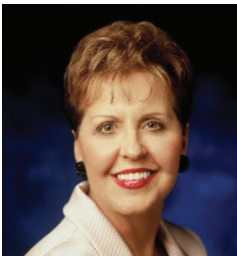
Dr. James L. Snyder is pastor of the Family of God Fellowship, 1471 Pine Road, Ocala, FL 34472. He lives with his wife in Silver Springs Shores. Call him at 352-687-4240 or e-mail jamesnyder2@att.net. The church web site is www.whatafellowship.com

Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Matthew 9:37

Enjoying Everyday Life

How You Can Have a Perfect Heart

By Joyce Meyer



Your heart is the most important part of you. It's not only a physical organ that keeps your blood pumping, but when the Bible refers to the heart, it's talking about who you really are. Each person has an inner and outer life. There's the person we show to everybody around us and the part of us that only God can see, the part He really cares about.

The Bible tells us to have a perfect heart. Matthew 5:48 (NIV) says, *"Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect."* If you're a perfectionist, this is a scary verse, because it's a struggle to always try to be perfect. But this is not what it means to be perfect, according to Scripture.

The Amplified Bible translation of Matthew 5:48 says, *"...Be perfect [growing into spiritual maturity both in mind and character; actively integrating godly values into your daily life], as your heavenly Father is perfect."* A person with a perfect heart is someone who loves God and always wants to grow.

What God Is Really Looking For

Second Chronicles 16:9 (NIV) says, *"For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him."* This verse doesn't say that God can only work through those who are perfect but through those who are *"fully committed to him."*

Just as we don't have to make ourselves perfect before we come to Christ (which we couldn't do anyway), we don't need to behave perfectly in every area of our life before God will work in us and through us. When I first started teaching a home Bible study years ago, I wore short shorts and smoked while I taught the Word, sitting on my living room floor.

I had a lot of growing to do, but I really loved God and wanted to please Him. He met me right where I was and worked with me to get me where I needed to be. I'll always have room to grow in my walk with Christ while I'm on this earth, and I'm so thankful that God keeps working in me and through me on every level of my journey, every day of my life.

How Committed Are You?

A person with a perfect heart is someone who loves God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength, and who is fully committed to Him. The question is: What areas of your life have you been holding back from God? Have you been giving Him your time, praying, and studying the Word? Do you give of yourself to others, helping to meet their needs as you're able? Are you managing your finances the way God wants you to, living within your means, saving, spending, and giving as He puts it on your heart to do so?

It's important to remember that whatever God asks us to do, it's always for our good. Initially, it may feel sacrificial, to give up things we like or want. But as we obey God, we find later on that there was so much more we didn't even know about, and what God wanted was much better for us in the long run.

More than anything else, the Bible says God wants us to love Him (Luke 10:27), and love sacrifices and obeys. The more we love Jesus, the easier it is to obey and trust Him, because when you really love someone, you want to please them and make them happy. What makes God happy is helping you do anything that will give you a better life.

Give Your Heart a Self-examination

It's possible to appear to be doing one thing while your heart is somewhere else. You can smile and act like you're good on the outside, while on the inside, it's a different story. I remember times when I was in church, singing "I Surrender All" with my hands in the air, and thinking, "If Dave thinks I'm cooking something for him today, he's got another thing coming."

We all need to have a meeting with ourselves once in a while to examine what's really in our hearts. In Mark 7:15, Jesus says, *"Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them."* This verse makes it clear that it's what comes out of a person's heart that really matters.

My goal with this message is to help you make a committed decision to love God with all of your heart and to fall in love with Him more and more every day. As you do, you'll discover how it's the key to having a heart that's more like His...a perfect heart.

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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Was Jesus Successful?

By Dan Quorollo
Burke County

At first glance, you may dismiss my question as one that is completely irrelevant; however, if we were to apply the same standards by which we judge success to Jesus, we would be forced to conclude that Jesus was unsuccessful.

Success is often wrongly measured by various factors, most of which are tangible in their nature. A successful businessman is often determined based on the assets he possesses. This may include the financial well-being of the company as well as his own personal finances. Often, a businessman’s success may be seen in the house he lives in, the cars he drives, or the things he possesses. Incidentally, these things are not automatically wrong; however, they are the basis by which success is often gauged.

Religious leaders often define success by the following they have acquired. A pastor who builds a large church is suddenly the expert on church growth; while the pastor of a small, rural church is thought to know little about church growth. Those who build a large church may write a book that is then accepted by many as the standard by which they too can be successful.

Students and teachers are often judged by their grades. A student who makes good grades is sure to make it in life; on the other hand, the student who struggles with less than average grades is tragically overlooked and often regarded as one who will not make it.

Our culture often defines success by tangible standards. These standards include such things as bank accounts, possessions, associations, and a host of other standards. Are these really the standards by which our lives are to be judged?

One would be foolish and wrong to conclude that Jesus was unsuccessful or that He had somehow failed in His mission. However, if we were to judge the life of Jesus by today’s standards of success, He would be unsuccessful. Jesus had no earthly possessions; He said that He did not even have a place to lay His head (Luke 9:58). He was buried in a borrowed tomb and had no descendants to carry on His legacy. The tunic, which was a seamless garment that was individually tailored, was divided into four pieces by the soldiers during His crucifixion. Thus, if we used the standards of possessions to determine His success, Jesus was unsuccessful.

Consider the following Jesus had. While the initial excitement of His ministry was a sight to see, an offensive message turned the multitudes away (John 6:53-66). He chose twelve men to be His apostles, but one of them betrayed Him. Throughout the ministry of Jesus, His following simply decreased. Is it not tragic that Jesus Himself could not write a book on church growth by today’s standards? My point in this article is not to suggest that Jesus was in any way a failure or unsuccessful; instead, it is to challenge how we define success. The life and example of Jesus define what success truly is: whole-hearted obedience to the will of God. The entire earthly life of Jesus was governed by obedience to the will of the Father (John 4:34). Since Jesus fulfilled this perfectly, He is the ultimate and greatest example of success.

We must not measure ourselves by the world’s standard of success. Those who do so will most likely not be successful in God’s eyes. Our standard of success is evident in our obedience to God’s will. One day, we will be judged by the standard of faithfulness to that very task (1 Corinthians 4:1-3). Let’s determine to measure success by God’s standard.

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



Legislative Risk in Retirement

By Steve Gaito
McDowell County

Legislative risk is stress that everyone in or close to retirement feels. It is the threat that the government will do something that negatively impacts your retirement income. I know this because when I survey attendees of my seminars it is often one of the top three reasons they come to hear me talk. Why would the legislative risk be so high? I think you know why. There are over 30 trillion reasons. Our national debt has risen to an unprecedented level in the past couple of years. The government has a history of taxing what they consider to be wealthy. This definition varies depending on who it is targeted. For example, if you have a million dollars in a retirement account you are considered wealthy. But if you were to use the income safely generated from the account it would be generally between \$35,000 and \$50,000 which most would consider being middle class. This income if it were generated from a qualified account (IRA, 401(k), etc.) would be subject to income taxes and be added to the income from Social Security. This additional taxable income can increase the taxes you pay on your Social Security benefits. So, these distributions impact more taxes than most think. It is important to remember that the government controls the rules, and this is a Legislative Risk. They can change brackets, deductions, credits, exemptions, and how much of your Social Security benefit is taxed.

What if you could take this risk off the table for most of your income? Would that make sense? I believe so. For almost 30 years I have helped people save in these plans. The objective was to save in higher taxed years to withdraw in lower tax years. This has worked well for most, but that will soon change. In 2026 the tax tables and rates revert to old higher tax tables. There are two ways depending on your circumstances to get tax-free income. The simplest way is Roth conversions. I help people maximize the tax brackets to convert and pay taxes now at lower rates to be able to take money out later tax-free. This eliminates most of the legislative risk down the road. The challenge is that the government still controls the rules that govern Roth IRA plans and like in recent legislative proposals they had Roth IRAs included in required minimum distribution calculations. This effectively would have forced withdrawal from Roth accounts and had money now subject to capital gains taxes. You can see that the government is always looking for ways to get more of your money. The other way is by using dare I say Life Insurance. Life insurance has always been a great source of tax-free income for the wealthy, but with the introduction of Indexed Universal Life and Survivor Indexed Universal Life, it provides a very attractive alternative to a Roth IRA. You still must withdraw money from the qualified accounts, but once it is in the policy it becomes a great source of tax-free income and provides great estate benefits should you not need the income. Best of all because it is a contract between you and the insurance company it is not subject to the same legislative risk. The government may limit these in the future, but because they are individual contracts it would be difficult to legislate across the board.

If you would like to see an analysis of what each of these strategies looks like for you let me know. I am happy to schedule a free no obligation initial meeting. Contact my assistant Morgan Wylie at either morgan.wylie@retirerm.com or give her a call to schedule a time. (828) 559-0299

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



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By Steve Parker
Catawba County

For the past two months, I’ve been writing about the subject of forgiveness and how important it is for Christian discipleship. In June, I explored how our failure to forgive can hinder us from experiencing the fullness of Christ’s forgiveness, including all the blessings that come with the cleansing of our sins. In July, I put forth the idea that we may often be carrying unforgiveness but calling it something else, such as righteous indignation or justified anger. When this happens, we are unknowingly giving the devil a foothold in our life, which he uses to build strongholds, fortresses from which he can engage in spiritual warfare to turn us away from God. Because of this, when we choose to forgive, we are making room for the Holy Spirit to drive away spiritual darkness and bring Christ-like transformation to our inner world.

This month, I want to look at an example from the recent history of how embracing the radical forgiveness of the cross can not only powerfully change individual life, but can actually transform the world! Think back with me to the atrocity of the AME Zion church shooting in Charleston, SC.

On June 17, 2015, white supremacist Dylann Roof killed nine African-American members of the Emmanuel AME-Zion Church while attending their Wednesday night Bible study. As one would expect, news channels, newspapers, and social media devoted massive resources to providing coverage of this horrific event. The entire country was shocked by this violent display of racial bigotry and hatred.

Two days later, however, the country was shocked again, when the relatives of those who died were asked to speak at Roof’s first court appearance. What follows is from the article that appeared on the front page of the July 20 edition of The State, South Carolina’s largest newspaper. Taking up most of the page, the article’s headline read: “‘I forgive you.’ Victims’ families offer forgiveness, not condemnation, to suspect in Charleston church murders.” The opening paragraph read:

“One by one, the family members of slain Emanuel AME Church faced their loved ones’ suspected killer head on, and rather than condemning him, they offered their forgiveness. As the relatives spoke out during 21-year-old Dylann Roof’s initial bond hearing Friday, they expressed hope for his redemption and promised to pray for his soul through a tearful round of family sentiment.”

Nadine Collier, daughter of 70-year-old murder victim Ethel Lance was among the family members quoted on that front page: ‘You took something very precious from me,’ she said. “I will never talk to her again. I will never, ever hold her again. But I forgive you. And have mercy on your soul.”

Years later, these same relatives would publicly share how these acts of radical forgiveness gave them a deep and abiding peace while drawing them closer to Christ at the time those events unfolded. But what I want to note here is the impact that an event like this can have even on non-Believers: Christ-like forgiveness makes the world stop and take notice. Just as the shooting had been front page news, forgiveness also made the front page. Usually, those headlines are reserved for events that are shocking, impactful, or unexpected. This qualified as all three.

However, deep forgiveness not only gets people’s attention, but it also has the power to transform governments and societies. The film Emmanuel documents the events following the shooting, and reports that leaders of the Black Lives Matter movement were drawn to Charleston by the tragedy and planned to launch massive protests. Those plans changed when they heard that the families had forgiven the shooters. BLM activist Muhiyidin D’Baha says in the film, “Immediately, as an organizer, it was just like... ‘that’s the nail in the coffin man. We aren’t going to be able to mobilize.’”

However, amazingly enough, one of the results of the shooting was something that many civil rights activists had been trying to accomplish for decades. Moved by the tragedy and appalled at pictures of murderer Dylann Roof posing with the Confederate flag before the massacre, South Carolina legislators, led by Republican Governor Nikki Haley, voted overwhelmingly to remove that same flag from above the state capitol.

Would that have happened if the protests had taken place? Perhaps, but not necessarily. Quite possibly, defiant legislators would have refused to give in to violent demands. What seems to have happened, however, is that the power of forgiveness created an atmosphere that cleared the way for the flag to come down. South Carolina is a different place today because those who were grievously sinned against chose forgiveness over vengeance. They embraced the great grace that had been given to them through the cross of Christ and chose to be channels of that grace for a city that desperately needed to see it. They were changed, and their world was changed, for the better.

Radical forgiveness brings about radical change. The question is, are God’s people ready to embrace this power to transform the world?

Steve Parker is the Executive Director at FOCHUS and founder and former Publisher of Blue Ridge Christian News.



The Bad News Bears

By Kurt Bomar
Avery County

Do you ever wonder why so many enjoy watching movies like the Bad News Bears, The Sandlot, The Replacements, The Mighty Ducks, Little Giants and so many others of that genre?

It’s because the story is the same. It’s generally about a group of rag-tag losers who team up with a coach that believes in them and somehow they find a way to win the big game. We love that.

That’s why the story of Israel is so compelling. For the last 3500 years or so they have been the rag-tag team that the whole world has been relentlessly attacking. They should have been wiped out centuries ago, yet they’re still here. How have they done it? They’ve got a great coach. He made a promise to their charter member (Abraham) a long time ago, “I will make you into a great nation”. So who gets the glory? The Coach.

He made another promise to the Church, “But ye [are] a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” 1Peter 2:9.

We got chosen on the team too. The exciting thing is that the more awkward or insignificant we are, the greater glory our coach gets. He seems to like that.

So instead of whining or complaining that we aren’t as talented, wealthy, or good-looking as others, we should rejoice that in living our lives as “losers” we have a better chance of bringing glory to our coach than anybody else. Paul noticed this too. “Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth.” 1 Cor. 1:26.

In other words, God generally uses people just like us. Let’s live our lives to give glory to Him.

Selah (think about it)

Kurt Bomar is pastor of Walnut Grove Church.



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Something to Think About

What Does Your Name Mean?

By Dennis Love
McDowell County



The name Benedict Arnold will always be associated with treason and betrayal. He was a general in the American Continental Army who fought the British during the Revolutionary War. But in 1780, Benedict Arnold defected and turned his back on George Washington. He then became a spy for the British and plotted a siege against West Point. Throughout history, when people hear the name Benedict Arnold, the first word that comes to mind is the word traitor.

This is also how people remember Judas Iscariot. Although he was a follower, friend, and disciple of Jesus Christ, Judas committed an act of high treason and became a traitor. The Bible calls him a traitor in Luke 6:16. When Luke gives us the names of the chosen 12 disciples of Jesus, he says in Luke 6:16; “*And Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor.*”

The Greek word for traitor means “to give over or surrender to the enemy.” Although the name Judas will forever be associated with treason, this is not what his name originally meant. The Hebrew name for Judas comes from the word “Judah” and it means “to praise.” But no one will ever remember that, because Judas blew it big time.

No matter what your name is, it is very important. My name is Dennis, and it means “follower of Dionysus.” In Greek mythology, Dionysus was the son of Zeus. He was also the god of fertility and wine. Now to me, that is not important at all. I have no interest at all in Greek mythology and the gods of the Greeks. They were pagan, and I’m a born-again Christian with a new name. My name is a child of the Most High God.

However, my earthly name is very important. Why? Because what other people think of me when they hear my name mentioned does matter. When people think of your name or hear your name mentioned, what does it mean to them? Do words like, “Considerate, Thoughtful, Generous, Sincere, Friendly, Trustworthy, Reliable, Caring, Cheerful, Kind, and Loving, come to mind?”

What does your name mean to God, the One who knows us by name, and the One who knows us better than we know ourselves? If it means anything other than “My Child” then it is high time to change the meaning of your name! The Good News is God can change your name, and give you a new name the instant you call out to Him, and trust Him as your personal Lord and Savior.

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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The Meek

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



Jesus of Nazareth sat on a little hillside overlooking the Sea of Galilee and spoke some surprising Kingdom principles. That discourse is recorded in Matthew 5 and is known as the Sermon on the Mount. He first spoke about the poor in spirit. He called for them to recognize that they are poverty-stricken, helpless, and hopeless without God. He invited them to hear His claim of Lordship over their lives. And He compelled them to respond by faith to His message of forgiveness and salvation. He desired that they, just as all of us today, give our hearts and lives to Him as Savior, Lord, and Master.

Jesus then drew attention to those who would mourn. He challenged them to become fully aware of the consequences of sin. He asked them to see the horror and devastating effects of sin—and mourn! He desired that they, as all of humanity, grieve, weep and cry out to God in sorrow over sin and rebellion. He called them to repentance and promised them forgiveness, cleansing, and reconciliation. He promised them a new, everlasting relationship built upon grace, mercy, and love, rather than good works or keeping the law.

The Lord continued as He spoke about a third “Kingdom” principle. He pronounced that those who are meek, humble, and gentle, will inherit the earth. *“Blessed are the gentle, for they will inherit the earth.”* (Matthew 5:5) What a startling statement to hear for all of those listening who had experienced the ravages of oppression and occupation. They had seen the harsh, inhuman treatment of the Roman soldiers. We, too, have witnessed the horrors of unrestrained evil in these past months through the pictures coming out of the country of Ukraine. Jesus’ listeners knew it first hand. They had labored under the strict, weighty expectations of the law placed upon them by their own religious leaders. They had suffered from abuses and injustices perpetrated by the power structures of their own civil and religious societies, as well as the occupying Romans. They knew that gnawing sense of helplessness and hopelessness and most had become downcast and downtrodden, looking for peace and deliverance.

Suddenly, and with great authority, Jesus declared that those who are gentle and meek will inherit the earth. That sounds preposterous, unthinkable, unreasonable, and just plain ridiculous! After all, doesn’t human reason and history tell us that it’s the go-getters and the over-ambitious who inherit most of what’s around them? But Jesus insists that in His Father’s Kingdom, it won’t be like the world around them. He declares that those who are meek and gentle will inherit the world. To really understand what Jesus means it is necessary to look at the deeper meaning of the Greek word Jesus used in this statement. It is *prais* (πραῖς). That word is the classical Greek word which is translated as “meekness.” But it just so happens to be the very same word that was used to describe war horses. Yes, you heard that right—war horses. The Hebrews had seen the Roman war horses all around them. They knew of their power and ruggedness. The writers of the YouVersion devotional, “Salt and Shiny,” point out, “These horses were born and bred for military purposes and so were always battle-ready and very powerful. In addition to this raw strength, they were highly trained and extremely obedient.” It is important to note that associated with the whole idea of “meekness” is an underlying foundation of strength, training, obedience, and power. Loosely translated, the kind of meekness that Jesus is teaching about is “power under control.” The meek are not the weak or cowardly of this world. They are those who place their simple, yet deep and profound trust in the Lord and His goodness and mercy. They are those, says Dr. Frank Stagg (The Broadman Bible Commentary, Vol. 8, p. 105), “who under the pressures of life have learned to bend their wills and to set aside their own notions as they stand before the greatness and grace of God... They are characterized by humble trust rather than arrogant independence.”

Don’t you see! The world has got it wrong! The world is trying to rely upon its own strength, wisdom, and power—and that cannot stand before Almighty, Holy, Omnipotent, and Sovereign God! Only those who stand before the Lord as servants of the Most High God will truly inherit all of the heavenly blessings and promises of God. And that can only be accomplished through humble, childlike faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Meekness isn’t weakness! Meekness isn’t fragility or lacking of strength. The mind, heart, and character of meekness are all about the kind of faith and strength that comes in recognizing that: we are children of God; that He cares for us; that we are totally dependent upon His mercy and grace; and that we have all of His power and authority available to us in order to accomplish His plans and purposes. We also have the strength of discipline that allows us to respond in love; rather than in anger or fear.

Jesus, the Son of God, was declaring that those who practiced these “Kingdom” principles would be supremely blessed. They would have the Spirit of the Lord fall upon them and they would experience the fullness of the Lord’s grace, mercy, and love. They would inherit the fullness of God’s blessings—both here on earth and in eternity. Blessed are the *prais*, for they will inherit the earth! Amen!

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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Obedient Heart Fellowship

Many Such Things

By Jim Huskins
McDowell County



Pharisees and Torah scholars criticized Jesus for allowing His disciples to eat bread without first practicing a hand washing ritual not found in Scripture. He responded by calling them hypocrites and quoting Isaiah 29:13: *“This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”*

He then quoted Exodus 20:12 and 21:17. These Torah commands require us to respect and care for our father and mother. The Pharisees invented a loophole which they called Corban. This Hebrew word means “given to God.” A man could declare that all his possessions were Corban. He retained and controlled everything as before, but because his property now belonged to God, he was supposedly not able to help his parents.

Every hostile exchange between Jesus and those religious leaders resulted from Him confronting their man-made teachings. They had rules against healing on the Sabbath, carrying a sleeping mat on Sabbath, traveling more than a certain distance on Sabbath, using mud made with spittle as a healing salve, and plucking and eating grains of wheat or barley on Sabbath. Their hand washing ceremony is almost comical. In Mark 7:13, Jesus said that their traditions “make void” the word of God. To emphasize the extent of this behavior he added, *“And many such things you do.”*

Perhaps it would be wise for us to “make void” the Word of God. Contradicting the teaching and example of Jesus may prove advantageous in a culture controlled by people who despise everything Godly. The rapid spread of the anti-God agenda is a core topic of a recent book entitled Live Not by Lies: A Manual for Christian Dissidents by Rod Dreher. In chapter four of the book, Dreher explains that major, American corporations have adopted the agenda of the “woke” left. Those companies are using their vast capacity for gathering, analyzing, and manipulating personal information to shape public opinion. On page 75 of the book, Dreher makes this chilling statement: “Woke capitalist branding harnesses the unmatched propaganda resources of the advertising industry to send the message, both explicitly and implicitly: the beliefs of social conservatives and religious traditionalists are obstacles to the social good.”

If Dreher’s analysis is correct, then everything I hold dear is a direct affront to those who now define “progress.” History teaches that totalitarianism always begins by raising doubt about any shared narrative. It always manipulates language in absurd, new ways. It always redefines good and evil. In Genesis 3, the serpent questioned the shared narrative by asking, *“Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’”* He twisted the human’s language by insisting, *“You will not surely die.”* He redefined good and evil by saying, *“God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God.”*

The man and the woman did not cease life function on the day they welcomed sin into their lives, but they initiated the process that would inevitably lead to them returning to dust. Slavery to sin is the ultimate totalitarianism. Sin caused them to be expelled from paradise, barred from the Tree of Life, and kept from direct fellowship with God. This seems a high price for even an exceptional piece of fruit.

Satan’s agenda has never changed. It is not surprising that his modern minions are using those ancient techniques. The “woke” left tells us that America is not and has never been a force for good. They say unborn babies are not human. They tell us that men can become women and that young children should be assisted in “choosing” their gender. They claim that socialism is superior to free-enterprise capitalism because capitalism is “racist” and socialism is “fair.” These lies and many more represent an organized effort to usher soft totalitarianism into modern America.

The “hard” totalitarianism of the Soviets and the Nazis was enforced by fear. The secret police, the gulag, and the concentration camp made effective tools for controlling the populace.

“Soft” totalitarianism is implemented less by fear than by hate. We are told that we must hate our founders, our Constitution, our entire history, and anyone who does not follow the party line. Many who refuse to cooperate find themselves banned from communication forums, publicly disgraced, and deprived of careers. Constitutional rights have been canceled. The radical left is determined to teach everyone to hate each other and to eventually hate themselves.

The woke left is determined to eliminate one of the most repeated messages in Scripture. Here it is from Isaiah 5:20, *“Woe to those who call evil good and good evil.”* Rod Dreher warns that the beliefs of “religious traditionalists” stand as an obstacle to wokeness, but I wonder if that is the case. Jesus came to pay the price for our sin and to call us to lead lives characterized by a hunger and thirst for righteousness. Righteousness is obedience to God. The Bible teaches that sin is bad and righteousness is good. It defines sin as breaking God’s law. (1 John 3:4) Jesus says that The Law will be in full force for as long as heaven and earth remain.

A disturbing number of Church leaders claim that sin no longer matters, that righteousness is an attempt to “earn salvation,” and that God’s Law is an unbearable burden. Modern Christianity teaches “many such things.” The truth is that sin is still an intolerable affront to Holy God. When we enter that saving relationship “by grace through faith,” we have no option but to *“keep the commandments of God and (our) faith in Jesus”* (Revelation 14:12) Perhaps the best way to avoid persecution which will certainly be focused on people who follow Jesus’ example is to maintain association with one of the many groups which teach and practice only that small portion of God’s Word which they find palatable.

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Jim Huskins is pastor of Obedient Heart Fellowship.



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Freedom Life Ministries

By Jim Smith
McDowell County

At Freedom Life, we are gearing up for some awe-some things over the next several months. In August, Heart Cry will release its first official album. The journey of Heart Cry began in 2010. Danny Hampton, after serving over 20 years in church pastoral ministry, was called to serve as a prison chaplain at the Marion Correctional Institution in McDowell County. While serving, God began to move powerfully in the lives of the men serving on the prison ministry worship team in the Marion Correctional's Minimum Security Unit. The worship team began to spend time not only in music practice but in prayer and Bible study.

In November 2012, a nonprofit ministry, called "Freedom Life" was incorporated to minister to the needs of current or formerly incarcerated men and women. The worship team was also granted permission to go outside the prison on ministry concert trips and became known as, "Heart Cry." The group is now comprised of Danny Hampton, Scott Kelley, Melissa Lister, Michael Fox, and Stephen Hampton. "With Me All Along," the title track of the album, is an original song written by member Scott Kelley while in prison. It was the first song Heart Cry learned and performed in concerts when the group was first forming inside the walls of the correctional institution. All of Kelley's original songs included in this project were written while he was in prison.

Through the power of the song, Heart Cry has seen God bring hope to many lives that, because of a deeply broken past and destructive choices, have struggled to believe that they could truly be worth loving. Their songs represent the stories of God's healing love and transformation in their own lives.

Danny Hampton stated, "We hope that God will bring healing and new hope to the lives of so many that are desperate to believe that their lives can be made new, regardless of where or what they have been through. Seeing God's love bring hope to so many lives trapped in hopelessness is what has inspired this project. We pray that

through this project many more lives will find new hope and life through God's love." The album is available for pre-order at: <https://distrokid.com/hyperfollow/heartcry/with-me-all-along> It will be available on August 20th on all digital platforms. CDs will be available for purchase through Freedom Life Ministries

In the fall, plans are underway for a 5k Color Run with a Kids Fun Color Run. This event will be held at the YMCA Campus in Marion. Watch the Freedom Life website and Facebook page for registration information. \$35 Entry Fee for those over 10, \$20 for those 10 and under. This will be a wonderful fun event for our community and families. With registration, you will get a white T-Shirt, runners tag, and medal when you finish! This event will be on October 22nd at 9 am.

A new and upcoming event sponsored by Freedom Life Ministries for the McDowell Community will be "Art, Stories and Chocolate." This creative event will feature reentry and recovery stories of our clients paired with a chocolate sampling from local dessert makers along with artwork created by local artists to reflect on the journey of each client. Clients were asked to participate in this event to share their stories of recovery and reentry. Each client is being paired with a local dessert maker. These chocolatiers were challenged to create a chocolate dessert that was inspired by hearing the client's story. Next, each client was paired with a local artist/craftsman who created a piece of artwork (painting, clay sculpture, drawing, etc) that would reflect the client's walk through the recovery process and where they are today in their recovery and reentry journey. As ticket holders enter the facility, they will have the opportunity to visit each station where they can meet the client and learn more about their journey. In addition, each station will offer a sampling of the inspired chocolate dessert, the artwork display, and the opportunity to bid on the art piece for the silent auction. All artwork created for this event is by local and regional artists and craftsmen. This community event will be Saturday, November 5th at the McDowell Parks & Recreation Center on Academy Street. We are still looking for several dessert makers and artists. If you would like to participate please reach out to Jim Smith at jsmith@freedomlifeministries.org or 828.413.9901



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



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Dave Says

By Dave Ramsey

Dear Dave,

My wife and I have plans to enter the mission field as soon as we have paid off our debt and get a full emergency fund in place. We only have about \$12,000 in credit card debt left, and we don't own a home, but my father does not want this debt to stand in our way. He has offered to pay off the credit cards and make it a loan where we would pay him back over time. It is a tempting offer, but we both feel strange about accepting it. What do you think we should do?

Brandon

Dear Brandon,

Your dad sounds like a generous, good-hearted man. But considering the goal you and your wife have, I want you to think for a minute about the spiritual implications of a situation like this.

Proverbs 22:7 says *"the borrower is slave to the lender."* Now, the Bible doesn't say debt is a sin, but it definitely discourages debt, and it teaches us to live our lives differently than the rest of the world. That's the case when it comes to handling money, too.

If you do this, you'd be turning your dad into your creditor in a very real sense. That's going to make family dinners taste different because you'll be eating with your lender instead of just good old dad. Money has a way of changing the family dynamic, and it's seldom for the good. Suddenly, you're getting raised eyebrows if you buy something for yourself, because even the nicest, most generous folks have opinions.

If it were me, I'd say thanks, but no thanks. There's no way I'd be in financial debt to my dad.

Now, if he were to offer to make paying off your debt a gift — one that was given with no strings attached to help you two get into the mission field quicker — I'd be OK with that, and I'd be deeply grateful and honored.

But I would never tell you to go into debt to a parent. Your dad is probably thinking you should be in debt to him rather than some uncaring bank or credit card company. But I just wouldn't want to do anything that might jeopardize your relationship. — Dave

Dear Dave,

My husband and I are retired. I receive a small pension, and we are both on Medicare and Social Security. We have about \$25,000 left to pay on our mortgage, along with a second mortgage of \$18,000. These are our only debts. We also have a nest egg of \$30,000 set aside, and a small annuity that's worth about \$20,000. Would you recommend paying off our mortgages with our savings? Jane

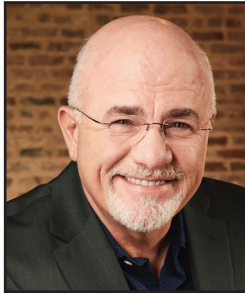
Dear Jane,

If you know me at all, you understand how much I'd love to see everyone in control of their finances and living debt-free. But being broke, even in a house that's paid for, isn't a good idea. Believe me, I understand. The idea of paying off the house and everything is awfully tempting. But if you two did that, you'd be left with very little. To me, that's a scary thought when your small pension—along with Social Insecurity and Medicare—are all you have coming in.

No offense, but your nest egg is kind of small, to begin with, so I don't think I'd be raiding it right now. On the other hand, if you'd told me you had \$400,000 or \$500,000 saved up, I'd tell you to pay off the house and second mortgage today. If you're not doing this already, I'd advise you two to start making and living on a regular monthly budget. Give every dollar a name on paper before the month begins, because if you don't, your money will control you instead of you controlling it. Make sure you're living on less than what's coming in, and hopefully you can devise a plan to have the house and other debt paid off in a few years.

God bless you two! — Dave

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



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God Has the Best Plan

By Steve Williams
Mitchell County



How many people have ever made plans before? There are all kinds of plans. There are Good Plans, there are Better Plans, there are Your Plans, and then there is the Best Plan, and that is God's Plan. Many of us have made plans and changed them time and time again. The Bible says in Prov 14:12, "*Says There is a way which seemeth right unto man but the ways thereof are the way of death.*" Let me share with you a great truth that I have learned: God is Smarter than you & me. Amen! In the book of James 4:13-17 councils men against the foolishness of making plans without consideration for the will of God in the matter. All James is saying is that you and I can make any plans we wish to make, but God always has the final say in the matter. We are addicted to our plans because we are control freaks. We want what we want when we want it and the way we want it. But we need to learn His plans for the situation in our lives and make our plans based on His plans, then we will find out that He had the best plan all along! But, we humans like to make our plans, don't we?

Think about when Peter and the others had fished all night without catching a fish, Jesus told them to go out into the deep water and cast their nets on the other side and they would catch fish, Luke 5:4-8. Peter planned to forget fishing for that night and go home. But, the Lord had a different plan and Peter obeyed the Lord. He found out that God had the best plan. Let me ask you a question. Do you trust the person when you don't like the plan? Peter was tired and ready to go home but Jesus told him to keep fishing. Peter listened to Jesus and he filled his boat up with fish.

Think about this. When Jesus told His disciples that He was going to die, Peter rebuked the Lord, then Jesus rebuked Peter Matt. 16:21-23." *get thee behind me Satan.* " Peter thought he had a good plan and that Jesus shouldn't have to die. Peter saw when Jesus went to the cross and died, paid for sins forever, and rose again, that God had the best plan. Jesus gave his life so that we may have eternal life and live in heaven with Him forevermore.

Think about old Goliath when he saw David coming to meet him on the battle-field. Goliath had plans to kill David and feed his carcass to the scavengers of the field, 2 Sam. 17. But the Lord had a different plan. God planned to do away with Goliath. David slung a stone that sank deep into Goliath's forehead and he fell forward to the earth. David cut Goliath's head off with his own sword. Plans Change!

What about when Israel sent spies into Canaan and saw the giants that lived there, Num 13-14, the people were making plans to find themselves a new leader to go back to Egypt. But God had a different plan. God allowed them to wander around in the desert over the next forty years. And they died one by one in the wilderness till that generation had passed, and they learned that God had the best plan. They learned that they should go in and take the promised land that God had promised them.

We can look at Gideon and his army before they went into battle. Gideon planned to take 30,000 soldiers into battle. But before the battle ever took place God shrank Gideon's army down to 300 men that lapped water out of their hands like a dog to win the battle. Gideon found out that God had the best plan. Hey, it's not about you and I understanding God's plan, but it is about you and I saying Yes to God's Plan, and believing that he is Smarter than You & I and that He has the Best Plans for our lives. We see all through the Bible that God has the best plans for our lives.

Just remember God is not trying to trip you up in this life, God is trying to lead you in the right direction. God wants you and I to have and find victory in our life. Let me share with you some great truths about God's plans that I have learned. 1st God's plan may not be the easiest. 2nd God's plan may not be the most popular; 3rd It may not even seem like the smartest plan at the time, but I have learned that God always has the Best Plan! Be sure you don't make plans without running them by God first. Because His plans will be better than yours. I don't believe in little plans. I believe in plans big enough to meet a situation that we can't possibly foresee now.

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



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The Great Controversy

By Art Dmytriyeu
Yancey County

This article is a reminder about something that all humans need to remember. Almost everyone nowadays repeats that we are all living in unprecedented times. All the world is under pressure with different disasters such as earthquakes, wars, sicknesses, commotions, and uncertainty. Here is the reminder - there is definitely hope for us!

If someone ever read the book of Revelation in the Bible, they probably came across Chapter 12. There is a description of the war in Heaven being transferred to the planet Earth.

"There was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." (Revelation 12:7-9 KJV). Amazingly, absolutely all of humanity is involved in that conflict. There is no place for humans to just observe. So, the war did not start on Earth, but in Heaven, but when Satan was banished from Heaven he headed straight for Earth, accompanied by all the angels who followed him.

Based on this narrative we might be able to answer the universal question: "Why does God of love and mercy allow sin and suffering?" Perhaps, we need to ask a deeper question: How long will the Lord of love, mercy, and grace let Satan and his angels continue with sin, suffering, and torment toward God's beloved creation? The Bible says: *"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you."* (James 4:7-8 KJV).

This whole conflict will have an end. Yes, nobody knows the day or the hour (Matthew 24:36), but it will not last forever. If you wonder who will gain the victory and what will happen after it, then you only need to read 1200 pages of the Bible in the context of the Earth's history. The victory in this conflict belongs to Jesus and His angels as well as to all His followers here on Earth. One day, God promises us, that He will put an end to sin, destroy Satan and his followers, and make all things right again. Before that happens, though, everyone has to make a choice. Heaven's Eternal bliss is the reward to everyone who conquers.

"Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." (1 John 5:4 KJV).

Let me conclude with the most relevant question for today. Where is our place in all that controversy? Are we fighting the Lord's battles, or are we on Satan's side? No human knows his or her day or the hour when the battle will be over. So, let us live every day of our life as if there is no tomorrow! If you fight on the Lord's side then the Lord promises to you something very helpful: to assist us in this controversy. Christ sends the Holy Spirit and the loyal angels to guide, protect, and sustain us on the way to salvation.

Dear reader, everyone on Earth must take a side in this spiritual warfare - the Great Controversy. We can choose the path of rebellion and selfishness, which is made to look appealing to the flesh, but it leads to destruction, or, even though this world makes it difficult, we can choose the path of justice, mercy, and God's unfailing love. Please, choose life and victory in Jesus so that we can all spend Eternity with our Lord and Savior!

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



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"Joy In Serving Him"

By Chastity Ogburn
Avery County

"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." Romans 15:13

My heart was full of joy one evening as I came home from an afternoon of serving at Anne Ministries. God prepares us for what He gives us. I had two extra volunteers with me this particular afternoon. I'm so thankful that they were available to serve. God knew He needed them there for this day. He had us all in place for His work to be done. I knew I had an afternoon appointment with a client that had reached out to me and expressed her regret from a past abortion. She came in that afternoon and we met in our peer counseling room. We talked about plans to begin the "Forgiven and Set Free" Bible study. I listened while she shared her heart for pro-life ministry and how she never wanted any young girl or woman to ever experience an abortion. She was dealing with the unresolved guilt and pain from a past abortion that took place years earlier in her life. She knew God was calling her to do the Bible study and she was ready to be obedient to what He wanted her to do. We prayed together. I shared some of my own experience with abortion as a young teenage girl and how I had accepted God's forgiveness and grace in my life many years ago. It was no coincidence how God had led her to the ministry. I expressed my excitement in all that God has for her life. God takes our most difficult pains in life and can use them for a purpose. What the enemy meant to destroy us God can turn it to good and He is glorified.

Isaiah 61:1-3 is our mission statement. I believe these verses are what the Lord wants to do in the lives of those that He brings through the doors of Anne Ministries. When I came out of the meeting our volunteers had been helping a young pregnant mother. She came to the ministry in desperate need of baby items. They were loving her and helped her gather items needed while I was with my client. I was so proud of these two volunteers and I was so thankful that they stepped right in to be the hands and feet of Jesus to help this young mother with her needs. I was able to meet her and she was so grateful for the help she was receiving from the ministry. Supporting and loving both mom and baby is what we are called to do. Whatever the need is, we want to be used by God to extend His grace. When we help that young mother or woman who walks through the doors of the ministry know she is not alone in her journey that can make such a huge difference in her life. I experienced a heart full of joy that afternoon as I went home and the other two volunteers expressed to me that they also experienced that same joy. A joy that only comes from serving Him. Jesus met with us all that day. He prepared us. He guided us. He provided for us. He encouraged us. I am grateful and filled with joy to be serving Him in this ministry.

Anne Ministries will have been open at our location 305 West Mitchell Street in Newland, North Carolina for one year on September 1, 2022. I thank God for each one that has walked through the doors of the ministry in this past year. I look forward to all God has for us as we trust and follow Him in this new year of ministry. We will be having an Open House on Saturday, September 24th from 10-2 pm. We would like to invite those in our community and surrounding communities to come out to tour our center, meet volunteers, and celebrate a year of being open at our location. We will be having light refreshments and giving away some free resources and baby items. Trusting Him.

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

And thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are within thy gates. Deuteronomy 16:14

Lakeview Missionary Church

The Linchpin of Christianity

By Christopher L. Scott
Moses Lake, Wash.

“Religion and faith are just a crutch,” one of my coworkers used to tell me. “Religion and faith are for weak people that can’t handle life on their own.” I was so stunned I didn’t know what to say or how to respond. So I walked away.

As I have had more time to think about what she said I’ve realized that faith is an essential linchpin of Christianity and it definitely is not for the weak. The Concise Oxford English Dictionary defines linchpin as “an indispensable person or thing.”

The author of Hebrews describes the importance of faith for us as believers writing, “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Heb 11:1, NASB). An important note here is that faith gives reality and proof of things unseen. The late theologian Charles Ryrie defines faith this way, “Being convinced or giving credence to something or someone, especially to the truth of the Gospel.” Faith treats those unseen things as if they have already been seen. It is more than just hope.

As you read the Bible you see some of the giants of faith. Abraham left his family, possessions, and everything he knew and went to a land he had never been to before. Moses went head-to-head with the Pharaoh of Egypt to free the Israelites from slavery. David endured fifteen years of persecution from Saul. These people were heroes not because of their great accomplishments, but because of their faith. Because of the way they trusted in God and His promises when it probably didn’t make sense. And because they trusted in His promises they eventually saw God work through their circumstances to fulfill His promises because of their faith in Him.

Faith pleases God. “And without faith, it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek him.” (Hebrews 11:6) But where do we get faith? How can we grow our faith? Warren Wiersbe says, “Faith is not a feeling that we manufacture. It’s a confidence we have that God tells the truth and that truth is in His Word. The people of God who read the Bible daily and meditate on what they read will grow in faith and learn to trust God.”

My coworker thought faith was for the weak, but it is for the strong. And the more faith in God we have, the stronger we get.

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



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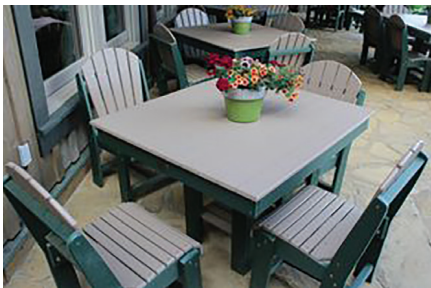
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Notes From the Shire

Fall Festivals

By Nancy Malik
Avery County

As we leave summer and step into autumn, the Jewish New Year will begin. At this time in history, many eyes are on Israel and God’s prophecy concerning the future. A part of that history is the fall festivals. There are three festivals in the fall and each one points to the future of Israel and the calendar of Redemption. The first four festivals have been completed and Jesus returned to the Father and left us the Holy Spirit. The last three, the Fall Festivals, will be fulfilled at the Second coming of the Lord. Ross Hashanah, Yon Kippur, and Sukkoth have been a part of these fall festivals for many thousands of years.

Between the fourth feast day (Pentecost) and the fest of Trumpets includes both growing and the harvest. Rosh Hashanah is the beginning of the Jewish New Year and is usually in late September. It begins with the blowing of the Shofar, a ram’s horn. The ram’s horn is a reminder of the ram Abraham offered as a sacrifice in place of his son Issac. It will also sound at Jesus’ return. This is the beginning of the Jewish New Year, Rosh Hashanah. This year it will begin on the evening of September 25th. This is also called The Ten Days of Awe, a period of introspection and repentance that follows Yom Kippur. On this day, it is said God decides each person’s fate, so those who follow this make amends and ask forgiveness for sins committed during the past year. This holiday includes a twenty-four-hour fast and religious service for the holiday. These two holidays are considered Judaism’s “High Holy Days”!

There are symbolic foods which include apples and cakes dipped in honey, representing “the sweet New Year”. Challah bread, is round and plaited and is white, leavened bread. Carrots are also traditional.

Yom Kipper took place after the Israelites' exodus from Egypt and arrival at Mount Sinai where God gave Moses the Ten Commandments. Descending from the mountain, Moses caught his people worshipping a golden calf and shattered the sacred tables given by God, in anger. Because they atoned for their idolatry, God forgave them their sins and gave Moses a second set of tablets. This day during biblical times was the only day the high priest could enter the inner sanctum of the Holy Temple of Jerusalem. The priest would sprinkle blood from a sacrificed animal on the Ark of the Covenant.

After Yom Kipper is the Tent of Meetings or Sukkoth. This year will begin on October 9th and end at sundown on October 16th. When commanded in the Torah, the Old Testament of the Bible, the people would celebrate by going to Jerusalem for the final feast of the harvest. The people celebrating would dwell in a tent or fragile dwelling for one week to remind themselves of the fragile dwelling of the Israelites who traveled in tents for forty years.

God’s fall festivals are a reminder of the precious people of God, the Jewish nation, which included God on Earth! The nation dispersed all over the earth after the temple was taken down by the Romans. But God is returning them to Israel at this time. We can thank Him for the festivals that always point to Christ and their loyalty to His ways.

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.



Evangelism Explosion International

The Gospel from Generation to Generation

By Rev. John B. Sorensen



We hear so much today about the gaps that exist between generations. Researchers spend a lot of time, money, and energy trying to define what drives each age group – how they think and what they value –to understand the differences and bridge those gaps. While we, as Christians, recognize that people respond to the Gospel in a variety of ways, what I’ve experienced is that the simple message of the Gospel crosses all of those generational gaps.

Throughout the years, our worldwide team at EE has seen this in action. When children learn about Jesus, they often become so excited that they can’t wait to share it with their siblings, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and great-grandparents. And many of those children have led their family members to faith in Jesus Christ. Likewise, I have also witnessed teenagers drop what they are doing to listen as someone from my generation shares the Gospel.

I have not seen any other message do this. The Gospel is a message of hope, and people of all ages are looking for something to hope in today. It’s universal and transcends generations. Prisoners share it behind cell walls. Seniors spread it through nursing homes. The Gospel can touch the hearts of rich and poor, young and old, across nationalities and even other religions. It has that much power.

But what excites me, even more, is the power of the Gospel to multiply through spiritual generations. There is no greater joy than to see our spiritual children begin to share their faith and lead others to Jesus Christ. They become spiritual parents, and we become spiritual grandparents. And, God-willing, even great-grandparents!

When we share our faith, we become part of a spiritual chain that keeps the Gospel moving forward from generation to generation. Our contribution, no matter how big or small, will continue to impact lives for eternity long after we are gone. That is the ultimate legacy that God has called every believer to possess.

I’ve often heard it said that we are one generation away from Christianity dissolving away. We are that close! All it takes is for one generation not to share it with the next for our legacy of faith to cease moving forward. This is why it is so important to keep the Gospel moving and continue sharing its message of hope with each generation.


2 Peter 3:9 reminds us that God is patient and doesn’t want a single person to perish, but we have a task to do. Don’t let a generation gap keep you from sharing the greatest news that you have. We can witness and disciple people across generational lines. Begin praying for an open opportunity to share the Gospel. Then take a step of faith and start that conversation today.

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


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Marlene’s Meditations

The Short Answer Is . . .

By Marlene Houk
Burke County

“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” Psalm 119:105

Ten young girls ringed the Sunday School classroom. Diversity abounded in their beauty, health, and education. They attended four high schools in our county and lived with a variety of families. But all of them desperately needed a short answer for living that would serve them well. Short answers linger in our minds and often appeal to brief attention spans, especially in youth.

My first class with fourteen and fifteen-year-olds began. Could I bridge two generations from my age to theirs and effectively offer Gospel truth? How could I point them to Jesus in thirty short minutes each Sunday? What powerful words should I use to embed life principles they could use for the rest of their lives? After two years, I realized teaching provided opportunities to hone my skills and cross-generational barriers. Insight into their mindsets, fears, and hopes still linger in my heart today. They encouraged me to reduce the truth to as few words as possible. I began to repeat three simple yet profound words, “My short answer is...” as a way of answering their questions and discussing how to apply the Bible to daily life. I completed the sentence by repeating three words often, “Read your Bible.”

Simple yet profound—read your Bible. My daughter created the Read Truth Together ministry, and she often shares powerful Bible verses that direct my day, inspire me toward holiness, and nourish my soul. I cling to the divine words as I journey through my day. Like a family story remembered by one word, my daughter and I remind each other of favorite Bible verses.

In the Bible, divinely told drama overflows with words that send us spinning around twists and turns of the Master Storyteller’s cliffhangers, our mouths hanging open. Frankly, I can’t imagine racing toward 400 angry men who had orders to kill my people. (Read Abigail’s story in 1 Samuel 25.) Who finds the courage to face ethnic cleansing, pivot its hatred to peace, and emerge after enriching her world with the knowledge of God? (Read the book of Esther.) Or, imagine the breathtaking thrill of seeing Jesus’ empty grave at the pivotal point of all history. Surreal. Beyond mortal life. Electrifying. To find hours of thrill-seeking life events with deep satisfying treasures for your soul, read your Bible.

Beyond the drama of Scripture with its hidden riches of healing, the Bible fills our hearts with purpose, a plan for life, and power we can use for good. God designed us to find our soul’s home within the pages of His Holy Word. Life’s cruelties and crises fade into the background of eternity when we read our Bibles. Our boat stops rocking in the waters of life, and we steer toward the lighthouse on the shore. The balm of Gilead soothes our wounded souls, and we rise to face another day, our hearts renewed with a greater sense of purpose. Verses such as 1 Samuel 22:33 and Philippians 1:6 offer a secure, confident plan to pursue goals. The incredible inner power of the Trinity surges through our words as we share inspired truths. Read your Bible to find this purpose, plan, and power.

Reading our Bible helps us to climb over overwhelming emotions. We crest the summit of anger and drink in the beauty of His love and care for us. The Holy Spirit helps us remember Bible stories that remind us of our troubles. He helps us to refocus as we return to seeing life through God’s viewpoint, and the world’s horizon levels. As we look beyond our circumstances to eternity, the Lord clarifies our spiritual vision, adding another stepping stone to our faith in Him. Worshipping and praising Jesus works to restore peace and diverts our attention from ourselves to the Almighty who directs our lives. Read your Bible to find the reality that rules over rage. Wear the mantle of Esther and discover the God who redeems harsh storms in life.

After 59 years of reading, meditating, memorizing, and exploring the depths and heights of the Bible, I’m still stunned by its power. I gaze into vast diamond mines of truth within its passages and stare at awesome vistas of eternity. Plunging into its healing waters, I’m amazed that simply reading the Bible gives us access to all this and more. From Genesis through Revelation, I walk through its grand rooms, marveling at its intricacies and absorbing its attention to tiny details. The excellent architecture and sweeping airy interiors of its chambers delight my hunger for freedom and beauty. As I read my Bible, the Master Teacher condenses powerful truths in my soul. He empowers me to offer short answers from its pages, packed with truth.

Now, years later, I hope that my short answer, read your Bible, still rings in the memories of my former Sunday School girls. I know that if they’ve searched the Scriptures, they’ve found bold answers to their questions about life. God honors the reading of His Word, and every “word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.”

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

And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. Revelation 14:15



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By Joe Sturz
Shenandoah, Va.

Let us who are Christians be faithful disciples of Christ who:
--use the law of liberty (James 1:25),
--are empowered by the Spirit who brings liberty (II Corinthians 3:17),
--bring creation into our glorious liberty as God's children (Romans 8:21).
(copied--see below)
So as Christians who have been called to liberty so let us use our liberty, not to indulge ourselves, but to love and serve one another (Luke 4:18; Galatians 5:13-14) as we seek to build Christ's kingdom (Matthew 6:33).
Brother Joe "faithful in my liberty" Sturz [Wednesday, August 10, 2022, www.sturzchristiancounseling.com
Be set free from the bondage of sin by believing in Jesus Christ (Romans 10:8-17), Who died on the cross to pay the penalty of hell for man's sin, confirmed by His being raised from the dead (I Cor. 15:3-4).
Note: my three points were copied from a letter from Mark Rushdoony who is the CEO at www.chalcedon.edu



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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Sudoku

Solution on page 14

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

A Hike In The Woods

By Ken and Jan Merop
Cleveland, Tennessee



“Let’s take a walk this afternoon,” said our 16-year-old Grandson.
That sounded good to us. So, after church and lunch, we ventured out on a mild hike within our community. Walking under the cover of overgrown foliage weighed down by a week of rain, we were eager to explore.
The first part of our trek took us under a natural arbor where we immediately stopped for a photo op. Smartly, we had worn hiking boots as the terrain was muddy and uneven.
Our hats, long pants, and (for me) a long-sleeved shirt meant less skin showing that would invite bugs to feast.
A break in the woods opened our eyes to a beautiful lake with jumping fish... stopping us in our tracks. Other times, the sun spilled its rays through the trees inviting us to keep going.
We had reached approximately the halfway point at an open area when a drop or two of rain pointed us to some menacing clouds.
Picking up our pace, we entered the woods once more. Raindrops sang their song, but we felt safe and dry under our canopy of natural foliage. However, that was short-lived.
Suddenly, the downpour penetrated our covering and there was nowhere to hide. So, we ventured back out resigned to getting drenched. When the storm passed and our clothes gradually ‘dried,’ we rewarded ourselves with ice cream to finish off our adventure.
Recently, I had been reading in Ephesians 6:11, NLT to “Put on all of God’s armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil.”
And as I thought back to how we carefully dressed for our hike, our hats gave important coverage.
For the Christian, we need to be covered from head to toe in God’s armor. The helmet of salvation indicates we belong to Christ. All the other armor depends upon our relationship with him.
The belt of truth and Christ’s righteousness are pieces of armor that keep us standing firm in evil times. Our spiritual shoes of God’s peace protect us from sin.
As we plunged ahead into the eeriness of the shaded, overhung woods, we did so by faith that we had protected ourselves as best we could and we would come out on the other side.
The same is true as we step out in faith daily. “Hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil.”
By prayer and the Word of God, we will come out on the other side...and the reward is matchless. Selah

Nature’s Tranquility

*Tranquility. Can it ever be achieved?
Nature says, “Yes!” Dependably.
Sunrise blesses each day with brightness and warmth.
Rain bathes and replenishes the dry earth.
Sunset paints the sky and welcomes the night.
Inhale the scent of forest evergreens;
Relax beside the stillness of the reflecting lake.
Be renewed.
A thankful heart resting in God’s sovereignty
Will be wrapped in tranquility’s arms.*

*“Be still, and know that I am God!”
Psalm 46:10*



Ken and Jan love residing in the mountains of Avery County. Visit Jan’s new blog @pauseandconsider.net, Journeying with Jan. Ken’s photos can be seen at kenmeropphotography.com.

By Bruce Cannon
Mitchell County

Jeremiah 8:20 “*The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.*”

Jeremiah was a prophet whose ministry was to the nation of Judah. His ministry began around 626BC and concluded after 587BC. At the beginning of his ministry, he saw the nation turning away from God. Judah was acting like the nations around them. They were worshipping other gods, sacrificing their children, and so forth. He knew the Lord would not put up with that kind of behavior from His own people. And so he preached, prayed, and wept before God for the sins of his people.

The unthinkable began to happen in 605BC as God allowed Babylon to come into Judah and take many of its citizens captive. It happened again in 597BC and yet again in 587BC. After the third time, Babylon came into Judah their soldiers tore down the temple Solomon built, damaged the walls, and took more of the Jews into captivity. The nation was decimated!

This takes me to the verse above. Jeremiah was marking time in Babylon. Year after year was passing and the people were still not being “saved”. Judgment from God had fallen upon the Jews and there seemed to be no end in sight. Thus, Jeremiah marks time with harvests and summer. He laments “and we are not saved.”

This is so eerily reminiscent of what is happening in America. I know no one has hauled us off to another nation into captivity as Judah was, but we are in captivity. We are losing freedoms! We are falling from within! Look at all of the divisions in our country. What is even worse is that we are seeing a lessening of people truthfully, faithfully worshipping our Lord. A fewer percentage of our population is attending houses of worship than ever before in our lifetime. And, all the while evil is taking such hold in the U.S.; we see it so clearly!

Judah’s hope in Jeremiah’s day was for someone to set them free from Babylon’s grasp and allow them to go back to Judah. It would happen after the Medes and Persians defeated the Babylonians. Finally, after a long time, they returned. They returned to find the destruction of the Temple. But, at least, they were able finally to go home.

What is the hope for America? The Lord! A return to Him! Our hope is not in the White House, Senate, or our Governors. It’s in the Lord! If only America would return to Him in brokenness, humility, and repentance, He would work on our behalf. He would move mightily in our midst.

If the only hope for America is the Lord, we must pray, repent and humble ourselves before the Almighty! We must claim Scriptures such as 2 Chronicles 7:14 “*If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.*”

Let us join together in prayer at this critical point in time. Thank You!

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.



Believe it or not! It’s Alive!

By Christy Lowman
Burke County

This month I wanted to talk to you about a see-through animal that is very hard to see. It ranges anywhere from 5mm to 25mm in diameter. They are clear in color with a small white or green tint in areas of their body. It is bell-shaped and has tentacle legs.

This animal is called Craspedacusta Sowerbyi. It is also known as the Peach Blossom Fish or a Hydromedusa. It is a freshwater jellyfish. They have found this exact jellyfish living in Lake James in Burke County, NC.

This jellyfish has many stages in its lifecycles. It can produce polyp seeds which are tiny balls of cells that function like plant seeds. They can dry out like plant seeds and then come back to life when they get back in the water. Then they will reproduce more jellies. Since they can do this, transporting these jellies are super easy. They originally came all the way from the Yangtze River Valley in China to the United States and other parts of the world. It is believed that they caught a ride on ornamental aquatic plants, on fish, on waterfowl, on boats or gear, and even on the bottom of people’s shoes.

Hydromedusas are found mostly in flooded quarries, ponds, lakes, or the backwaters of rivers. They prefer their freshwater to be still or slow moving and in the temperature range of 53-90 degrees Fahrenheit. When the water temperature gets too cold for them, they can ball themselves up, complete with a casing around their bodies, and go dormant until the water gets warmer.

The Craspedacusta Sowerbyi has anywhere from 50-500 tentacles. There are usually 4 long tentacles together followed by 3-7 short tentacles, then the pattern repeats itself. The long tentacles are used for swimming and stability while the short tentacles are used for feeding themselves. Like other jellies, this freshwater jellyfish uses its tentacles to paralyze its food. It eats macroinvertebrates and small fish. This jellyfish’s sting is not supposed to hurt humans but some people say they have felt its sting.

These jellies don’t have any eyes, a brain, blood, or even a heart but yet are still very much alive. This got me thinking about souls. Each one of us has a tiny invisible soul inside of us. We can’t see it but it is there. It doesn’t have any eyes, a brain, a heart, or blood but it is very much alive as well. For sure, our soul is the most important part of us. Our body is just a temporary house for it to stay in until it is time for our soul to go to its permanent eternal home. It is up to us to decide where our soul will get to live: in heaven with God and Jesus or cursed in the pit of hell with Satan. Each one of us decides only for our soul, we can’t decide for anyone else’s, however, we can witness and tell them about Jesus so they will hopefully make the correct choice. You may think you have all the time in the world to decide to follow Jesus, but we are not guaranteed tomorrow. There is no better time than right now. It is the best decision you will ever make. I can’t wait to meet you and see you there!

If you want to accept Jesus as your personal Savior then find an adult, a pastor, or contact me to help you. All you have to do is say and believe this:

1. We are all sinners (Rom. 3:10,23).
2. The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23).
3. Jesus paid for our sins when he died on the cross (Rom. 5:8).
4. Salvation comes by faith, by confessing with our mouths and believing in our hearts (Rom. 10:9,10).
5. Ask the Lord for salvation (Rom. 10:13).

Dear Lord, I pray that we will all take the time to accept you as our personal savior. Help us make the correct decision to where our soul will live forever. In Jesus’s precious name I pray, Amen.

continued on page 40



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Book Review for Gift of Grace

By Andrea Dietrich

Gift of Grace: Christian Inspirations, by Regina McIntosh, is a book of love poems to Jesus. Like David and his Psalms, Regina has graced us with her own “psalms” in the form of modern poetry that will inspire the Christian who adores the Lord and who takes pleasure in words of adoration and praise to the Lord Jesus Christ.

With its beautiful cover which shows the symbols of Christ’s death and resurrection and the many gems of poetry within, Gift of Grace is a treasury of numerous chapters of Christian poems. There is something for every devout Christian in Regina’s book. In many poems, Regina uses the sun and its light to portray her gratitude and love for God. In fact, one poem I really enjoy is even called “Sonshine!” The beginning of each of its first three stanzas are respectively Breathing Hope, Breathing Faith, and Breathing Love. I especially love “His Light,” a poem in which each verse begins with the word “light.” Here are examples of the lovely metaphors Regina created for the beginning of each verse: “Light like a whisper,” “Light like a morning,” “Light like a prayer,” (a song, a feeling, a promise) and she concludes, of course, with the name of the One for whom she is praising “Jesus, Savior of the World.”

Regina uses many creative literary devices in her poetry. In addition to metaphors, she uses great assonance as in this line from the aforementioned poem: “Light like a feeling, pleading for healing.” Also, she references nature very often. I particularly like the poem “God’s Muse.” Once again God’s light is glorified, but also she refers to other aspects of nature such as rain as shown by these lovely lines: “Showers of dripping liquid/ cool and comforting/Restoring the heart’s stillness . . .”

Regina’s ability to praise God in so many different ways is astounding. In one poem she depicts a woman who worships God through gardening. The title of this poem is “In Her Garden,” and here is an example of how Regina draws a comparison between the planting of a garden and the growth and joy of a person’s soul from the nourishment of God’s love: “Her wonder is alive on her grin as she digs, plants and weeds.”

Finally, because Regina uses contemporary verse, her style is easy to read and her poems always are beautifully patterned. Sometimes she takes a story from the Bible and makes it come alive for us as she does in “God is Always Good,” in which a boy laments how his dad is taking back the son who was such a disaster. Right away we can see this is the Prodigal Son, but narrated in the language of a modern child, we can see that feelings never change regardless of the time in which we are born.

Every poem in Regina’s book is a tribute to Christ. Her love and devotion for Him, as well as her extremely strong faith, are poured out in her very own songs of praise. She is like a modern David!

Regina McIntosh is a writer and poet from the mountains of Western North Carolina. Her words appear with Blue Mountain Arts, in the pages of various anthologies, and in her books – A Light in the Darkness and Gift of Grace. Her books can be purchased from Amazon.com, Barnes and Noble and Christian-books.com



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Mine Creek Baptist Church

From a Pastor’s Heart

By Chris Rathbone
Mitchell County

Sitting down with many of my fellow pastors, it doesn’t take long for the conversation to turn to one of us asking the question, “How’s your church doing?” The majority of the time the answer is always similar. It usually goes something like this, “Well, we’re doing pretty good, but I just can’t seem to get people to come back to church as they should!” Almost every pastor that I have had this conversation with says the same thing. Many folks just aren’t coming back to church services.

During the Covid fiasco, many churches and pastors did what they thought was right and helpful at the time to protect their church families. Our church did online services, outdoor services, and services inside with social distancing measures in place. There were a few times when there were several cases of Covid in our church family and we felt it necessary to cancel services. I would bring the message to our Facebook page. Our church bought a camera and other equipment to start streaming our services for the first time. We even bought an FM transmitter so folks could listen in their cars if they didn’t feel comfortable coming inside. The point is, that pastors and church leaders did all they could to be sure their church families could continue to worship together and be fed spiritually. Let me tell you from experience, that it was one of the most stressful times in my ministry. The pressure and stress of having to make decisions about how to continue to conduct services were sometimes overwhelming. If we had services some complained it was too risky. Others were upset if we didn’t have services and claimed we had no faith. Even when we did all we could to keep our church families gathering, even if it was a parking lot service that people could listen to in their car on the radio, many would not show up. How many times someone would say to me, “I can’t wait till we can have our worship services back inside the church!” To be honest, I’m still waiting for someone to show up! There are still folks saying they are afraid to come back to church because of Covid.

Now before you go off on me and accuse me of not caring about people, let me expound a little bit on why I’m writing about this topic. While there are still Covid cases going around, there is now a better understanding and treatment. I have a good friend in the hospital right now being treated for Covid. But for the most part, folks go through the symptoms and recover. There have been a few cases even in my church and thankfully everyone has recovered well. For sure no one is denying that the virus can be very serious for some people. However, let me give you some examples of some personal experiences I’ve had since things opened up again.

While in a local restaurant with over a hundred people eating and talking, a lady told my wife that she hadn’t been to church since Covid started. She was afraid to be around people that might give it to her.....

One family who hadn’t been in a long time told me they just weren’t comfortable coming back just yet because they didn’t want to take the chance of their kids getting sick. However, social media shows them at amusement parks, ballgames, school events, birthday parties, etc, etc.

Even some elderly folk tell me they just don’t get out much because of the same reason. However, their beauty shop visits, grocery shopping, family reunions, decoration days, and loafing trips tell a different story.

At this point, there is really no excuse for someone who has been a Christian for years to justify laying out of church constantly. As a pastor, I’ve reached the point where it is just too serious of a time in history to be tiptoeing around people’s feelings when it comes to worship attendance. Sometimes we do get sick and can’t come, someone elderly physically does not have the health to be able to attend, and many have to work some weekends, some are caring for family members and can’t come. Even my family goes on a vacation and misses church services. I’m talking about consistently laying out of the church and using every excuse in the world not to come when one is perfectly capable of doing so. As a pastor, it gets wearisome begging and pleading with people to come back to church when they should know better.

Here is the conclusion. Regardless of all the excuses we can come up with, there is really only a couple of reasons for constantly laying out of services. Folks are either really not saved or they do not love Jesus as much as they should. Jesus always works through the church. We worship together as the church, we are taught in scripture to assemble as the church, we are disciplined together as the church, we work and serve to spread the gospel as the church, and we are the body of Christ as the church and the body cannot be separated.

I love y’all, I really do! That’s why I’m telling you: QUIT FOOLING AROUND AND GET YOUR FAMILY BACK TO CHURCH SERVICES! Jesus is coming, the world stage is being set for the end, and your children need Jesus more than anything in this world, your marriage needs Jesus more than anything, you need Jesus more than anything! STOP MAKING EXCUSES AND GO WORSHIP JESUS BECAUSE HE IS WORTHY!

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

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Aglow International Lighthouse

Marion Aglow Seeks to “Awaken” Revival

By Marion Stephan
McDowell County

“We’ve been hearing through the prophets and other ministers for a couple of years now that there’s another great awakening coming.” So observed Pat James, president of the Marion Lighthouse of Aglow International, in a two-part message delivered to this Lighthouse. And the Marion Lighthouse, she declared, has no intention of sitting on the sidelines as this “third great awakening” unfolds.

“It is our goal as a lighthouse to be right there in the forefront. I want to be right there on the front line with whatever the Holy Spirit is doing.”

James was speaking at the July and August meetings of the Lighthouse, on the topic “Reopening the Wells of Revivals. The meetings took place at His Place Worship Center in Marion.

“Holy Ghost revival,” as opposed to the man-made revival, occurs when “the Holy Ghost shows up first, and then a group of people get in line with what he’s doing,” James explained. Revival grows into a “great awakening” when the move of the Spirit “spreads nationwide, or it spreads into different spots throughout the nation.”

During the Lighthouse’s July 9 fellowship, James traced the history of America’s great awakenings, beginning with the First Great Awakening that grew from the preaching of Jonathan Edwards in Northampton, Massachusetts in 1734. “Thousands of people came to the Lord during that period.”

She continued with a description of the Second Great Awakening of the 1880s, which rose up across the nation and in several areas of North Carolina.

The anticipated third great awakening “is going to be so different from the others,” James said. “When the Holy Spirit shows up this time, He’s going to be reopening previous wells of revival in communities all over the country and around the world. The Third Great Awakening is going to be worldwide, not just here in America.”

In the second part of her message, on August 13, James noted that the Marion Lighthouse has a special assignment to reopen the wells of revival in the Marion community. This will involve revitalizing Marion not only spiritually, but economically.

Marion, once a thriving mill town, suffered economically when mills and factories closed down and jobs were transferred overseas. However, “the Spirit never left this town.” And “part of our assignment . . . is not only are we supposed to pray for a well of revival, spiritual revival, but we want an economic revival in this community.”

James said the Lord has told her seven actions the Marion community needs to take in order to reopen the wells of revival:

1. Fast and pray in the Holy Spirit. The prayer “should be led and directed by the Holy Spirit in you We become strong warriors for Christ because we have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us and moving us.”
2. Declare, decree, and prophesy financial restoration. “Call in the jobs, call in the finances, call in the businesses, the companies.”
3. Buy into the assignment wholeheartedly. Share, with others, “the fire that the gifts of the Holy Spirit can kindle.”
4. Repent and humble yourselves before the Lord. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you unconfessed sin, and to help you let go of past resentments.
5. Put on a mantle of revival. “A mantle is like a robe that we are given.”
6. Be continuously filled with the Holy Spirit, beginning with the baptism of the Holy Spirit.
7. Practice warfare worship. Warfare worship involves engaging in spiritual warfare through worship. It occurs when the Holy Ghost falls on an assembly, and “the anointing is there, and you break through this ceiling, and you are doing business in heaven.”

James asserted that God is calling the body of Christ to “Come up into the heavenly realm with our worship and our warfare and our praises and our intercessions He has ministries he wants to raise. He has businesses He wants to raise.”

She told the listeners, “Part of why you’re here today is to bring each one of us a mantle of revival to put on. . . . We’re no longer doing our own thing. We’re the servants of God in the service of his Kingdom.”

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

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YOUR GOVERNMENT PAGES

NC Senate District 47



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

During the 2018 general election, millions of North Carolina voters approved two constitutional amendments, one for voter ID, and another for a state income tax cap. State legislators immediately began work on a bill setting out the implementation of the voter ID constitutional amendment, which included a wide array of acceptable forms of photo identification for voting, as well as the issuance of a free photo ID to registered voters upon request. Upon implementation, our state would join 35 other states that require voter ID and cease to be the only state in the Southeast without a voter ID requirement.

Unfortunately, however, various court cases brought by Democrat plaintiffs and presided over by Democrat judges have stopped voter ID in North Carolina from becoming a reality. Most recently, in a case filed by the NAACP, the four Democrat justices on the NC Supreme Court essentially trashed more than four million votes for the two constitutional amendments by ruling that the constitutional amendments themselves are unconstitutional.

In her written opinion, Justice Anita Earls asserted that the constitutional amendments were unconstitutional because they were placed on the ballot by a “racially gerrymandered” legislature. The problem with this faulty reasoning is that it does not address the hundreds of other bills passed under the same legislature. This ruling by the four Democrat justices – Anita Earls, Sam Ervin IV, Robin Hudson, and Michael Morgan – in support of their far-left base, serves to limit legislative power and nullify over four million votes. The message to North Carolinians is “you have no right to amend your constitution if we don’t like the amendments.”

In his dissent for the three Republican justices, Justice Phil Berger, Jr. aptly wrote that the ruling “unilaterally reassigns constitutional duties and declares that the will of the judges is superior to the will of the people of North Carolina.”

This is an arbitrary, blatantly political move and no precedent in the country exists for this level of judicial overstepping. Taking away the power of North Carolinians to amend their constitution is a travesty. I hope that on Election Day voters remember that two of these Democrat seats are on the ballot.

As always, please share your thoughts with me on this 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 September and all the fun fall activities that this month ushers in. I’m not sure that there’s a more beautiful place to spend autumn than in western North Carolina!

One of my favorite fall traditions is visiting our state’s local agricultural fairs. On August 22, I had the pleasure of attending the Drexel Community Fair’s opening ceremony. The Drexel Fair is a perfect example of timeless, family fun as it features agricultural exhibits, carnival rides, food, and entertainment. I also appreciate Drexel Fair Manager Don Deal’s commitment to safety on the midway. The Drexel Fair has been a longtime partner and participant in the department’s Fair Partnership program, which emphasizes safety for amusement devices and the riding public.

N.C. Mountain State Fair, kicking off September 9, is also a valued participant in the Fair Partnership program. On September 8, I will join Agriculture Commissioner Steve Troxler for the Mountain State Fair’s safety press conference, tour the fairgrounds, and have an opportunity to preview all of the attractions this year’s fair will offer guests. The fair is open September 9-18 on the grounds of the Western North Carolina Agricultural Center in Fletcher.

After a longer than normal season, the department’s Safety Awards program is winding down in September. The final banquet for the western part of the state will be held on September 7 in Hudson (Caldwell County) and is sponsored by the Western Carolina Chapter of the American Society of Safety Professionals. When all is said and done, we will have presented more than 2,000 Silver, Gold, and Million-Hour awards to businesses across the state. Each of these employers recognizes the importance of workplace safety and ensuring their workers go home safely at the end of the workday. Be on the lookout later this year for information on the process to apply for a safety award for the next round of banquets in 2023.

Annual N.C. Mine Safety and Health Conference is September 14-16 at Atlantic Beach. The N.C. Department of Labor’s Mine and Quarry Bureau is proud to partner with N.C. Aggregates Association to coordinate speakers, topics, and vendor exhibits of interest to the aggregates industry. Western North Carolina is home to many surface mine and quarry sites, and this conference highlights the industry’s efforts to keep its workers and contractors safe and healthy.

Have a wonderful September and I hope you enjoy one last trip to the pool, lake, or beach over Labor Day weekend!

NC Senate District 46



Sen. Warren Daniel
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Recently I was invited to give a presentation to a local business group in Buncombe County. The presentation centered on legislative and fiscal highlights from the perspective of a member of the North Carolina General Assembly. I thought I would share some of the information in a series of columns. To help give some perspective, I’d like to offer a review of the fiscal shape of NC over the last dozen years. Coming out of the recession of 2009-10, the state was looking at a \$2.5 billion budget deficit for 2011. There were structural changes that needed to be made and some tough decisions were required to correct some of the issues. As a result of those changes, the projected deficit of 2011 was turned into a series of revenue surpluses beginning in 2015. In FY 2019-2020 the projected budget surplus was looking to actually become a projected loss of \$1.13 billion, due to the shut-down of the economy due to COVID-19. However, the state used cash reserves (the Rainy Day fund) and CARES Act funding to plug the budget hole and provide funding for high-priority projects and protect state employees from furloughs similar to those that affected teachers and state employees in 2009-10. While we don’t yet have the final numbers for the amount of revenue surpluses in 2021 and 2022, over the course of the biennium it is projected to be approximately \$10 billion. This is the result of continued tax reform (reductions) and smart fiscal management by the Republican General Assembly over the past 10 years, which have in turn led to strong economic growth in our state. Saving for the future has been a crucial priority. Over the past 12 years, the Republican General Assembly has increased the savings reserve (often called the “Rainy Day Fund”) from \$150 million under Democrat leadership in 2010 to a balance of \$4.25 billion in FY2022-23. In addition, since 2016, NC has had to spend nearly \$1.5 billion from the savings reserve on disaster relief for multiple natural disasters, including hurricanes, severe storms, fires, flooding, and an earthquake. The Republican-led General Assembly has and will continue to make having robust savings reserve a priority so that our state is prepared for the next natural disaster or the Biden recession. These fiscal policies have helped to raise the esteem of North Carolina in many national business publications such as Site Selection Magazine, Forbes, CNBC, the Tax Foundation, and Chief Executive Magazine. Here are a few:

- No.1 Best Business Climate 2021
- No.1 Best State for Business 2019
- No.2 Top State for Business 2021

This is just a small part of the good news that is happening in North Carolina!

God Bless America

YOUR GOVERNMENT PAGES

NC 11th Congressional District



Rep. Madison Cawthorn
828-808-2148

This nation is facing a tremendous amount of challenges; however, I firmly believe that the best is still yet to come. I wanted to update you on what's happening up here in Washington. I am honored to represent you here in D.C. and know that I will never stop fighting for you in Congress.

Service Academy Applications

The honor of attending a service academy comes with the obligation and commitment to serve in the military for a minimum of five years upon graduation. The mission of the U.S. service academies is to provide instruction and experience to all cadets so that they graduate with the knowledge and character essential to leadership and the motivation to become career officers in the U.S. military. To request a Military Academy Nomination from our office, please complete the following form below using the link provided. The deadline to submit a service academy application is October 31st and the application form can be found on cawthorn.house.gov.

If you have any questions, please contact my District Director Brianna McMinn through her email which is Brianna.mcminn@mail.house.gov, or through our Hendersonville District office phone number 828-435-7310. Best wishes to you as you pursue your goal of attending one of the U.S. Service Academies and serving our country.

Congressman Cawthorn Introduces Legislation to Establish The Free Cities Commissions Act

I was honored to introduce The Free City Commissions Act which would establish a free city commission to examine the effects of liberal government policy on American cities.

The purpose of this commission is to study the effects of progressive governance on cities within the United States over the last seventy-five years. Additionally, this legislation would investigate issues of mental health and allow the Free City Commission to examine the effects of a lack of educational opportunities within American cities.

It is far past time to investigate and examine the effects that radical far-left policies are having on American cities across our nation. This legislation goes a long way in ensuring that the forgotten men and women in those areas of our country are given a voice moving forward.

Stopping China and Foreign Countries From Buying U.S. Land

In Congress this week, I was proud to introduce legislation, which would aim to direct the President to take any actions that may be necessary to prohibit the purchase of public or private real estate located in the United States by foreign governments.

Ensuring that America does not become overtaken by globalists seeking to destroy her, has always been one of my biggest priorities here in Congress. One of the most important ways we can ensure this doesn't happen is by directing the President to take action to prohibit the purchase of public or private real estate located in the United States by foreign governments.

Protecting American Sovereignty

I was proud to have been one of the 8 cosponsors of my colleague Rep. Carlos Gimenez's Migrant Protection Protocols Act of 2022. This important legislation would amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to require an alien arriving from a foreign territory contiguous to the United States to return to such territory.

Additionally, Congressman Gimenez's legislation would also codify the Trump administration's "Remain in Mexico" policy, which ensured migrants were returned to Mexico for the duration of their immigration proceedings and were given the notice to appear in an immigration court instead of being let loose in our country.

The weak decision made by the Biden Administration to reverse the Remain in Mexico Policy incentivizes Mexico to pass its border security responsibilities to the United States rather than dealing with the influx of migrants from Central and South America at the Mexican border. We must Secure The Border Now!

Standing With Those Who Protect Innocent Life

I recently joined Congressman Mike Johnson's resolution along with 39 of my Republican colleagues condemning the recent attacks on pro-life facilities, groups, and churches. This resolution would condemn recent attacks of vandalism, violence, and destruction against pro-life facilities, groups, and churches, recognize the sanctity of life and the important role pro-life facilities, groups, and churches play in supporting pregnant women, infants, and families; and call upon the Biden Administration to use all appropriate law enforcement authorities to uphold public safety and to protect the rights of pro-life facilities, groups, and churches.

Make no mistake, I will always defend those who are willing to stand up to protect the voiceless and especially back our law enforcement authorities during these divisive times in our nation.

The Home Front

Just weeks ago, a momentous victory was won for the most innocent amongst us. For nearly half a century, the specter of *Roe v. Wade* premeditated a silent American genocide, that stole the lives of tens of millions of defenseless children. Now, with its hard-fought overturning, a new fight in America has begun. The responsibility falls to all of us to serve. While I fight the murderous legislation here in Washington, movements like the inspiring anti-abortion demonstrations in Marshall are the home front in this great crusade for life. The message produced from this cause for life, able to bring a community of patriots together, is commanding. This is not the first gathering of this type in Madison County, and I pray today that it will hardly be the last. Let us follow the example of these patriots in Marshall, speak out with me until our collective voices are impossible for the elites in the capitals throughout this country to ignore.

NC House District 86



Rep. Hugh Blackwell
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Governor Cooper Ends His 888-Day Emergency

After 888 days, Governor Roy Cooper has finally ended his state of emergency. The legislature, years ago, in a good faith effort to prepare North Carolina to deal with sudden, unexpected danger, gave authority to governors to declare a state of emergency. At the time, no one imagined a governor, such as Roy Cooper, would distort the statute to allow himself so long to essentially rule the state by himself, totally bypassing the legislature elected by the public to approve a public policy for the state. The intent was for the governor to handle things on a short-term basis until the people's elected representatives could come together to approve policy to confront the threat.

It seems clear to me that, however unexpected the pandemic was when it arose, and however much the pandemic might require ongoing concern and action, it could hardly be considered an "emergency" for 888 days. A simple internet search turns up "emergency" defined as "a serious situation or occurrence that happens unexpectedly and demands immediate action." The pandemic itself could hardly continue to be called unexpected once it had occurred and became known. Moreover, while some immediate actions were appropriate, once the threat became known and was dealt with on a short-term basis, the ongoing pandemic and policies appropriate to deal with it should have been considered by the people's legislature - as our system of government intends. However, because the governor could not count on the legislature to agree with his policy choices, he chose to bypass the constitutional process and unilaterally govern the state in any matter he chose by simply citing the pandemic. Rather than ending his use of emergency powers when the emergency was clearly past and North Carolina was into a period of dealing with it as an ongoing health problem, he continued indefinitely exercising unilateral powers to dictate policies for the state. It was truly an abuse of power and a distortion of authority granted in good faith to governors by the legislature. Unfortunately, Governor Cooper was aided and abetted in this by the presence of a Democrat majority on the state's highest court that could be counted on to reach any decision needed to uphold the governor's position.

To combat this abuse of power, the legislature's Republican majority succeeded in amending the old law that Governor Cooper claimed as justification for his statewide emergency orders. The amended law makes clear that statewide emergency powers will end after 30 days unless a majority of the Council of State agrees to continue the powers for an additional 30 days. In addition, a court can order extension of the original emergency order for up to 60 days. Thus, all future statewide emergencies will terminate after either 30 or 60 days, as the case may be unless the legislature acts to extend the period of emergency. These new provisions were included in the budget bill. The changes go into effect on January 1, 2023. They apply to a state of emergency declared on or after that date.

The same budget bill also limits the State Health Director's power regarding quarantine and vaccine orders. The Director will not be able to issue a statewide quarantine in excess of 7 days unless there is a court-approved extension. If the order is not statewide, a quarantine cannot be for more than 30 days without court approval. These last changes also go into effect on January 1, 2023, applying to quarantine orders made on or after that date. Finally, there is a new provision that, during the period from July 11, 2022, until December 31, 2023, the State Health Director cannot "require any citizen of North Carolina to submit to a vaccination, diagnostic test, or other treatment for COVID-19."

First Baptist of Marshall

Humor

By Buddy Freeman
Madison County



“The pastor calls on Bubba to pray and 9 men stand up and start praying.”

“People think ‘Rapture’ is what you get when you lift something too heavy.”

“The collection plates are really hubcaps from a 1956 Chevy.”

A pastor was doing a children's sermon. He asked the children a really dumb question. He asked a little boy, “How long can a man live without his brain?” The little boy thought and said, “Gosh, preacher I don’t know. How old are you?”

A grandfather took his 5-year-old grandson to a wedding. After he watched the pretty young bridesmaids walk in the little boy asked his grandfather, “Is this where the man gets to choose which one he wants to marry?”

Ken Polish said, “My tennis coach told me I was one year away from being a good tennis player and next year I’ll be two years away.”

Will Rogers said, “You know horses are smarter than people. You never heard of a horse going broke betting on people.”

A drunk walked into a gym where he saw a fighter shadowboxing. He watched the boxer dance around and throw punches in the air. In a few moments, the drunk yelled, “You might as well stop fighting. The other boxer has gone home.”

During an airplane flight, a grandfather asked the person sitting beside him. He asked, “Have I told you about my grandchildren?” “No,” said the gentleman, “and I really do appreciate it.”

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



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The Hopeful And Helpful

By Toby Crowder
Mitchell County

“There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?” - John 6:9

The days in which we live demand a lot from today’s Christian... and especially the dedicated disciple of Christ. Now, possibly more than ever, the effect of individual decisions is becoming more important and more visible in the life of the church. You may not think that what you do (or do not do) matters, but it does! Tithing... attendance... faithfulness... witnessing... all these matter because there is much at stake. While some churches decline in number, the actual church itself grows stronger as dedicated believers hold fast to the profession of our faith. They have HOPE that is anchored in Jesus Christ, and they want to HELP serve Him and be the salt and light that our world needs.

The sixth chapter of John is a lengthy one, and much is happening on the pages of Scripture. I would like to introduce you to some personalities that were in the crowd in the early verses of this chapter. Perhaps they sound familiar to you... perhaps we can identify with them. The Bible tells us in v.2 that there was a great multitude that followed him *“because they saw his miracles.”* We will call this group the “half-hearted ones” because they were only there because of the miracles that Jesus did. They were interested in being a part of the crowd... and seeing the sights and miracles. These would not stay when the going got hard... or when something better came along. They were not there for what they could do for Christ, but what He could do for them! Some folks come to church and are curious or “along for the ride.” They are content to sit and be served... not volunteering, not working, but just being served... They expect a lot from the church, but they don’t want to be the church.

When Jesus saw the crowd, he questioned Philip about how to feed them, even though he already knew the answer! In Philip's reply... we see another type of personality arise; the “hesitant ones.” Philip answered the Lord *“Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?”* I get the feeling that Philip knew that Christ was able to provide a miracle, yet there was some hesitancy in his voice. Maybe his faith was wavering, or the crowd seemed too vast, or perhaps he was hesitant to simply ask the Lord to provide for this great number. I believe this describes a lot of Christians in today’s church and world... they are not unbelieving, but hesitant. They don’t expect God to do “big” things... and are hesitant to ask for them. Remember, we are only as effective for Him as our faith allows us to be, and Philip didn’t have any idea what Jesus was going to do... even though he had witnessed the miracles that Jesus had been performing. We may not be half-hearted... but many of us are hesitant. We believe that He can... but do we believe that He will?

The last group that I will mention is a combination of two terrific qualities... the hopeful and the helpful! In the verse above, Andrew comes to Christ with a possible solution to the problem they faced. He spoke the words of hope, coupled with a desire to help! You can almost hear the hope in his voice as he asks Jesus *“what are they among so many?”* Can you imagine a multitude of weary, hungry people that numbered in the thousands all needing to be fed? To us, it would appear to be an insurmountable dilemma, yet there was hope in Christ! The turning point of the story is found in the lunch of a small lad who desired nothing more than to lend a helping hand. What he had was very small... barley was the food of the poor. What we call loaves were likely small, flat wafers and the fish may have been more like sardines, but this helpful lad offered what He had in hopes that it would be a help to the Lord! Make no mistake... the miracle was not in the lad or the disciples but the hands of Christ! Whatever it is that you have to offer in the service of Christ, bring it to Him with the hope that it will be multiplied in His hands!

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

He that gathereth in summer is a wise son: but he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame. Proverbs 10:5



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.

Spruce Pine Farmers and Makers Market
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Thou Shalt Laugh

By John Martin

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Snow Hill Baptist Church

No Regrets

Good News and JYC Clubs What They Do And How You Can Help

By Dean Honeycutt
Mitchell County

While sharing with students and Parents about the JYC (Jesus and You Connection) club at Harris Middle school open house in Spruce Pine, a parent walks up to our table and asks about our afterschool club. The father is standing at our table with his children and asks what our club is about. My mind immediately thinks I may have an opportunity to share the Gospel with this father. I am excited about the opportunity but sense hesitation on his part. I could tell he was skeptical about our club. I had just seen him at another table hosted by a different group where he was excited about getting his children involved. I gave him a copy of our registration form that explains what the club is about. He looks at the form and says we are not religious and proceeds to place the form back on the table and walk off. My heart was saddened, and I became more aware of the burden I need for the lost to be saved.

One rarely meets families in our mountain communities that have no religious affiliation at all. This same evening, I met three other people who had moved into our mountain communities. Natives to this area generally have some religious affiliation. They attend church somewhere or grandma goes to church, or they believe in God but do not regularly attend a church. Last year in our JYC afterschool Bible club only two in six students regularly attended church. This reflects Mitchell County; less than a quarter of the population regularly attends church services. Regular attendance would be anytime a particular church is having a church service. Faithful church members will attend church every time the church doors are open. So, we have a large, unchurched population in Mitchell County that need a relationship with Jesus Christ.

The Barna Group analyzes cultural trends in values and beliefs and has found that only one in four Americans practice Christianity and that twenty-one percent of Americans have no religious affiliation. (Barna: State of the Church 2020; Signs of Decline and Hope among Key metrics of Faith). The concern I am raising is that lost people are all around me and the work I need to be doing is obvious. Families need the Lord. However, do I have a burden for the lost? The Bible says the fields are white unto harvest, but the laborers are few, who will go and work in the harvest?

I need a burden for the unsaved. I need to put my burden into practice and witness to the unsaved. The Bible says if my faith is not accompanied by works then my faith is dead.

This reminds me of the school that was built on a mountain and at the end of the playground, there was a cliff. Sometimes during recess, a ball would roll off the cliff and a child would go running after the ball and get too close to the edge and fall off and be injured. An ambulance would pick the child up and rush them to a hospital in another town. Sometimes the child would die on the way. The town got together and discussed what to do. And one person said we need to build a hospital. And everyone agreed to build a hospital. However, an elderly lady stood up and said a hospital would be nice but what we really need is to build a fence. But everyone was excited about the hospital. So, they started to build the hospital. But the elderly lady started building a fence and only a few joined to help her.

Christians are in the life-saving business. And our job is to witness to the unsaved. I thank the lord for the Good News and JYC clubs in Avery, McDowell, Mitchell, and Yancey counties. These clubs are a ministry of Child Evangelism Fellowship (CEF) a “Bible-centered, worldwide organization composed of born-again believers whose purpose is to evangelize boys and girls with the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and to disciple them in the Word of God and in a local church for Christian living.”

Through the ministry of these clubs in our public schools children are saved and sometimes entire families come to faith in Jesus Christ. Our director is Dianne Neal who serves the Mountain Chapter of CEF. She loves the Lord and does a fantastic job. If you are looking for Good News or JYC club for your child to attend, if you love working with children and have a burden to see children saved and want to serve in a club, or if you would like to financially support the work of CEF Mountain Chapter you may contact Dianne Neal @ (828) 442-7392.

All club teachers are screened, background checked, and trained to work with children.

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.



Pleasant Hill Baptist Church

The Power of Prayer

By Caron Cline
Burke County



Prayer is the most powerful spiritual discipline we can practice. It reaches the ends of the earth. It changes eternal destinies as well as daily lives. It brings emotional healing and reconciliation. If ever we needed prayer, it is now. When we pray under the anointing of the Spirit, anything can happen. When we pray, we must believe that all the promises of God are Yes and Amen in Jesus Christ, regardless of what we see happening in the world in which we live. Let’s trace the truths that will build our faith:

1. Full Assurance
Our faith begins with full assurance of our salvation, and our personal relationship with Christ. Our salvation hinges on the promises of God. John 3:16 promises that *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”* Ephesians 2:8-9 promises *“For by grace you have been saved by faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”*
Full assurance is essential for living the victorious, abundant Christian life.
2. Full Access
Once we are followers of Christ, we must understand that we have full access to the presence of God.
Ephesians 2:18 promises that *“through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.”*
This access was provided by the sacrifice of Jesus. As He was hanging on the cross, moments before He committed His spirit to the Father, He said, ‘It is finished.’ When He died, the veil of the Temple was torn from top to bottom.
Jesus went behind the heavenly veil as a forerunner and placed His own blood on the mercy seat to atone for the sins of mankind. John the Baptist was the forerunner of the Messiah. He preached a message of repentance, calling people to turn from their sins for the kingdom of heaven was at hand. As our forerunner, Jesus has prepared us for access into the very presence of God.
Hebrews 4:16 promises this: *“Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”*
We must be 100% secure in our relationship with the Lord and we must have confidence in our ability to enter His presence daily if we are going to experience an extreme breakthrough in prayer.
How often are we exercising this privilege?
3. Full Authority
God’s word promises us time and time again that we will experience answers to our prayers when we pray in faith, according to God’s will. Praying in this manner guarantees us full authority in the spirit realm to ask for anything.
Mark 11:23-24 promises *“Truly I (Jesus) say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and cast into the sea’, and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him. Therefore, I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted to you.”*
As we stand firm on the full assurance of our salvation and tap into our full access to the presence of God, we will begin to pray with full authority under the power of the Spirit, confident that God will answer our prayers. Our love for the Father will explode and our intimacy with Him will deepen until we experience what the Bible calls the
4. Full Measure
Ephesians 3:19 is part of Paul’s prayer for every believer in which he asks the Father to strengthen us with power through His Spirit so that we might know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge and be filled up to all the fullness of God.
The word ‘fullness’ in verse 19 is the Greek word ‘pleroma’ and it means ‘what fills or what is filled; to make full, fill, fill up; generally, of grace and God’s provisions’.
God longs to fill us to overflowing with His grace and love. We can experience the fullness of God. These truths should draw us to the feet of Jesus and set our prayer lives on fire!

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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The Helmet of Salvation

By Dr. Tom Walker
McDowell County



Ephesians 6:17 says *“Take the helmet of salvation.”* We need to remember probably why Paul had the armor of a soldier in mind because of where he is at the time of the writing of this epistle. We find him at this time in his life in prison. He is constantly guarded by soldiers, so he was compelled to look at the armor of the soldiers that guarded him from day to day.

The apostle Paul was a spiritually minded man. When he saw everyday things of life, his mind began to see a comparison of what he saw to spiritual things. He began to see in the soldier’s armor as what the born-again believer needs in his daily spiritual battle with the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Let’s not take lightly or push aside any of these enlightening comparisons Paul the Apostle makes here in Ephesians 6.

Today we deal with the helmet of salvation. We are all aware the helmet helps protect one’s brain, from which comes our thinking ability. It is a defensive piece of armor. The Christian must have a good defense in the time of spiritual battle.

Salvation is a wonderful thing. Three aspects of it are noteworthy at the very beginning of our study. They are the salvation from the penalty of sin, from the presence of sin and finally, we will have salvation from the very presence of sin.

Everyone needs to be saved. Salvation is made possible to anyone who will come to Christ for it.

Hebrews 2:9 says: *“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.”*

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

Romans 10:13 reminds us: *“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”*

There is nothing greater under God’s blue sky better than being saved from sin, its penalty, and its power. Salvation has to do with readying ourselves not only for life but for eternity as well.

Nothing will protect you from eternal death, demons, and the devil like personal salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:9 declares: *“Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.”*

The word “saved” is a good word. It is the little transliterated Greek word (sozo) which means “safe and sound.” It is translated in some other interesting ways in our KJV. It is also translated as heal, preserve, and be made whole. It is God’s salvation of grace that heals us, preserves us, and makes us whole or well spiritually.

Since the helmet is a piece of armor that protects, we are going to consider the “helmet” of salvation as something that preserves, defends, guards, keeps, shields, and shelters us.

God’s presence in the life of the believer can be so great that his presence becomes his shield and defender. Genesis 15:11 tells us: *“After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.”*

If I could legitimately be offered the entire physical world, I would not trade Jesus for what anyone could give me. I enjoy my salvation, which was real in my life as a young person, as I saw myself as a sinner, repented of my sinful condition, and turned to the Lord Jesus for my personal salvation.

Compare these next two verses from the Bible concerning what I said in the last paragraph.

Psalms 33:20--- *"Our soul waiteth for the Lord: he is our help and our shield."*

Psalms 84:9--- *"Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed."*

How does the Lord preserve us through the helmet of His salvation?

We are Preserved Unto His Heavenly Kingdom

2 Timothy 4:18 declares: *“And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”*

Every single government on the earth comes far short of being what it ought to be. There is not a nation on the earth that has perfect leaders and a perfect government.

There is a heavenly society in which all born-again people will enjoy and participate in one eternal day. No one in his or her right mind should purposely miss Heaven. I long to see a day when all will be perfect and be far above what it ought to be.

God’s people are not pickled, we are preserved. That means “to keep or save from injury or destruction” or “to save from decay and keep in a sound state” (Webster 1828 dictionary).

The Lord will make sure that all who trust Him and have a relationship with Him will not miss the heavenly kingdom. All who professed to be saved are not so, but any genuinely born-again person has the guarantee he or she will be in Heaven one day when life is over.

It would pay to read Romans 8:35-39 regarding our preservation. In addition, saved folks are sealed with the Spirit of God until the day of the redemption of the body (Eph.4:30). Salvation is designed not only to save man from eternal death but it is also planned so God could receive glory from it. God never loses any saved people. What kind of glory would the Lord receive if He lost even one of his children?

We Are Preserved From Fear Of Our Enemies

I have been to funeral services from time to time through these many years of being a Baptist pastor, and have heard people say, “He didn’t have an enemy in the world.” If that be, then in most cases, that person was probably not living as close to the Lord as he or she should have been.

Paul the apostle wrote, *“All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution”* (2 Tim.3:12). It is promised that if you live a godly life, you will suffer persecution or in other words, you will have enemies and people who will try to do you harm.

While being a pastor these many years, having been pastor of three different churches, there have been people who have decided they would be my enemies. I have learned from the Bible and experience that the Lord is bigger than those who would make themselves my enemies. I have learned that more battles are won when the Lord fights them, and I leave any retribution and wrath up to Him.

God reminded Israel that the battle is the Lord’s. When little David faced the nine-foot giant Goliath, David told him, *“That the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands.”*

A young preacher or pastor may be reading this message. Don’t give up and don’t turn loose from what God has called you to do. You will face some hard times, but I can say, God will see you through it all.

Fear paralyzes while faith energizes. Fear disarms but faith arms you for the battles of life. Fear will let you down but faith will lift you up.

We Are Preserved From Condemnation

That is exactly what salvation does. Romans 8:1 says, *“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”*

When do we get in Christ? The very moment we are saved is when that happens. Christ bore our sins upon His own body on the tree. 1 Peter 2:24 states: *“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.”* My sin has already been answered for in the death and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. When justice called mercy answered.

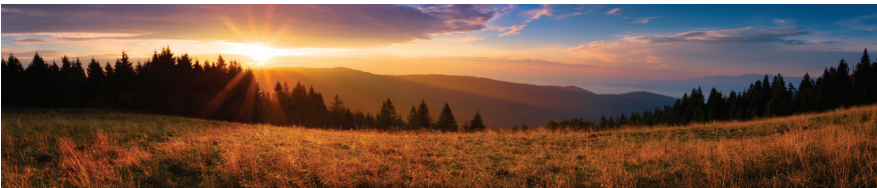
A young man was watching a parade years ago. His dad was with him and they were both looking through a glass at the parade. The boy said, “Dad the bands' uniforms are white. As his dad saw the marching band, he said, “Oh no son, the uniforms are red.”

As they investigated the difference, they found the son was looking through red tinted glass, while his father was looking through ordinary glass. The reason the son saw white uniforms was because he was looking through the red glass at red uniforms. Looking through the red at red gives the appearance of white.

Isaiah 1:18 says: *“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”*

The helmet guards the head and especially the mind. When a person has true salvation, it is then he or she begins to think as it would please God. Use the helmet of salvation as your defense against the world, the flesh (old nature), and Satan.

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



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The Best Mix On The Dial

Crossword

Crossword 280

ACROSS

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

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

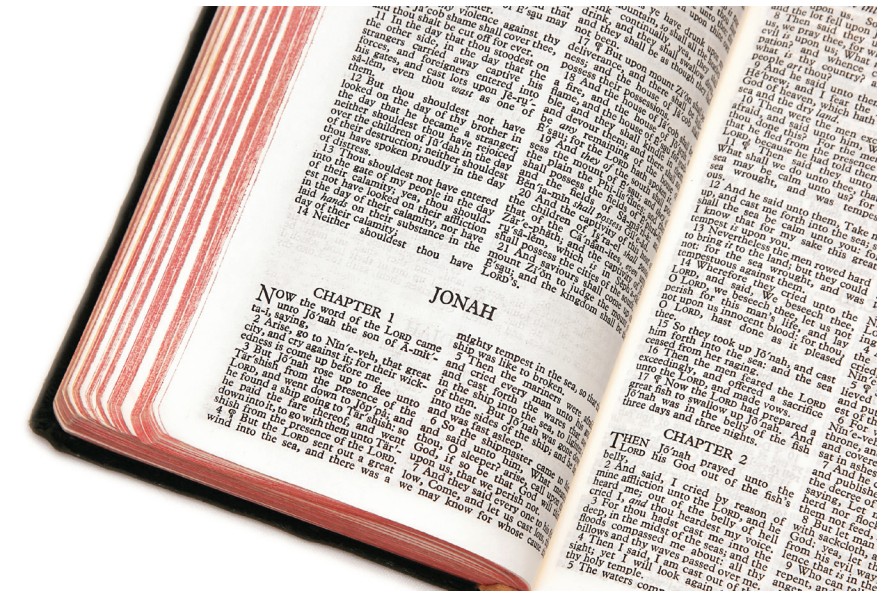
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thousands upon thousands of his holy ____ (Jude 14)
30 Joshua ____ his clothes, and fell to the earth (Joshua 7:6)
32 the sun rises with scorching ____ and withers the plant (James 1:11)
33 There were three gates on the ____, three on the north (Rev 21:13)
35 Absalom got his hair stuck in this type of tree (2 Sam 18:9)
38 My steps have ____ to your paths; my feet have not slipped (Ps 17:5)
39 rabbit (Deut 14:7) KJV
41 ____ your cloak around you and follow me (Acts 12:8)
42 The ____ is the lamp of the body (Matt 6:22)
43 If ____ forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles (Matt 5:41)
44 the ____ ones will be brought low (Isa 10:33)
46 represent four kingdoms that will ____ from his nation (Dan 8:22)
48 Remember that you ____ me like clay (Job 10:9)
51 In you, O LORD, I have taken refuge; let me never

be put to ____ (Ps 71:1)
52 To ____, mine own son after the common faith (Titus 1:4)
53 As he was scattering the seed, ____ fell along the path (Mark 4:4)
54 Like a lion I will devour them; a wild animal will ____ them (Hos 13:8)
55 "May your God, ____ you serve continually, rescue you!" (Dan 6:16)
57 to see if you would stand the ____ and be obedient (2 Cor 2:9)
58 my eyes are ____ with grief. I call to you, O LORD (Ps 88:9)
59 abbr. for the 17th book of the Old Testament
60 for a ____ and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem (Isa 8:14) KJV

Solution on page 14



“Warnings From The Wilderness”

By Shawn Thomas
Angleton, Texas



On the coastline of Japan is the village of Aneyoshi, where an ancient stone tablet is engraved with a somber warning: “Remember the calamity of the great tsunamis. Do not build any homes beyond this point.” In 2011 a great tsunami did indeed strike the coast of Japan. Every home in Aneyoshi, which was built above that warning marker, survived — but thousands of others ignored that warning, and over 29,000 people were killed when the tsunami struck. They ignored the warning they should have listened to.

In I Corinthians 10 God also gives us some warnings, from the history of Israel’s wilderness wanderings, and if we are wise, we will pay close attention to His “Warnings From The Wilderness.”

Verse 6 begins this section of the chapter with a key statement: “*Now these things happened as examples for us.*” Verse 11 says a similar thing: “*Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction.*” Did you catch that? These things happened to THEM, but they were written FOR US so that we would learn from them.

Then after Paul says “*So that we would not crave evil things as they also craved.*” And then he lists four specific sins the people of Israel were involved in, each followed by the key phrase: “*as some of them did.*” Each of these 4 is something THEY did, that God uses their example to warn us against: — First, he says in:7, “*Do not be idolaters, as some of them were ...*”. He’s speaking here of how Israel made the Golden Calf and worshiped it. He says, do not be idolaters like they were, worshiping something besides the one true God.

A couple of years ago Cheryl & I were walking our granddaughters Corley & Lottie to the Farmer’s Market that is close to their home in Indiana. As we walked, there were 3 statues of an Eastern god sitting by the sidewalk in front of a house. Lottie, said “What’s that?” and reached out to touch one of them. I instinctively pulled her hand back and said, “Those are other gods.” We don’t want to even mess with those!

You may say, “Well, I don’t mess with those either; I’m not an idolater.” I hope you’re not, but you also need to realize that an “idolater” is not just someone who worships a physical idol; an idolater is anyone who puts something in their life ahead of the one true God. And that convicts a LOT of us! There are many ways to put other things ahead of God and become an idolater.

Colossians 3:5 talks about “*greed, which amounts to idolatry*”. It’s saying love of money can be idolatry — especially when we love it more than we do God, or put it in His place. For example, God commands us to give the first 10% of everything we make to Him, to show that He’s more important than anything else we could do with that money. So if you are greedy for that money, and keep it instead of giving it to God, you are in essence an idolater. You may have never bowed down physically before an idol, but in your heart, you have bowed down to money, by putting it ahead of God.

And it’s the same with anything else like that too. Whatever you put ahead of God is an idol. Whenever you give something that belongs to God, to someone, or to something else; you have become an idolater. And God strongly warns us here: do not be idolaters, as some of them were.

— Second, 8 says: “*nor let us act immorally, as some of them did ...*” This is a real issue for many people today, who call themselves “Christians,” and who want to talk about how they love God and have a “great relationship with Him”, but at the same time, they are actively breaking God’s commands regarding morality.

Jesus is very clear in His word: He said, “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.” (John 14:15) One area in which God has given us commandments is regarding our practice of sexuality. We need to remember: sex is not something “wicked” from the world; GOD designed it. But the God who created sex gave us definite guidelines on how it is to be practiced: in the context of one man and one woman, in a committed, married relationship. Anything outside of that is breaking God’s commands, and is what I Corinthians calls here “immorality” — whether it is sex outside of marriage, living with someone who is not your spouse; homosexual practice, or pornography. Many people today do not believe these things are wrong — for example, last year they did a poll in which 70% of Americans said support the right to same-sex marriage. But it doesn’t matter what the polls say — God’s word says that if it is not between one man and one woman in a committed, married relationship, it is immorality. It is sin. The Bible repeatedly says the Old and New Testament; it could not be more clear.

Yet somehow there has come to be a real disconnect regarding this issue today. SO many people want to say, “Yes, I am a Christian,” and yet blatantly disobey God’s commands regarding sexual morality.

God warns us in this passage: you cannot consider yourself to be a Christian who has a “great relationship” with God if you are being sexually immoral. Immorality of any kind is a serious sin. In I Thessalonians 4:3 God said: “*For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality ... he who rejects this is not rejecting man, but the GOD who gives His Holy Spirit to you.*”

God shows us here that immorality is a big deal to Him. He says if you reject this, you are not rejecting man; you are rejecting GOD! You can’t say you love God, and continually reject what He commands you about morality. Jesus said no, “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.”

Now immorality is not an “unforgivable” sin; anything can be forgiven in

Christ. If you are involved in any kind of immorality right now, you need to discontinue it immediately, ask God’s forgiveness for it, and then take every precaution to keep away from it in the future. And most importantly, DO NOT buy into this false narrative that your practice of sexual morality has nothing to do with your walk with God. You cannot walk in immorality and walk with God at the same time. God warns us here: do not “act immorally, as some of them did.” — Thirdly He says in:9 “Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did ...” Numbers 21:4 says that while Israel was in their wilderness wanderings “the people became impatient” in the journey, and “spoke against God and Moses, ‘Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and water, and we loathe this miserable place.’” Instead of trusting that God had a plan and purpose for where they were and what they were going through, they doubted and complained instead.

How many of us are just like Israel in this? Do you today have a situation in your life that you are not trusting God with? You are so worried about it, or you look back on something that has happened, and you’re blaming God; you’re bitter for how it’s turned out — as if it were GOD’S fault.

Tim Keller shared an insightful quote on Twitter not long ago: “Worry is not believing God will get it right. And bitterness is believing God got it wrong.” When you are worrying, whether you realize it or not, you are being anxious that somehow God isn’t going to get this right. It is the total opposite of trusting Him. And when you’re bitter about circumstances, or the way things have turned out, what you are really saying is, God got this wrong.

And that’s just as much a sin as the first two things we looked at. Perhaps you were thinking to yourself, “Well I’m not an idolater; well I’m not immoral”; but the fact is you ARE trying the Lord, just like Israel did. You’re not trusting Him, or you’re bitter about some situation — and you need to realize that that is just as much a sin as idolatry or immorality! Idolaters and immoral people need to repent of those sins, and YOU need to repent of bitterness and doubt. God says, “*Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did ...*”. — Then He warns in:10 “Nor grumble, as some of them did ...”.

Perhaps this could have been included in “trying the Lord” in:9 because it’s very similar, but God addressed it separately, possibly to show just how much He HATES grumbling. There are SO many references in Exodus and Numbers to how Israel grumbled the whole 40 years they were in the wilderness: they grumbled about the food; they grumbled about the water; they grumbled about the leadership; they grumbled about what they had left behind; they grumbled about GOD ... And God said later in Psalm 95, “For 40 years I LOATHED that generation.” They constantly grumbled and complained the whole time He walked with them through the wilderness.

And God does not look any more favorably upon our grumbling today than He did upon Israel’s. He HATES grumbling. He says here, “*Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer.*”

God warns us here: learn from Israel’s example. It is vital that we avoid the sins He mentions here, as they will cripple your walk with God. Don’t put other things ahead of God; don’t disobey God’s moral commands; do not put Him to the test, and do not grumble. If you are involved in any of these things, it is vital that you repent of it, bring it to God for forgiveness, and ask Him to help you change it today!

Many residents of the village in Aneyoshi, Japan took the warning of that ancient stone tablet seriously; they stayed above the warning line, and their lives were saved. But countless others just laughed it off, or ignored it — and 29,000 people were killed by the 2011 tsunami.

In the same way, some people today will just laugh this message off — or if they don’t laugh it off, will just ignore it and go on. But we need to listen to it. This isn’t just written on some “stone tablet on the shoreline” like in Aneyoshi. This is written in the word of GOD. He says these things that happened to Israel aren’t just an ancient “history lesson;” God said these are examples for YOU; they were written for YOU — and you need to pay attention to God’s “Warnings From The Wilderness.”

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

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SEARCH Plans Meeting to Highlight YMCA

By Susan Larson
Mitchell County



The nonprofit SEARCH (Sustaining Essential and Rural Community Healthcare) is inviting the public to supper and a program on Thursday, September 22, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at The First Baptist Church at 125 W. Tappan Street in Spruce Pine. This is a family-friendly event to which all ages are welcome. In addition to dinner, childcare and Spanish translation will be provided.

The spotlight will be on the Mitchell County YMCA, both its current programs and the facilities, and the offerings planned for the Three Peaks Building (formerly Pinebridge) taking shape in collaboration with Mayland Community College. Representatives from Williams YMCA include CEO Trey Oakley and the Associate Executive Director Katie Willett. They will offer conceptual renderings for the building progression, as well as review current programs and opportunities across Mitchell County.

Though renovation has yet to begin, YMCA programs are already underway at locations in Mitchell County. Some are after-hours in the schools, some at the YMCA Healthy Living Center in downtown Spruce Pine, and some in other locations. Katie Willett will fill individuals and families in on what’s offered and how they can participate.

In keeping with the family theme, Katherine Savage, Program Manager of the Blue Ridge Partnership for Children, will present the results of a study that the Partnership recently completed. They conducted interviews and surveys with medical/non-medical providers and mothers to learn about the perinatal experiences of women and babies in Yancey and Mitchell counties since the closure of Labor and Delivery at Blue Ridge Regional Hospital in 2017. She will discuss the concerns that have emerged and the community planning process underway to create a stronger perinatal system more protective of local mothers and babies.

Anyone interested in attending should sign up by Monday, September 16, by emailing SEARCH at SEARCHwnc@gmail.com to request a registration form. There will be activities for children as well, and translation into Spanish will be an option, thanks to new equipment acquired by the AMY Regional Library. A simple nutritious supper will start the festivities. For more information, send an email. SEARCH is grateful for funding from the AMY Wellness Foundation, the Yancey Fund, The Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, and generous individuals.

Susan Larson is a co-leader of SEARCH. She resides in Mitchell County with her husband, retired physician Dr. David Larson.

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

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