



# BLUE RIDGE CHRISTIAN NEWS



**Spruce Pine First Baptist Church and Tri-County Baptist Tabernacle are honored to welcome Dr. Don Wilton and his wife, Karyn to Spruce Pine for one day only.**

**July 30th: Sunday morning, 11:00 AM at Spruce Pine First Baptist, 125 West Tappan St.,  
and Sunday evening, 6:30 PM at Tri-County Baptist Tabernacle – 252 Ridge Road**



Dr. Don Wilton served as senior pastor of the First Baptist Church of Spartanburg, South Carolina from 1993 – December 2022. He also served as president of The Encouraging Word television ministry. This ministry reaches thousands of homes through the regional CBS affiliate, WSPA-TV, and millions of homes both nationally and globally through the broadcast of The Encouraging Word. Dr. Wilton’s messages are also available online.

Dr. Wilton’s preaching and teaching are hallmarked by his uncompromising presentation of the life-changing truth of God’s Word that points people to Jesus. He challenges and encourages people to become all that they can be for Christ, emphatic in his belief that “evangelism is incomplete until the evangelized become the evangelists.”

He has written and published many manuals, articles, and reviews for the Southern Baptist Convention, Preaching, and Decision magazines, as well as other publications. He has authored Saturdays with Billy; The Absolute Certainty of Life After Death; See You at the Finish Line; Totally Secure; When God Prayed; A Hope and a Future: Overcoming Discouragement; Praying for a Miracle; Encouragement In His Presence; Defying the Odds: Standing Up When You Want To Give Up; and Undeclared: God’s Strategy for Successful Living.

Dr. Wilton has served as president of the South Carolina Baptist Convention

and is a frequent speaker for the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association at the Billy Graham Training Center at The Cove, as well as the Billy Graham Schools of Evangelism, held around the world.

He is a distinguished Bible expositor, a frequent guest of other TV ministries, and a guest speaker and preacher at many Bible conferences, state conventions, seminars, and colleges across the nation.

Don and his wife, Karyn, have three grown children: Rob, Greg, and Shelley. Rob and his wife, Annabeth, have four children, Bolt, Mack, Birk, and Carolina McCall. Greg and his wife, Abby, have four children, Max, Charlie, Oliver, and Gabby. Rob and Greg are used mightily in the Gospel ministry, and Shelley serves in humanitarian work in Africa.



*For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.*  
**Galatians 5:13**

# What We Believe

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

## God

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

## Jesus

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

## The Holy Spirit

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

## The Bible

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

## Humanity

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

## Eternity & Eternal Security

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

## Salvation

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

# Foundation Forward

## George Clymer

By David Streater, Ph.D.  
Burke County, NC



This is an American history educational moment of those who made a difference during the Revolutionary War era and how they served our Country.

George Clymer was born in Philadelphia on March 16, 1739, and was orphaned at seven. He was adopted and educated at home by his aunt and uncle, Hannah and William Coleman. Growing up, George was in socially prominent circles while working in his uncle's business. During this era, he became acquainted with notable political and patriot leaders.

Clymer did not serve in the Revolutionary War. However, he did command a company of voluntary militiamen in the early 1770s, known as the Silk Stockings. Later, working in politics as the Continental Treasurer, he used his acquired business acumen, leadership, and financial skills. He also served on councils supporting the troops as a member of the Continental Congress during the Revolutionary War (DSDI, 2023).

Questioning British taxes and business restrictions sealed George's prosocial outlook toward independence. George was a member of the Pennsylvania Safety Council and headed a committee that forced out the overseers of Britain's Tea Act. While serving in the Continental Congress, Clymer served on committees dealing with commerce, financial, and military affairs. The British announced a reward for his capture because of his expert work in the militia, Congress, and improving the army. During military hostilities, when Clymer's colleagues were unwilling, he made in-person battlefield evaluations to ensure the soldiers received their needed warfare materials, food, and other supplies.

Because of a bounty being offered for him, Clymer moved his family to relative safety in the countryside. George continued working in Philadelphia with a few colleagues, knowing the British were advancing (NPS, 2004). Believing Clymer was at home, the British changed course and went to Chester County, Pennsylvania, to apprehend Clymer and his family, and destroy their home.

Surviving the War, George continued in public service until his death in January 1813. Among his positions after the Revolutionary War were president of the Philadelphia Bank, president of the Philadelphia Academy of Arts, and vice-president of the Agricultural Society of Philadelphia.

In addition to being a visionary, George was the quintessential statesman. As a judge, Clymer promoted reform of the penal code, including eliminating the death penalty. He was only one of six Founding Fathers to sign the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution.

In Clymer's honor, a Navy attack transport ship was named after him. The U.S.S. George Clymer, APA 27, saw operational campaigns in the Pacific, and Atlantic theaters during WWII, then in Korea and Vietnam. The U.S.S. George Clymer was decommissioned in 1967 and sold for scrap metal.

George Clymer was a fervent patriot. It was said of him that "his dearest wish was for independence."

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 FoundationForward.com to learn more about our existing settings. Vance and Mary Jo Patterson are the benefactors and originators of Foundation Forward, 501(c)(3) education non-profit.

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. In addition, 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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**Publisher/Co-editor** – Brian Barrier  
828-413-0506  
brianb@brcnews.com  
**Office Manager/Co-editor** – Cathy Pritchard  
828-765-6800  
cathyp@brcnews.com  
**Sales:**  
Brian Barrier  
828-413-0506  
brianb@brcnews.com  
**Church Directory:**  
Brian Barrier  
828-765-6800  
brianb@brcnews.com

**Distribution:**  
Deborah Slagle  
Doug Braswell  
Amanda Silver  
Ashley Hoilman  
Albert Kaylor  
**Graphic Design / Layout**  
Lynn Elliott  
lynny@brcnews.com  
**Blue Ridge Christian News**  
152 Summit Ave.  
Spruce Pine, NC 28777  
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*“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace: that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation: that saith unto Zion. Thy God reigneth!”*

Isaiah 52:7 KJV



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## Church Directory



### Grassy Creek Baptist Church

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

Disciple Life 9:45 AM  
Sunday Worship 10:55AM  
GCBC Kids 5:30 PM  
Wednesday Service 7:00 PM  
Youth 7:00 PM  
*"That the world 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  
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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 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 10:30 am  
Life Groups Tuesday-Thursday evenings, 7:00 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

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### Burkemont Baptist Church

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

**Sr. Pastor - Dr. Luke Lane**

Sunday Services  
8:30a - Early Worship  
9:45a - Sunday School  
11:00a - Worship  
Wednesday Services  
6:30p - Adult Choir & Orches-  
tra, Adult Bible Study, Youth  
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Sunday Worship - 11am and 6pm  
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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.org  
Email: info@pinebranchbaptist.org

**Rev. Bruce Cannon, Interim Pastor**

Sunday School • 9:45-10:45am  
Worship Service • 11:00am  
Sunday Evening • 6:30pm  
Wednesday Evening • 6:30pm

Growing Together in Christ

### 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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### 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

### 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**  
opc@mikecloy@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  
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# Billy Graham Evangelistic Association

## Billy Graham's 'My Answer': Does God Really Love Me

Many people don't believe they can be loved, or they have the wrong view of what love is. Maybe that's you or someone you know. You feel you're unimportant, unworthy, and unlovable. In this 'My Answer,' Billy Graham gives an explanation of God's love for us that could change your view of it all:

Q: I have a hard time believing God loves me. I know you'll say He does, and sometimes I believe it, but most of the time I don't (although I wish I did). If you knew all the bad things I've done, you'd understand why I can't believe God loves me.

A: If God treated us the way we treat other people, then you'd probably be right. If someone insults us or hurts us, we usually don't want anything more to do with them. We may even want to strike back at them and hurt them in return.

But God isn't like this! Even when we ignore Him or insult Him by the way we live, He still reaches out to us and wants us to come back to Him. He doesn't love our sins—but He still loves us, and He still yearns for us to love Him in return. The Bible says, *"I have loved you with an everlasting love"* (Jeremiah 31:3). How do we know God loves us? Listen: If He didn't love us, He never would have sent His only Son into the world to die for us. But Jesus Christ did come into the world, and He did die on the cross for our sins. Why did He do this? The only possible explanation is because God loves us. The Bible says, *"This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins"* (1 John 4:10).

Don't trust your emotions; they can deceive you. Instead, trust Christ and what He has done for you. Invite Him to come into your life today, and then thank Him every morning for His unchanging love for you.

Get to Know the God Who Loves You.



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## Poem

By Regina McIntosh  
Yancey County

### HEALING HEARTS

Heavy burdens lay on her heart  
She was grief-stricken, falling apart  
Hope had left her here in the silence  
Almost stronger than darkest violence

Doubts beyond her faith, her believing  
Deafened her dreams, left her grieving  
Nothing seemed pure, worthy or pleasant  
The worst of her past crept into the present

Lost in the dread – in her worst fears  
There lived a sorrow full of misty tears  
Quieting her hopes with dusky shadows  
Her heart felt like worry always grows

It would be beyond her understanding  
These feelings bleeding – demanding  
Her faith – her smile – her best insights  
Her soul felt like clinging to the last rites

Prayers only seeped through those emotions  
Clinging to her spirit, trickling through devotions  
Intended to bring her close to the One who knows  
Her heart, though broken, believes He arose

Grieving through the songs, hymns of hope  
Promising that, even in death, she can cope  
Because of One who is healing her, filling her  
Grace and hope beyond the grave He'll stir

Giving her a chance to reach for the hand  
Who made her and saved her... He planned  
To bring her the healing she would need  
On a cross He would hang so she'd be freed

In the priceless moments at the cross, He bid her  
The grace, the faith, the forever – not an amateur  
He made a way for her to be freed, to finally pray  
For love that saved when He took her sins away

Regina McIntosh is a heart who loves Jesus. She is a poet and writer from the mountains of WNC. She has written two books of Inspirational Christian poetry - *A Light In The Darkness* and *Gift Of Grace*. All of her books can be found on Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble or Christianbooks.com. She is currently working on devotional books that will be published soon. Her words can be found on her website at <https://reginariddle.wixsite.com/reginamcintosh/blog>



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By Cody McCain  
Burke County



The concept of rest has become synonymous with idleness. In our modern society and even in our churches, we’ve been consistently taught to work! We’ve been taught to work in our natural lives as well as our spiritual lives. How often have we heard many saints say – including our own selves – that “I’m laboring for the Lord” or “I gotta get busy for Jesus.” We have definitely heard the phrase “Idle hands are the devil’s workshop!” In essence, we have been taught that “doing something” or being “busy” equates productivity. Actually, what we have done, especially in the Body of Christ is confused LABOR with work! There is a huge difference between labor and work when we look at the very beginning of Scripture. When we look at Genesis 2:15 which states, “*And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it*”, we see that it was God’s original design and intent for mankind to work. At this point, man was in perfect harmony and union with God, therefore man’s work was first and foremost with the MOTIVE to please God and secondly, man’s ability to work flowed out of the PRESENCE and POWER of God! I would go on to say that in the beginning, man’s work was following his PURPOSE, therefore work was a JOY and a DELIGHT unto mankind as well! Everything Adam did, he did with the heart and mind of God since he simply operated on who God created him to be and what he was ASSIGNED to do; WORK is PRODUCTIVE and brings forth FRUIT! However, all of this changed after the disobedience of man and the entrance of the curse of sin into the Earth’s environment.

Part of what constituted the curse of sin is found in Genesis 3:17 when God said to Adam, “... *cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;*” The NASB translates this verse as saying, “*Cursed is the ground because of you; With [a] hard labor you shall eat from it All the days of your life.*” The word used here for labor (KJV says “sorrow”) comes from a root Hebrew word which means: pain, grief, OR to SHAPE, FORM, OR WORSHIP! In other words, because of sin, work changed to LABOR because of man’s disconnection from the PRESENCE of God! Man was forced to LABOR out of his own strength and sweat rather than the power of God and even would go so far as to shape or form something that would become an object of worship above the LORD! Does this sound like any of us? How often have we labored in something out of our own strength and wisdom rather than WORK in the realm God assigned us? Labor can also be defined as SELF-EFFORT which ultimately leaves to SELF-WORSHIP; the place where our focus becomes what we can do or what we have done, failing to give God the glory and the honor! Holy Spirit shared something very simple yet profound with me several weeks ago; He said, “To launch out and do something outside of my wisdom and guidance is just as bad as doing nothing at all!” Very sobering yet truthful words!

This brings us to our scripture texts for this morning: we often forget that fact that in the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Mark, the writers record two instances where Jesus fed a multitude of people, with some noticeable differences yet a major similarity we often overlook. In the first account – which we’re most familiar with – Jesus fed a multitude of 5,000 men in addition to women and children, making the congregation significantly more than 5,000. In my study I found out that the particular location of this miracle – according to archeological evidence where an early artistic depiction of this miracle was found on a mosaic in this area – took place on the eastern edge of the Sea of Galilee outside of a city called Hippos in a DESOLATE and SOLITARY PLACE. How many of you know that some of the greatest miracles are performed in a DESERT PLACE?! It is also important to note that many came from the comfort of their cities (including Hippos – which was a very prosperous Greco-Roman city) to follow Jesus out to the wilderness! It is in this setting that Jesus manifested one of his most well-known miracles. Often we focus on the miracle itself but fail to realize a very important command, Jesus issued BEFORE the miracle could take place; verse 19 says, “*AND HE COMMANDED THE MULTITUDE TO SIT DOWN ON THE GRASS...*”

When we jump to the second account of Jesus feeding a multitude in Matthew 15, this time it was 4,000 men in addition to women and children. This time the setting is on another side of the Sea of Galilee but yet in a solitary and desolate place! We also note where the text says that in this instance there were “a few” fish and “seven loaves of bread.” There is significance in the number seven, which means COMPLETION. Before I get to the key point here, I noticed something else: in verse 33, Jesus’ disciples yet again asked Jesus, “*Where could we get enough bread in this remote place to feed such a crowd?*” Now the disciples just ran into the SAME situation in the previous chapter, had they forgotten so quickly what Jesus could do? How often do we forget what God can do when we face similar situations that He’s delivered us out of previously?! This is why the Scripture tells us in Hebrews 2:1 (NIV), “*We must pay the most careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.*” This goes beyond weekly church attendance to developing a WORD based lifestyle, where we continually flood our awareness with the Word of God which I will discuss shortly. The point I want to emphasize is that in this account of Jesus feeding the multitude, one aspect remained exactly the same as that in chapter 14: verse 35 of this account says, “*And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground.*” Yet again we see the motif of SITTING DOWN! This is the posture that God is calling for us as believers...to simply SIT DOWN! Before we can experience a manifestation from the Lord Jesus, the proper posture is necessary!

Mary exemplified this posture in Luke 10:39. When we sit down, we are

to sit as she did and sit at the feet of our Lord Jesus Christ! Sitting at someone’s feet symbolizes a place of SUBMISSION and FELLOWSHIP! Additionally, the Scripture says that she just didn’t sit at Jesus’ feet idle, but she, “*HEARD HIS WORD.*” In Greek, the verb “heard” is in the imperfect tense, which can also be translated like this: “[She] KEPT ON HEARING His Word.” This signifies a continual and repeated action on Mary’s part of attentiveness to what Jesus was saying! Sitting at Jesus’ feet brings us back into alignment with God’s original intention for mankind in Eden: to operate out of the character and nature of God! When we keep on hearing the Word of the Lord at His feet, our inner man is changed, our minds begin to AGREE with God’s Word, and our actions will follow suit. This took place with sister Mary when we look at John’s Gospel account of this supper. In John 12:3 the Scripture records that at this supper – likely after the time Jesus finished his teaching and reclined to eat, after Mary sat at his feet listening – she took very costly ointment and anointed Jesus’ feet. During Biblical times, it was customary to anoint the heads of guests (which she most likely did as well), which was an act of honor. However, Mary’s response to sitting at Jesus’ feet was to anoint His feet, which was an act of DEVOTION. We then move from laboring out of our own efforts to WORKING out of the power of the Spirit of God. Sitting down at Jesus’ feet is a place of rest, which Hebrews 4:10 describes: “*For all who have entered into God’s rest have rested from their labors.*” Resting in Jesus is the greatest posture of submission, fellowship, and honor we experience in Him. Sitting before Him is the most EXCELLENT way to shift from the category of “busy Christian” to “FRUITFUL KINGDOM CITIZEN!”

As I close, this is a time and an hour in the Body of Christ where the LORD is calling us to SIT DOWN! It is time for us to cease from our own efforts and works and sit at His feet. We’ve become so consumed with DOING that we neglect BEING! BEING in the posture of submission and fellowship with the LORD where we crave His very voice and presence. It is in this place that we receive wisdom and guidance necessary to do the WORK He’s assigned to us. This is also where we learn to even disconnect from LABOR that God never intended us to undertake! The old saints had a song that they sang that applied to eternal rest, but I believe that it can apply to resting in the LORD while we live: “Sit down servant, sit down and rest a little while!”

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



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## Have A Deeper Connection With God

By Glenda Ward  
McDowell County



Make a daily habit of confessing your sin to God, our Heavenly Father. Our biggest hindrance to being close to God in relationship to Him is our sin! When sin is a barrier in our relationship with Father God, our confession of our sin to Him removes that barrier. God promises to forgive us when we confess our sins before Him, and that forgiveness is what restores a relationship that has been strained with our Heavenly Father.

Asking God to forgive you of your sins and trespasses simply isn't enough! In the request for forgiveness, the sin needs to be stated specifically. It is the heart-felt feeling of a remorseful conscience and of those who recognize that their sin is offensive to our Holy God, realizing that their sin is what nailed Jesus Christ to the Cross at Calvary. "God I am sorry for the sin(s) I committed," simply is NOT ENOUGH! Get serious about your condition in sin and seek, truly seek God's promise of forgiveness.

### 1 John 1:9

Confession of your sin should free you to enjoy a restored fellowship with God our Father. It should ease your conscience so you can focus on a deeper relationship with our Heavenly Father. Confessing our sins does not mean a shallow reciting of misdeeds and transgressions. It means owning up to your wrongdoing and bringing your life into alinement with God's goodness and commandments, into a right relationship and deeper connection with Him. God can forgive and cleanse anyone from their transgressions and the most terrible of any sins. Many Christians do not understand that God wants to forgive people for their sins. God allowed His beloved Son to die a cruel and agonizing death on the Cross at Calvary so He could pardon our very sins. We are still of this human body and we fall short of the Glory of God daily, therefore we are to continue confessing our sins daily. Our salvation in Jesus Christ is secure. It is we confess our sins so we can enjoy maximum fellowship with our God, our Heavenly Father.

### Psalm 32:5

The confession of our sin brings us relief because God forgives the immorality of that sin committed. The guilt that is felt while in the depths of sin is not a subjective feeling but a liability for punishment in a legal sense. It is not the mere removal of the guilt feelings from sins committed since God brings the conviction on us. Forgiveness is what is needed and required. What is confession? To confess our sin is to agree with God, to acknowledge that He is right to declare that what we have done is a sin and that we are in the wrong to desire to commit the sin. It means affirming our intention to abandon sin to have a deeper connection with our Father God, and to be faithful to His leadership.

### Acts 3:19

Peter called on his audience to repent and be forgiven based on who Jesus Christ was and is today, how He was treated by the Jewish people, and how God had vindicated Him by raising Him from the Dead.

John the Baptist had prepared the way for Jesus by preaching repentance. The first step leading to God's forgiveness is to confess your sin and turn from it completely. "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you." (Acts 3:19). The apostles' call to salvation also included repentance. "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2:38). When we repent, God promises not only to wipe away our sins but to bring Spiritual refreshment to us. Seek a deeper connection in your relationship to and with God and He will give you a better way.

### James 4:8

Submit to God – is self-humbling. Resist the devil – is an active resistance against temptation. Following is a list of 5 statements for how you can have a deeper connection with God by drawing nigh (close) to Him.

- 1) "Submit yourselves therefore to God," (4:7). Realize that you need His forgiveness. Be willing to follow Him.
- 2) "Resist the devil," (4:7). Don't allow him to entice you into temptation.
- 3) "Cleans your hands, ...and purify your hearts," (4:8). Lead a pure life. Be cleansed from your sin. Replace it with God's purity.
- 4) Let there be tears, sorrow, and sincere grief for your sins. Don't be afraid to express deep heartfelt sorrow for those sins. (Reference 4:9)
- 5) "Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord and He will lift you up," and draw you nigh unto Him. (4:10; 1 Peter 5:6).

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

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## Burke County

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70th HomeComing beginning Sunday morning at 10am , July 16th musical guest The Right Side Bluegrass Gospel.with guest preacher Dr. Daryl Harbin.  
Monday, July 17 at 7pm musical guest Fields of Grace with Dr Daryl Harbin preaching .  
Tuesday, July 18 at 7pm musical guest Agee Family with Guest preacher Evangelist Todd McKeehan.  
Wednesday, July 19 at 7pm musical guest Fields of Grace with Guest preacher Evangelist Todd McKeehan.  
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In August DMBC Vacation Bible School is August 10-12,2023 at 6pm  
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Mountain View Recreation Center  
• Archery Class will be held August 8 – September 17 on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 4-5 pm. Age range is 8 -12 years old. Cost is \$30 for city residents or \$40 for non-city residents.  
• Summer Kid’s Camp will be held Monday – Friday on June 12 – July 7 from 8:30am – 4:30pm. Age range is 8 – 13. Cost is \$60 per week for city residents and \$70 per week for non-city residents.  
Collett Street Recreation Center  
• Corn Hole League registration is from June 5 – July 5. Ages 18 and older as of July 1st. Cost is \$50 per team. Each team has two players.  
• Adaptive Programs will have a Movie & Pizza Night on June 28 from 5 – 7pm showing the movie Free Birds. There will also be a Canvas Painting Class July 26 from 2 – 4 pm. Both of these events are FREE.  
• Tennis lessons will be held June 12 – June 23, June 26 – July 7, July 10 – July 21, July 24 – August 4 and August 7-18. Age range is 4 – 17 years old. Cost is \$30 for city residents and \$40 for non-city residents per two week session. Lessons will be held Monday – Friday of the above weeks with your choice between an 8:30am or 9:30am slot.  
• Swim lessons will be held June 19 – June 30, July 3 – July 14 and July 17– July 28. Age range is 4 – 17 years old. Cost is \$40 for city residents and \$50 for non-city residents per two week session. Lessons will be held Monday – Friday of the above weeks with your choice between three 45 minute slots of 10am, 10:45am or 5:30pm.

## McDowell County

Main Street Marion Independence Day Celebration  
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6:30 p.m. Fox & Company Band  
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seat in town at the rodeo grounds.  
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## Mitchell County

Bakersville Events:  
Spruce Pine Events:  
July 1st – Independence Celebration (Downtown Spruce Pine)  
July 14th – Movies in the Park (Central Park)  
July 22nd – Light Up Spruce Pine Christmas in July  
July 28th – Movies in the Park (Central Park)  
July 30 – Aug. 6th – Parkway Fire and Rescue Mineral & Gem Festival

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Let Freedom Ring

By Steve Bietz  
Burke County

The 4th of July, also known as Independence Day, is an annual American holiday that falls on, you guessed it, the 4th of July. Now you may be planning a trip to see the best fire-works in your area or shopping for great sales that the stores often promote over the 4th of July, but the day should remind us about freedom. One of the greatest freedoms our founding fathers put down on paper is the freedom to worship as our own conscience dictates.

On one occasion, Jesus got into an intense exchange with the Scribes and Pharisees. Jesus and the Scribes and Pharisees are discussing fatherhood. The earthly dad of Jesus comes up as well as Abraham the Father of the Jews. And in the middle of this conversation, Jesus says: *"And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."* (John 8:32) Now to you and me that may not appear to be a controversial comment at all. But the answer from the scribes and Pharisees tells us otherwise. Look at their response: *"They answered Him, we are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can you say, 'You will be made free?'"* (John 8:33) Wait...What? Never been in bondage? Not in bondage to Egypt? Not in bondage to Assyria? Not in bondage to Babylon? Not in bondage to Rome? The better statement would have been, when have you not been in captivity? Talk about selective memory. The Scribes and Pharisees suggesting that they have never been captives are downright laughable if it had not been so pitiful.

Now Jesus basically gives them a pass on their selective memory and goes to the main point. Jesus states that your captivity is deeper than you know. Jesus says gentlemen you are free, the Son shall make you free indeed. And the Scribes and Pharisees respond with what do we need to be free from, free from what. You and I understand that the Lord is trying to show how they are captured in the sin problem.

The Jews thought, because of their birth and all their laws of traditions, that they were not really in that bad of shape when it came to the sin problem. They had come to believe, falsely, that in the waters of sin, they were in the shallow end. Their sins were so shallow that the Jews believed that their elaborate righteousness by works system actually saved them. When Jesus tells the Jews of His day in Palestine that He has come to save them from sin, they respond, but we are not drowning in sin, we are not in the deep end of sin, we are in the shallow end and so we can be our own lifeguards. I would hope we know better. I would hope that freedom from the bondage of sin is something we understand that we can not save ourselves from. We need that Redeemer Lifeguard to save us.

As you and I celebrate America's Freedom, may we also celebrate that Jesus promises us even greater freedom. The Son, He has made us free!

Steve Bietz, Pastor, Morganton Seventh day Adventist Church.



The Trifecta

By Lawrence Traynor  
Jacksonville Beach, Fla.



Too Young, Too Smart, Too Rich, To Be An Alcoholic  
It's like a Jeopardy game show question: "What are the three reasons most often given as to why people with a drinking problem cannot get sober?"

What is too Young, as "I'm only ( ) fill in the blank, years old."  
"How can I possibly be an alcoholic, I'm too young?" "Yes, my mother and father drink too much and are probably alcoholics but they are in their mid-seventies."

"Not me, I'm too young to be an alcoholic."  
The undeniable truth is that alcoholism affects both men and women of all ages. What is too Smart, as "I have a degree from a good school and have received excellent grades throughout my entire academic career. I thought only high school and college dropouts could be alcoholics."

"Not me, I'm too smart to be an alcoholic."  
The undeniable truth is intelligence is no more a factor in who may be an alcoholic than the day of the week they happened to be born. What is too Rich, as "I don't live outdoors, I didn't spend last night under a bridge. I have an excellent paying job, a home in a nice neighborhood, an investment broker, a trust fund, and a BMW in my garage."

"Not me, I'm too well off financially (rich) to be an alcoholic."  
The undeniable truth is that money and an individual's wealth play no role in who may or may not be an alcoholic.

My personal and professional experience in the Christian rehab, recovery, and treatment industry suggests it is either one, two, or all three of these reasons why people believe they cannot have a drinking problem.

In my own case, it was all three reasons, "the trifecta" as I like to refer to it, as to why I could not possibly be an alcoholic.

I was 38 years old, a college graduate, and a successful, small business owner who attended Church each Sunday. How could I possibly be an alcoholic? Besides, I had a lot of friends and especially relatives that spilled more alcohol than I ever drank.

I used to say, 'My only problem is when there is not enough to drink.'  
The craving started most workdays between 1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. It was at this time daily I would begin romancing the idea of having a few cold, "Tall Boys" on the drive home. Winter or summer, hot or cold, it made no difference. Stopping each late afternoon at the local convenience store or "packy" as we say in New England and purchasing what I considered my just reward for completing yet another day at work became a daily ritual.

I had become like Norm on Cheers. How else was I to make my way home through the late afternoon Boston traffic? Besides, I worked hard each day and deserved a few beers on my way home, didn't I?

I had always believed alcoholics were dirty, lived outdoors, and drank cheap wine from screw-top bottles.  
Arriving at home each day before taking my jacket off, I would routinely reach into the fridge for yet another of my trusted friends, my Bud.

Oftentimes I would proceed to have several additional ice-cold beers in arm's reach while taking a hot bath or sitting in a bubbling jacuzzi.  
Just one or two more before supper and I'd have captured once again the illusive beer buzz, I so craved at the end of each day.

I thought I could stop drinking any time it became necessary. The simple truth was I was living a lie and had a secret I could not share with anyone. I knew deep down inside I was not able to stop or even control my drinking.

I began to worry that it was just a matter of time before I hit what I had heard referred to as a "bottom" and lost everything. I discovered there are two "bot-toms" an alcoholic usually experiences. There are what are referred to as High "bottoms" and Low "bottoms."

Examples of an alcoholic's Low "bottom" include DUIs, divorce, child-related custody, bankruptcy, job loss, hospitalization, and jail.

How could I be an alcoholic? I was only 38 years old; a college graduate and owner of both a sailboat and a BMW.

It wasn't until Super Bowl Sunday on a late afternoon during the winter of 1992 that my wife provided an ultimatum including a choice between drinking or losing my marriage and children. I gave up, finally surrendering as I was, lonely, desperate, and sick and tired of being sick and tired.

It was in taking a friend and former prep school classmate's advice and attending twelve-step meetings that allowed me to acknowledge I had become powerless over my alcohol, that my life had become unmanageable including the loss of my health, job, wife, children, home, boat, and car.

The tough love extended to me included attending ninety 12 Step meetings in ninety days. In hindsight, this tough love saved my life. The gratitude I have today stems from the fact that I did not lose everything, that I succumbed, surrendered, and acknowledged my alcoholic disease.

Today, with 31 years of continuous sobriety (11,315 days) I understand when I hear someone explain they are too young, too smart, or too rich to be an alcoholic.

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

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God Pulled A "Snow Job" On Me

By Steve Henry  
Burke County



According to the dictionary, "snow job" means "a deception or concealment of one's real motive in an attempt to flatter or persuade."

A couple years after I was saved God pulled a "snow job" on me that "revealed" His great heart of love to me and "persuaded" me to study His Word more to discover just how precious we are to Him.

One winter's day many years ago we had one of the most beautiful snowfalls I can ever remember. It snowed for hours with big, heavy, wet flakes that stuck to everything it came in contact with. As I was riding around in my old Jeep I "just happened" to pass by a public trash site. When I pulled in everything was covered in this beautiful pure white snow, even the sides of the dumpsters were covered. Then I heard the thoughts, "That is the way I see you, I don't see the garbage." Well, needless to say, I had a praise fit right there on the spot. I had church in the parking lot of the trash dump. To think that the God of Glory would see Steve Henry (put your name in the blank) in that way still blows my mind, but that is exactly how He sees us. When He looks at me He sees me in His Son and says he is one of my new creations. He sees me in the same perfection as His Son (Hebrews 10:14). Yes, you heard me right, I am perfect in my Daddy's eyes, don't try to figure it out, just enjoy His grace.

God helped me to see this wonderful truth one day as I was looking at my daughter when she was about two years old. I was outside swinging her and as I looked at her, in that moment, in this daddy's eyes, she was perfect. Now, of course, I know all about all her imperfections and worked with her through the years to help her overcome them, but God help the man that would try to convince me that my little girl was anything but perfect.

That's the way our Heavenly Daddy is with us. He sees us "when" we sin, but never sees us "in" our sin. Jesus took care of all our sins, past, present, and future (Isaiah 1:18 *"Come now, and let us reason together, says 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."*) When we sin, the same One that died for our sins advocates the Father on our behalf. God convicts but never condemns (1st John 1:9; Romans 8:1).

He convicts and when we agree with Him He forgives (sends away the thing that we have allowed to bind us), and cleanses us (takes away guilt) from that unrighteousness.

My hope and prayer are that all of His children will rest in the security that we have in our Savior, after all, He took our penalty so we can go free.

Steve Henry has been a lifelong resident of Burke County. God blessed me with an incredible lady that I have been married to for 43 years. He has blessed me with two wonderful children and two beautiful granddaughters.

Living in the Middle of an Ocean of Churches

By Dennis Love  
McDowell County



Think about this. Did you know you could die of thirst stranded out in the middle of the ocean, just as fast as you could if you were stranded in the middle of a desert?

Wouldn't it be terrible to die of thirst out in the middle of an ocean with water on every side of you, but none to drink?

Now, I don't think I need to explain to you that you cannot drink seawater. We know it is too salty. What you may not know is this. With needing water to drink and seeing nothing but water, you will eventually drink that water even though it is very salty. Here's what happens when you drink seawater. The salt gets into your bloodstream and draws water out of your cells. Your body then tries to get rid of the excess salt by frequent urination. So, you end up getting rid of more water than what you take in and you dehydrate----rapidly! And rapid dehydration leads to death.

Spiritually speaking, we can easily find ourselves in a similar situation. The prophet Amos said these words; *"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord."* (Amos 8:11)

Could those days be upon us? We may not think so because we see churches on every corner. We see preaching on TV. We see spiritual videos posted on Facebook and other social media outlets. We also have access to daily devotionals at our fingertips. However, not everything we hear and see behind pulpits, on Facebook, and TV is the true word of God.

There is a lot of good preaching and teaching at our disposal, but there is also a lot of teaching and preaching that is confusing and false. And, sadly, people are dying of spiritual thirst when they are sitting in the middle of an ocean of churches. The good news is that Jesus, our great High Priest, has opened the door for you and me to approach God for ourselves. We can go directly to Him in prayer and find help in times of trouble. We can open His word, and drink from a pure well of water that never runs dry. So, you don't have to die of thirst even though you are sitting in the middle of an ocean of churches.

The days spoken by Amos the prophet certainly seem to be upon us. If so, we know it is only going to get worse. There certainly seems to be a famine in the land of hearing the words of the Lord. However, we never need to experience that famine personally. We have the word of God, and He has given us His Holy Spirit to help us better understand it. The famine may be in the land, but it doesn't need to be in us! We can pick up His word at any time and have our spiritual thirst quenched. Praise the Lord that we don't need to die of thirst even when living in the middle of an ocean of churches!

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

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Sports Gambling's Legalization:  
Nothing to Celebrate with Smiles and Applause  
By Rev. Mark Creech



Sports gambling is now legal in North Carolina. Gathered around Gov. Roy Cooper in Charlotte at the Spectrum Center, lawmakers and stakeholders smiled broadly and applauded with glee as he signed the legislation into law.

But a lot of us aren't smiling. Instead, we are grieving because we know our State, like Esau in the Old Testament, foolishly traded its birthright for "a mess of pottage." We have been grossly short-sighted and exchanged the long-term value and significance of virtue for the pursuit of mammon.

For those who say, "Well, we can have both," they would do well to remember the words of Jesus, who said: "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other; or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money" (Matthew 6:24).

Some argue the times are changing, and we may as well embrace sports gambling. Yes, the times are changing, but we should at least hope for the better.

During the Nineteenth Century, many sports were created: Baseball, Basketball, American Football, Boxing, Tennis, and Wrestling, to name a few. During the Twentieth Century, these sports and others became widely popular and attracted huge crowds. This period was also characterized by the rise of superstars, including athletes such as Babe Ruth, Jim Brown, Muhammad Ali, Michael Jordan, and Jackie Joyner-Kersey.

The media has played a significant role in the expansion of sports, with sports events broadcast near and far on radio and television, making it a part of the very fabric of American life.

Still, it hasn't only been the entertainment value of sports that has traditionally made it such a grand thing through the decades. More importantly, it has been the morality it inspired. It's been a means for physical and mental development, building team spirit, shaping character, and instilling discipline. Athletics has enabled people to rise above their circumstances and become winners.

Sports have served a significant function in our culture, bringing us together, creating a sense of community and identity. It has been used to promote social harmony and political unity, particularly during wartime.

However, with the legalization of sports gambling in the Tar Heel state, along with the other twenty-five states that already legalized it, the goodness of sports will slowly but surely be supplanted by a culture of avarice and selfishness among players, coaches, and fans. Instead of focusing on the values of teamwork, fair play, and sportsmanship, people will become more concerned with winning bets and making profits. This will lead to the deterioration of the integrity of sports and a loss of respect for the games.

We can expect sports gambling to create an element of corruption and cheating. When large sums of money are at stake, individuals are more prone to bend and break the rules. Match-fixing, point-shaving, and other forms of cheating will erode the honor of the games.

Over time, sports gambling will diminish the role of sports as a source of inspiration and moral guidance for youth. Instead of inspiring them to work hard, demonstrate determination, and chase after their dreams, sports will become substantially associated with gambling and quick fixes.

The result? The generations to follow will be more focused on making money than developing a vision in life or advancing in decency and respectability.

Sports gambling also creates confusion about role models for today's youth. Pete Rose was banned from baseball for betting on it. He bet on his own team, the Cincinnati Reds when he was their manager. Was Rose the unfortunate victim of an overly moralistic Baseball Commissioner, A. Bartlett Giamatti? Or, is Rose now someone to be emulated? How is it possible to have clear role models in the field of sports when it's no longer about who wins on the field but who wins off of it? When it becomes about money, how can we be confident anymore about what's real and what isn't?

Governor Cooper and the Republicans who drove this legislation insisted sports gambling was already happening. But it wasn't happening to the extent it will, as gambling had not been authorized by the state government to become an integral part of sports culture, thereby virtualizing an old vice and empowering it to corrupt and weaken the real virtues of sports.

That's nothing to celebrate with smiles and applause.

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



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Spirit Of Love

By Christy Lowman  
Burke County



Did you know that there are animals that show love to one another and sometimes to other animals and humans? This month I thought we would talk about a predatory animal that shows love. It’s hard to think of a predator that eats other animals being capable of showing affection. Can you guess what this animal is?

A wolf. There were once 26 wolf species, 24 of which are now extinct, all that is left is the gray and red wolf. Wild red wolves can now only be found in North Carolina.

Gray wolves are not only gray but can be black, tan, and white. Wolves are extremely social pack animals that mate for life. Their pack is a family, made up of parents and their offspring. Juveniles live with their parents sometimes until they are three years old, or when they are mature, sometimes they are younger. Juveniles will then leave that pack and start their own. A pack can have as many as thirty members but the usual number is between five and eight.

Wolves only mate once a year. Pups weigh one pound and are deaf and blind when they are born. They are very dependent on their mothers. Older pups often help raise and take care of the new pup litters. New litters usually consist of four to six pups. These pups grow quickly and are big enough to start exploring on their own at three weeks. By ten months old, they are as big as an adult wolf.

Adult wolves can reach as much as 6.5 feet in length, 32 inches tall, and weigh as much as 145 pounds (sometimes more). Their lifespan in the wild on average is 6-8 years but can be as much as 13.

A wolf’s footprint can span up to five inches long. They have four toes with claws that form an oval shape. Wolves can run up to 38mph in short lengths. They usually travel at a sprint of 5mph. Wolves run on their toes, not the pads of their feet.

Wolf packs travel up to thirty miles a day. Their territories can be as large as 1000 square miles.

Wolves have forty-two teeth with a jaw-crushing power of 1500 pounds per square inch! In comparison, a Rottweiler’s jaw-crushing power is 328 pounds per square inch. A single wolf can eat up to 20 pounds of meat a day. They mainly eat small critters but have been known to also eat ungulates (hooved mammals). Supposedly wolves don’t consider humans prey and won’t attack something that is not moving. However, I’m not willing to test out that theory!

A newborn’s eyes are bright blue (even though they are born blind) as they grow their eyes turn yellow. They then glow. They have a see-through covering, called tapetum lucidum, that causes them to glow. It also gives them the ability to see in the dark. Our eyesight is actually better than theirs when it comes to color and distance. Wolves’ eyes, however, are better than ours when tracking movement.

Wolves communicate in several ways. Silent body language is one they use while hunting. They may give a “gaze signal” during a group hunt to coordinate what to do without the prey hearing their presence. Other body language is eye contact, facial expressions, and posture.

Scent is another form of communication. Wolves have over 200 million scent cells. They communicate through urination markings, scratchings, etc.

Howling is another form of communication. Wolves can hear other wolves’ howls up to 10 miles away. Each wolf has its own unique howl. Howling is their way of sending messages to other pack members. It helps them assemble their pack, scare off non-pack members, locate lost pack members, and defend their territory from intruders.

Wolves howl out of love when a member of their pack is missing. They will howl more that night than other nights so the estranged member can find their way back home.

When a wolf howl is followed by a bark, this is an alarm to other members. Sometimes wolves stand together, touching each other in a line, and howl together. Their tails are raised and quivering at the very tip.

Growling, barking, and whining are some other types of communication. Wolves also show affection by rubbing noses when they see each other, and delivering “wet noses,” (licking faces) to another’s face. They also groom one another, nip, lick, and bite to show love. Snuggling and curling up together when they are asleep are other examples of affection.

A wolf’s saliva has healing properties and can heal wounds, fight bacteria growth, and encourage new tissue growth.

Showing affection and love to each pack member gives them a strong bond and keeps their pack strong instead of vulnerable.

Wolves take care of each other in their family, even when they are hurt or sick. They educate and raise their young. They also love to play with one another. When wolves are raised by humans they show these same traits when showing love to their human pack members, but not every human is considered a pack member.

According to Oxford Dictionary, love is an intense feeling of deep affection. Can you find all the ways in this article that describe how wolves show love and affection?

Can you think of ways that love was demonstrated in the Bible? I immediately think of God giving us His only Son that was sacrificed so we could be saved. I also think of Jesus washing the disciples’ feet out of love. Another example is when Jesus performed a miracle and feed the 5000 with 2 fish and 5 loaves of bread. Esther also demonstrated love when she put her life at risk to save her people. Moses’s mother showed love when she put him in the basket and sent

him down the river to save his life. Pharaoh’s daughter showed compassion and love by saving Moses and raising him as her own. There are many examples of love in the Bible. Can you think of any others?

What are ways you can show love to others?

Dear Lord, I pray that You will help us react lovingly and show love to others so they may see You. I pray that we will remember all the examples of love in the Bible. I pray they will help us in our daily life. Thank you, dear Lord, for creating animals that also have qualities that show love. Thank you for the gifts of the fruits of the spirit. In Jesus’s name, I pray, Amen.

*Let all that you do be done in love.* 1 Corinthians 16:14

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





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

Crossword Solution

M	A	S	T		D	A	T	E	S		L	A	N	D
A	B	L	E	M	I	S	H		P	O	O	R	E	R
J	O	E	L		S	H	A	D	Y		R	E	B	A
O	N	E		W	H	A	T			A	D	D	O	N
R	E	P	L	I	E	D		F	A	S	T			K
			A	L	S	O		I	M	P	O	S	E	
B	E	R	Y	L		W	A	R	E	S		E	L	I
O	W	E	S		U		S		N		R	E	S	T
Y	E	A		G	R	A	S	P		D	A	R	E	S
	S	P	R	I	G	S		L	A	I	N	No.277		
S			A	R	E	A		A	R	E	G	L	A	D
H	A	D	I	D			U	N	I	T		E	R	E
A	M	O	S		W	A	N	T	S		A	P	I	N
M	A	L	I	C	E		D	E	E	P	N	E	S	S
E	D	E	N		T	H	O	R	N		T	R	E	E

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The Red, White, and Blue

By Caron Cline  
Burke County



The month of July offers the opportunity each year to celebrate the independence of our nation. The Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, which was a declaration that severed ties with Great Britain. Previously, each of the 13 colonies flew their own flags. On June 14, 1777, the Continental Congress adopted the stars and stripes as the flag for the United States of America, portraying the unity of the colonies against tyranny. The US flag was carried into battle for the first time in Brandywine, Pa., in September 1777, quickly becoming a standard of sacrifice, freedom, and victory. During the American Revolution, 4435 American lives were lost defending the belief that ‘all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness’. By the end of the Civil War, 498,332 Confederate and Union soldiers were dead. These men were willing to make the ultimate sacrifice defending their positions concerning economic practices, government overreach, and the evil of slavery. No one should be considered the property of another individual. Freedom from government control, exorbitant taxation, oppression, slavery, and injustice is worth the fight and the sacrifice that results. The values our nation once defended were Biblical values and the willingness to stand for truth aligned our nation with God, Himself. As long as He fought for America, she was victorious. Sacrifice, freedom, and victory speak forth from the stars and stripes of Red, White, and Blue. Just as the American flag is a standard of sacrifice, freedom, and victory to the citizens of the United States, the cross is a standard of the same to Christians. The entire human race is born into the slavery of sin and subject to a cruel dictator, Satan. A battle between good and evil has been raging for centuries. Yet freedom from the dictator would require the sacrifice of Someone Who was fully human and fully divine. The Creator of the human race humbled Himself, entered time and space as a baby, matured into a man, ministered for three years, and allowed Himself to be sacrificed on a cross for the redemption of the world. As He had promised, Jesus rose again on the third day, victorious over death, hell, and the grave. The sacrifice of the Son of God frees all who are enslaved to sin and breaks the power of the enemy over their lives once and for all. Followers of Christ experience victory over all the forces of evil, overcoming them by the blood of the Lamb, the word of their testimony, and refusing to shrink even from death. This July 4th, as we celebrate the birth of this nation, remember that the flag symbolizes sacrifice, freedom, and victory for every citizen. Yet the greater truth is that the Cross of Christ symbolizes sacrifice, freedom, and victory for every believer. We are citizens of an everlasting Kingdom, a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession. (1 Peter 2:9) That’s worth a fireworks display every day of the year!

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

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# Obedient Heart Fellowship

## Dress For Rain

By Jim Huskins  
McDowell County

In spite of world-wide drought, Western North Carolina is embracing her children in greenery. Wildflowers delight the eye and the mind. Gardens approach full production. Blackberries ooze purple nectar. Clover bloom graces most roadways. The ancient sacrament of converting summer growth to winter feed reminds us that all flesh is grass. None of these miracles would be possible without the blessing of showers.

Rain is a gift. Paul and Barnabas once healed a man crippled from birth. Residents of Lystra attempted to worship these messengers of the Gospel. While explaining whom they should worship, Paul said, *“(God) did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.”* (Acts 14:17) Similar teaching is found in Isaiah 55:10-11, *“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty,”*

I cannot read what the Bible says about rain without wondering why we are not experiencing a nation-wide drought. The Bible links blessing to obedience. Part of the litany of curses which accrue to disobedience is found in Deuteronomy 28:23-24, *“The heavens over your head shall be bronze, and the earth under you shall be iron. The LORD will make the rain of your land powder. From heaven dust shall come down on you until you are destroyed.”* God says that He will reward disobedience with curses. By that standard, our once-great nation is rushing toward destruction.

Our President recently hosted a celebration of perversion. The Chief Executive addressed an assembly of men pretending to be women as “the bravest and most inspiring people I’ve ever known.” In one sentence, he lauded a range of sexual deviance which the Bible labels “abomination” and also insulted millions of soldiers, policemen, firefighters, and others who have demonstrated legitimate bravery throughout our nation’s history.

This national disgrace on the White House lawn was a celebration of “pride.” According to the Bible, pride foreshadows an inexorable antecedent. *“Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.”* The promise of Galatians 6:7 is that divine retribution is assured. All of us will be judged and repaid: good for good, and evil for evil. When faced with the evil which has commandeered our national agenda, believers may be tempted to despair. We cannot afford that luxury. Our marching orders are still clear, and our work is more important than ever.

Paul prophesied our modern culture of perversion: *“For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”* This familiar instruction to Timothy has achieved surreal poignancy. Those who promote “pride” will not stop until every American is forced to endorse their depravity. We who recognize and revere the path of Christ-like humility have much to do.

Jesus instructed His followers to make disciples of all nations, to baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and to teach them to observe all of His commandments. The only means God’s children have to counter the devil’s onslaught is to faithfully and prayerfully fulfill the Great Commission.

The first component of our Commission is to make disciples of every nation. Many churches talk about “disciples” and “discipleship,” but few believers appear to understand the concept. A disciple is not someone who merely knows a great deal about the Bible. A disciple lives and acts and thinks like Jesus. Discipleship is built upon an intimate knowledge of God’s word. Jesus said that the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms are all about Him. (Luke 24:44) Everyone who ignores the first three quarters of the Bible chooses willful ignorance of our Lord and Savior. The only way to learn how to live and act and think like Jesus is to pick up the Bible and read it from the beginning. *“Whoever says he abides in (Jesus) ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.”* (1 John 2:6)

The second part of our commission is to baptize disciples in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Jesus did not tell us to argue about baptism or its purpose. He did not tell us that we have the option of refusing to baptize or be baptized. He said that every believer must be immersed in water.

Finally, our Commission states that we must teach disciples to observe His every command. This instruction is related to the first. Hebrew thought employs repetition for emphasis. By telling us the same thing twice, Jesus is underscoring the importance of living as He lived. Those who insist that Jesus only gave two commandments—love God and love others—invariably define “love” as some vague, warm feeling. Godly “love” is an action verb. Details of “how” to love are found in the first five books of the Bible.

Hell is a gated community. (Matthew 16:18) If God’s people will devote themselves to knowing God’s Word and living like God’s Son, those gates shall not prevail against us. May Holy God grant us the courage and discipline to: *“Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against he schemes of the devil.”* (Ephesians 6:11) What a joy it will be to someday see the entire world clad in God’s full armor while raising worshipping hands and joyful faces toward never-ending showers of God’s blessing.

Jim Huskins is pastor of Obedient Heart Fellowship.



# Covy Rock Freewill Baptist Church

Green Mountain, NC

Covy Rock Freewill Baptist Church hosted vacation Bible school on June 19-21. Multiple children and youth from both Yancey and Mitchell counties attended. Bible school lessons followed the theme of travelers in the holy land. Students visited and learned about the Garden of Eden, the Garden of Gethsemane, the Red Sea, the Sea of Galilee, and the towns of Bethlehem, and Jerusalem.



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# Anne Ministries

## The Whispers Of God

By Chastity Ogburn  
Avery

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

Have you ever heard God speak to your spirit and you know without a doubt it is Him speaking to you? He doesn't have to yell at us, sometimes it's that still small voice. It's the whispers of God speaking to our spirit. He speaks to us to give us guidance and direction in life. In 2018, God whispered to my spirit something very important.

I had surrendered to the call to ministry months prior in 2018 and I was trusting God had a plan. I committed to be obedient, surrendered, and available to what God had in store.

In the early morning hours of September 13, 2018, the Holy Spirit whispered to my spirit Anne Ministries. I remember getting out of bed and pacing the floor. I had heard clearly the name Anne Ministries. “God, Why Anne Ministries?”, I said. It was only a few short minutes and He showed me why?

It was as if pieces of a puzzle were all fitting together in that very moment and the puzzle pieces were all parts of my life. They were the hard and hurtful parts of my life that by the grace of God, He had redeemed. God’s hand of grace was in the name of Anne Ministries. That morning God revealed to me that His hand had always been there and His grace covered it ALL. It was a morning I will never forget.

God reminded me that the meaning of the name Anne was grace. I was then reminded by the Holy Spirit of my two children that were aborted when I was 16 years old. During my healing journey in 1997, I named them Andrew Steven and Lori Anne. God then reminded me of our daughter Lexie Anne. We lost her due to an early miscarriage when I was almost 20 weeks pregnant. God showed me His amazing “grace” in all that He was revealing to me. He showed me that, “Yes, you, Chastity Anne, I have poured out my grace on,” and He wanted me to share His grace with others.

Anne Ministries was birthed into my heart and spirit that morning. God was honoring the lives of my children through the ministry and wanted to use Anne Ministries to extend His grace to those who were hurting and needed hope, forgiveness, and healing through Jesus Christ.

Now, almost 5 years have passed since that amazing morning and I continue to be in awe of all that God is doing through the ministry. I am reminded as I write this that Anne Ministries is a House of Grace. God’s grace overflowing and pouring out to those in need. We offer pregnancy support services but also services to those that need healing from loss.

I’m so glad I heard the whispers of God that September morning. I pray to always have ears to listen to and hear His voice. He may speak to us through His written word, a sermon, or conversations with others. He may speak to us when we are on our hands and knees in our prayer closet. God speaks to us all in different ways. I pray to always have a heart open to hear Him and to obey Him.

Friend, we are all created for a purpose. God has a plan for your life. He accomplishes that plan in our lives as we surrender to His will. We have to step out in faith. We can trust God because His plan is the greatest plan for our life. We can trust that still small voice. Obey Him today and follow the whispers of God. He will do amazing things! Isaiah 61:1-3



# Snow Hill Baptist Church

## On Christ The Solid Rock I Stand, All Other Ground Is Sinking Sand

By Dean Honeycutt  
Mitchell County



Why do I build sandcastles at the beach or do something constructive with the sand? Because it is there, and I do not have anything better to do. I do not like just sitting at the beach, especially during my younger self I had to be doing something. One time I planted a trunk of a tree that had washed up on shore. It was about six and a half feet long and I planted it in the sand like it was growing there. People would walk by and look puzzled as to how did that tree get there. Sometimes I dig big holes in the sand large enough to set a chair down in it. Sometimes we build large sandcastles with tunnels and motes with roads and houses. I get bored so I play in the sand. The little plastic shovels will not hold up to the strenuous task, so I bring a real shovel.

But all my efforts are futile. Because we come back the next day and all my work has been washed away by the high tide. But I will do it again. I know the sand is not going to withstand the oncoming tide, but I enjoy working and playing with the sand even though I cannot stop the high tide.

God has promised us victory in Jesus Christ. He never promised life would be easy or without difficulty. He did promise that He would never leave us or forsake us. He promised that our relationship with Him is like an anchor both sure and steadfast. What I may perceive as futile in our fallen world and the hightide of moral depravity will not discourage me from serving the Lord.

I will not place my hope on sinking sand but on my Rock Jesus Christ for which the gates of hell will not prevail. As Eve is the body and bride of Adam, the Church is the body and Bride of Christ. God caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep, and while Adam was asleep God Opened up Adam’s side and removed one of his ribs. From this rib God made woman. Adam said Eve is now “bone of my bones” and “flesh of my flesh”. What a beautiful picture of the union between husband and wife.


Jesus died on the cross for our sins, and as His lifeless body hung on the cross by the “determinate counsel” of God a soldier pierced the side of Jesus, and from His side came blood and water. We are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ and washed from our sins in His own blood. The Bible says, “Husbands love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word.” Jesus said to him who is thirsty I will give to him the fountain of the water of life freely. Therefore, we are united with Christ by His blood and water. What a beautiful truth of Christ’s love for the Church.

The church is the Bride of Christ and one day Christ will receive His glorious church without spot or wrinkle, holy and without blemish. This is a perfect church. On earth, we have our problems in our churches. That is because imperfect people are in them. But the church that Christ will rapture will be perfect. No sin or sinful people will enter heaven. Flesh and blood will not inherit the Kingdom of God. On that great and glorious day at the trump of God the dead in Christ shall rise first and then those who are alive shall be caught up (raptured) to meet the Lord in the air and there we will forever be with the Lord. In the twinkling of the eye and at the last trump we shall be changed this corruptible body will be clothed with an everlasting body never to die. In my glorified body, I will live forever in my forever home with Jesus my Savior.


Thank the Lord I have a secure salvation, that Jesus worked for and gave His life for. On the cross, Jesus said,” It is finished.” His payment for sin is now fulfilled and sealed in time and eternity. Nothing in heaven or earth, no power anywhere or at any time can destroy the finished work of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

To God be the Glory.

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



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# God of Mercy and Judgment

By Thomas Thorne  
McDowell Count

In last month’s article, we started to examine the second commandment from Exodus 20:4-6, “*You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments* (ESV).” We showed that God being “jealous” comes from the Hebrew ka-na and refers to God having great energy and enthusiasm in pursuit of the righteous behavior and salvation of His people.

The next part of this verse, “*visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me*” also has posed a question for some. At first glance, this sentence sounds kind of harsh and in contradiction with other passages in the Bible. For instance, Ezekiel 18:20 clearly states, “*The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself* (ESV).”

So what is meant by “visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation?” Are these two sets of verses in contradiction with each other? Over the next two articles, we will examine this phrase to see if we can gain a little more understanding of these seemingly contradictory verses. Exodus 34:5-7 is one of the remarkable passages in the Old Testament where the LORD shows His glory and proclaims the name “*the LORD/YHWH*.” This set of verses has very similar wording regarding “visiting the iniquity of the fathers...” Before we examine this phrase, let’s review its precursor Exodus 34:5-7.

“*The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him [Moses] there and proclaimed the name of the LORD. 6 The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, 7 keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation”* (ESV).

Let’s examine some key points in this verse:

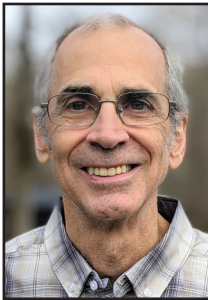
1. First, the Hebrew for “the name of the LORD” is “B’shem YHVH.” The word shem, translated as “name” is referring to His reputation and authority as well as what He is called.
2. The words in these verses are the LORD’s/YHWH’s revelation of His character. His character defines His relationship with His people. Yes, that included 15th century B.C. Israel but it also includes 21st-century believers in Jesus as well as those in between.
3. The Hebrew word for mercy in verse 6 is rahum. This word refers to deep mercy and compassion that is similar to a mother’s gentle love for her children.
4. The word gracious, hanun, according to Hebrew scholars and authors Practico and Van Pelt1 is only used in reference to God and in most cases, it appears in combination with the word rahum (mercy). This is a degree of graciousness and compassion beyond human ability.
5. Grace is that aspect of God’s character that gives what is not deserved, whereas mercy withholds what is deserved. God, in His great grace, gives us redemption. He buys us back from sin, the ways of this world, and the deceiver, even though we don’t deserve it. He saves us, even though we deserve the opposite.
6. The term for “slow to anger” - erek afyim - is a Hebrew idiom for “longsuffering” “patient” or “slow to anger.” This is referring to God’s remarkable and outstanding patience. His patience is demonstrated principally concerning His mercy.
7. Abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. The Hebrew words are chesed and emeth. God’s steadfast love (chesed) is a divine love that is forgiving, redeeming, and relentless in pursuit of those to whom it is to be given. God wants to and is willing to forgive everyone. God’s truthfulness and faithfulness (emeth) carry with them the certainty that the divine attributes of this self-revelation will last forever. They will never fail.

Let’s review the descriptive phrases in these verses: merciful, gracious/compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness (KJV-abundant in goodness and truth), keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity, forgiving transgressions, and forgiving sins; yet He does not leave the guilty unpunished, and the results of sin may be felt until the fourth generation. Pause and think about what we have just covered. God is a God of mercy, and He is also a God of judgment.

By the way, I count, I add up to nine phrases related to mercy and forgiveness and only two related to judgment. Although, these last two, those that appear to be related to judgment, can also be considered acts of divine compassion. For example, God does not leave the guilty unpunished. To have a stable and safe society the guilty cannot be left free to do whatever they please. Being corrected is necessary for a person to realize his or her mistakes. If a person doesn’t realize right from wrong, the chances are he or she may never mend his or her ways.

The holiness and justice of God are part of His goodness and love toward all of His creation. God does not allow sin to dwell within His camps. This is an act of kindness.

Now consider the phrase, “visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children,



and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.” This will be explored further in next month’s article.

1. Gary Pratico & Miles Van Pelt, Basics of Biblical Hebrew, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2007, 335.
2. My apologies, in last month's article I accidentally called Exodus 20:4-6 the third commandment. It is the second commandment.

Tom Thorne and his wife Amy are fellowship coordinators for Avdai El Elyon/ Servants of the Most High God ministries. Tom can be reached at [servantsotmhg@gmail.com](mailto:servantsotmhg@gmail.com)

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Humor

By Buddy Freeman  
Madison County



An irate subscriber called her local newspaper office and loudly demanded to know where her Sunday paper was. The editor said, “Ma’am today is Saturday and the Sunday paper does not come until tomorrow.” The lady said, “No wonder there wasn’t anyone at church today.”

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

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

I must confess to you that I had a drug problem when I was growing up. I was drug to church on Sunday morning. I was drug to church for weddings and funerals. I was drug to the woodshed when I disobeyed my parents, told a lie, or brought home a bad report card. I was drug to the kitchen sink to have my mouth washed out with soap if I uttered profanity. Those drugs are still in my veins and they affect my behavior in everything I do, say, or think. They are stronger than cocaine, crack, or heroin: and if today’s children had this kind of drug problem, America would be a better place.

You did a good job getting all those animals in the ark, “ said Noah’s wife to her husband, “but I really think you should have put the termites in a jar.”

Edward E. Hale(1822-1909), an American historian was once asked if he prayed for the U.S. Senators. He replied, “No, I look at the Senators and pray for the country.”

Questions you might ask: How come a wise man and a wise guy are opposite?... Do massage therapists ever rub people the wrong way?... Why is it that people say they slept like a baby when a baby wakes up every two hours?... Is it true that cannibals don’t eat clowns because they taste funny?... Why do dentists ask you questions when they have their fingers in your mouth?

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

It’s All Good in God

By Stephen R. Clark  
Lansdale, PA



For the past few years, my mantra has been, “*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*” This is what Paul wrote in Romans 8:28 (NIV).

Every time I’m in an uncomfortable or annoying or tough situation, I try to let this verse play over and over in my head and parse through it.

- I know I love God, even if imperfectly.
- I know He has called me; this has been affirmed countless times.
- I know He has a purpose for me, even if I’m not always clear on what that is.

So, whatever is happening to or around me, my all-knowing, all-loving, always-perfect God intends it for my ultimate good. This is true even when I can’t see it.

What I’ve been experiencing as I let this one truth soak into my soul is lessening stress and anxiety.

Long ago I came to the awareness that nothing touches my life that doesn’t first pass through my heavenly Father’s hands and that He will never let anything touch me that I can’t handle.

So, whatever touches me is all good. Eventually.

Knowing this, and experiencing it more and more, allows me to relax. I can walk calmly through whatever is thrown onto my life path and He will make sure it doesn’t destroy me.

And if it does? As Paul writes a little later in Romans, “*If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord*” (14:8, NIV).

It’s all good, either way.

Stephen R. Clark is a writer who lives in Lansdale, PA with his wife, BethAnn, and their two rescue cats, Watson and Sherlock. His website is [www.StephenRayClark.com](http://www.StephenRayClark.com). He is a member of the Evangelical Press Association and a regular contributor to the Christian Freelance Writers Network blog (<https://christianfreelance-writersnetwork.wordpress.com/>).



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# A Pastor's View

## Coming Back to the Father

By Shawn Thomas  
Angleton, Texas



In a state prison in Hominy, Oklahoma, was an area called the “pig slop” pit, into which animal renderings and other food wastes were thrown into big barrels. Every so often, a vendor hauled the barrels away. One day, one of the inmates climbed into one of those barrels. The truck took him away, but when he climbed out of the barrel at a service station, someone reported him, and he was re-arrested and sent back to prison.

In Luke 15 Jesus told the story of another man who found himself in pig slop: the Prodigal Son. The tale of the young man and his father is well-loved, as it is very much “the story of us all”, picturing the relationship we each have with our Heavenly Father.

### We have all left the Father

:13 *“the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living.”*

The young man undoubtedly envisioned how great it would be to leave his father and live in that far country, and it WAS great — for a while! But he ended up impoverished, in the pig slop, longing to be fed with the pig’s food.

This is mankind’s story from the beginning. Tempted by Satan, Adam and Eve ate the fruit God had forbidden them. As a result, they were cast out of the Garden and the presence of God. In their choice to sin, they left the Father.

Each of us since has done the same thing. *“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”* Romans 3:23 says. Isaiah 59:2 says, *“Your iniquities have caused a separation between you and your God.”* All of us have left the Father as Adam & Eve did.

When I was 6 years old, at Christmas time, my sister had a big red balloon in the shape of a bear. I was so jealous, that at one point I took a fork, and popped it, pretty much ruining Christmas Eve! That’s the first specific memory I have of choosing to sin.

Someone might say: “That was not some great sin!” – but it’s not the MAGNITUDE of our sin that matters; but the FACT of it. I knew the right thing to do but did wrong instead. All sin separates us from God.

The story of Adam & Eve and the Prodigal Son has been repeated in every one of us. We’ve all left the Father. Some have gone into a “far country” in a sense, like the Prodigal Son. Others just went “down the road” a little, comparatively speaking. But the distance doesn’t matter as much as the fact: whether near or far, at some point or another, all have left the Father’s house. We’ve all sinned against God.

### We are all loved by the Father

:20 *“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him, and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.”*

In the pig slop, the Prodigal Son decided to return to his father. He didn’t know how he’d be received. But the Bible shows the father always loved his wayward son. It says he was watching ... waiting ... longing. *“And while he was still a long way off ... his father saw him ...”*

When my daughter was young, she was invited by a friend to her house one Friday afternoon. Libby waited all week to go. Finally, Friday came, and there was Libby, 2 hours beforehand, bags packed; standing with her nose to the glass door, watching to see if Rachel’s car might be coming around the corner!

That’s the father’s attitude in this story — and it’s God’s attitude towards YOU! He loves you; and although you have left Him in your sin, He still loves you, and longs for you to come back to Him. The greatest sign, however, that God wants you back, is the cross of Jesus Christ. At the cross, God made history’s greatest sacrifice. With the blood of Jesus, He paid for your sins so you could be forgiven, and be restored to a relationship with Him. At the cross, God said powerfully and finally: “I love you, and I want you back!” Just like the son in this story, you are loved by the Father!

### We must all return to the Father

Verse 17 says: *“But when he came to his senses, he said, ‘I will get up and go to my father’ ...”*

The young man finally changed his mind and returned to his father. This gives us a picture of “repentance.” Repentance is a change of mind, that leads to a change of direction. It means you were going one way – away from God – and you think better of it, and come back to Him.

A few years ago, we took a “Field Trip Friday” to visit unexplored areas of the state. At one town, we took the old main street through a little downtown area — but suddenly, the main street just ENDED, at the foot of a plateau! If we were going to go anywhere else, a U-turn was absolutely required!

Salvation is that way too. A “U-turn” is “absolutely required” to be reconciled with God. You’ve been going in the wrong direction, away from God; so to be saved, you must turn around and come back to Him by turning from your sins and accepting Jesus as your Lord & Savior. You must personally respond to God.

When we lived in Tulsa, I preached a message on the Prodigal Son. I shared how a few years before, a dying woman had written a letter to God, asking Him to save her in Jesus’ name. I said that in the same way, each of us must make our own personal response to God. A little boy sat with his parents in the church that morning. Jason was a typical child; he had done things he shouldn’t have. But as he heard the message that day, he responded by writing his own letter to the Lord, in the form of a prayer, which his mother later showed me:

“Dere Lorde I know I hav send. Ples Pogeve me. I love you, God. Ples come in to my horet that is all I wonte. God you are the greatest God. And in your name amene. Love, Jason.”

Significantly, Jason decorated his letter with a hand-drawn cross: the cross I’d preached about, where Jesus showed His love for him by dying on the cross for his sins. Jason knew he had sinned, and he asked God to forgive him, responding to Him with that letter.

Jason’s story is a precious reminder that we must each personally respond to God. It’s not enough to merely read this story, or understand what it says. You must respond to it, and personally repent and return to the Father. If you’ve never done it before, why don’t you write your own letter to God today, asking Him to save you, in Jesus’ name?

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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### What's Behind the Obvious?

By Marlene Houk  
Burke County



The large room echoed the painting's vast feel of King Solomon's court as the Queen of Sheba presented herself. I felt drawn inward to join the others of the court, gazing at her beauty and the treasures she presented to the wisest man who had ever lived.

Jacopo Robusti (called Il Tintoretto), the leading artist in Venice in 1576, created bold characters in his painting called, The Visit of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon. The linear perspective style of receding floors suggests the vastness of King Solomon's kingdom. I remember staring intensely at the elegant robes of the queen and the dramatic body language of the characters. But, even more, astonishing was the brief glimpse behind the painting as the curator shined a light into a corner beside the king's elevated throne. We saw beneath the painting, behind the obvious as she pointed out the hat originally painted on the blue and white-robed man with the white hair. Fifty years later, I still recall the tall brown hat I saw for less than five seconds.

When I peer into a list of named Bible women, I feel the same way. Catching fleeting patterns, I pause to consider their impact and walk away, stunned at the messages rising to the surface of my understanding. Hidden in a list of named Bible women, secrets to our success in living a Christian life rest on the surface of the ancient pages of the Bible. Here are three secrets to whet your spiritual appetite.

1. Our names can point others to Jesus and His saving power. God considers names important because they define, reveal, and describe people and things. Newly discovered stars receive names from astronomers and scientists. Parents honor their newborn babies with names chosen after much thought. And, God revealed His own name in His Word. When we become His children, He even writes our names on the palm of His hand. As we live for the Lord, our names become synonymous with His character, and others notice. God makes Himself known to others through our actions and words as our names bear influence for Christ. God allowed the named women in the Bible to reach out to us through their divinely-told drama with messages of wisdom and practical solutions. The same problems they experienced we encounter today, and the crises remain basically ageless: relationships, emotions, and actions. Their names become the same with caution or encouragement. Jezebel warns us about anger and craving for control. The Bible equates Her name with a sinister evil. Mary, the mother of Jesus, reminds us, simply by her name, to be gentle and kind, ignoring the taunts and threats of others to focus on Jesus, our Savior.

Our names possess power in the sense of influence. The purpose of the power of our names exists to point others to Jesus.

2. Our godly community can lead us closer to each other and Christ. One of the patterns in the list reveals another secret—the power of community. Looking at the Bible references reveals that a whopping 75% of the list of named Bible women have close or exact references. Their stories could not be extracted from each other. We need both of their stories to complete the messages that God wants us to know from their crises. God wants His people to be in community—encouraging, teaching, giving, serving, discerning, guiding, and showing compassion to others. Together, we are stronger. As we support other Christians, and they provide resources for us, living for Christ emerges as a reality, not just wishful thinking or theory.

3. Legacy leaves a lasting impression on the Gospel. Legacy wafts through our minds with a wisp of lavender buds or maybe yellowed lace, rich with memories. Likewise, Bible stories we cherish form spiritual legacies within our hearts. Sarah, Abraham's wife, begins her faith journey in the Old Testament in Genesis and closes with God's final honor to her in Hebrews 11:11. We can trace Sarah's journey from acknowledging God in the Old Testament—stumbling through doubt, and poor choices, and fighting barrenness—to being in the Hall of Faith in Hebrews chapter eleven. Her story finally ended after millennia as God called her a woman of faith. What a legacy she leaves us of how to travel through life, toward faith, trusting in the promises of God!

Other secrets lay hidden in the list. Search for them. They contain treasures untold to enrich and enlarge your Christian life.

In his painting, Tintoretto depicted the Queen of Sheba as she visited King Solomon. As I ponder the spiritual analogy of the hidden hat some fifty years later, as revealed by the light of the curator's tool, I realized a simple yet profound truth. A list of named Bible women, seen through the light of God's Word, uncovers discoveries of God's vast love and infinite care for His children.

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

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

Education Foundation Awards Grants To Classroom Projects

By Cheryl Shuffler  
Burke County

The Burke Education Foundation, Inc., recently awarded \$3,000 in funds to three Burke County Public Schools teachers for classroom projects. Table Rock Middle School science teacher Angela Happoldt received \$2,371 for flexible seating; Patton High School science teacher Will Singley received \$379 for a device to collect weather data; and Anna Koon, a kindergarten teacher at Glen Alpine Elementary School received \$250 for garden planters.

Foundation Board Chair Chasity Poteat Rice said, “Congratulations to these three innovative teachers for proposing these meaningful projects for their students. The Foundation received 23 requests during our open grants period, and the board had tough decisions to make regarding funding. All of the project requests were intriguing, and we appreciate the time and effort that went into the teachers describing their projects and making their submissions.”

Happoldt said her project seeks to incorporate blended learning models and flexible seating in her seventh-grade science classroom. She said, “Blended learning has many benefits, such as increased instructional time and personalized learning opportunities for students. They both promote student empowerment and engagement with collaborative learning opportunities that are student-paced and student-led. I feel this project would help students feel comfortable in my classroom to be able to collaborate and work with teams when needed.” Happoldt explained that blended learning covers many types of models, and its main goal is to combine active, engaged learning online with active and engaging learning activities in the classroom to provide students control over the time, place, path, and/or pace of learning. She said, “Blended learning offers a range of models that free us from the front of the room and allow us to work directly with individuals and small groups of learners.”

Singley plans to use his grant to purchase a weather science kit to collect weather data right outside his classroom. “A tempest weather station, handheld weather meter, and activity cards can be used to collect data used in Earth/Environmental Science classes. It will open conversations about atmosphere and weather units. Beyond the classroom, coaches and trainers can use it to detect incoming storms and make sound decisions regarding outdoor practices and games. This brings technology into the classroom and provides an interdisciplinary experience, as the data can be used to show trends, look at averages, create graphs, and plenty more that align with math courses.”

Koon plans to incorporate garden planters into science, technology, engineering, and math lessons for her kindergarten students. Koon said, “Gardening is a great introduction to STEM projects, and kids love to learn about nature and the life cycles of plants. The planters will allow my students the opportunity to get their hands dirty and encourage responsibility. It will also provide kids the opportunity to gain a better understanding of where our food comes from. I have also discovered that oftentimes kids are more willing to try different herbs and veggies when they play a role in growing them.”

Burke County Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Mike Swan said, “We are appreciative of the Burke Education Foundation and its efforts to support our teachers and students. Congratulations to Mrs. Happoldt, Mrs. Koon, and Mr. Singley for these opportunities to expand classroom experiences in creative ways for their students.”

Past gifts of the Burke Education Foundation have included assisting with a mindfulness classroom at East Burke Middle School, contributing to the needy children’s fund of all 26 schools, and donating to the Burke County United Way backpack program.

The Burke Education Foundation was formed in July 2016 by a group of Burke County Public Schools stakeholders who wanted to find a way to further support the students and staff of the school system. The foundation officially received its 501(c)(3) status in April 2017 and went to work carrying out its mission, which is, “To support powerful, innovative learning for all Burke County Public Schools students.”

During this grant period, the Burke Education Foundation, Inc. received 23 requests for a total of \$50,449. If you would like to help fund future grant requests, donations can be mailed to The Burke Education Foundation, Inc. at PO Box 972, Morganton, NC 28680-0972.

Cheryl Shuffler is the Public Relations Officer for the Burke County Public School System.



Pipes On The Parkway A Success

By Kate Groff  
Mitchell County

On Sunday, June 4, the Orchard at Altapass held their first Pipes on the Parkway celebration. At noon, Gordon Warburton began his march across the Orchard fields playing the bagpipe. An overwhelming audience listened to its emotionally-charged hum being carried on the breezes into the pavilion—all in recognition of the region’s Scots-Irish heritage. The Mitchell County Historical Society was on hand to describe their work at the Society and their research for a new exhibit in the red barn. After a brief respite, the pavilion filled with the sounds of the Dollar Brothers playing bluegrass, one of the many Scots-Irish evolved musical traditions. And the people danced. The afternoon closed with a rollicking performance by Rewind Goodtimz and more dancing and applause. “It was a great day, a great beginning for a tradition on which to grow and engage our community,” said Beth Hilton, executive director. “Being the first, we had no way of knowing how it would play out. But all the notes lined up for us with the weather, the talent, the people and their appreciation. We look to gather more stories of generations past from our community and to many more first Sundays in June.”

The Orchard is now open from Wednesday-Sunday, 10 am to 5 pm. Located at 1025 Orchard Road near Spruce Pine at mile 328.3 on the Blue Ridge Parkway, it is a not-for-profit working orchard and educational venue, family- and pet-friendly. For information, please visit [www.altapassorchard.org](http://www.altapassorchard.org) or the Orchard Facebook page. Photo courtesy of Brandi Morrow.



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

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Have a Good Laugh

By Chris Rathbone  
Mitchell County



The Bible says in Proverbs 17:22 "*A merry heart  
doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the  
bones.*"

You have heard, I'm sure, the old saying, "Laughter  
is the best medicine!" I recently read an online article  
from the Mayo Clinic on the benefits of laughter. Some  
of the benefits listed were: improvements to your immune  
system, pain relief, soothing tension, activating and relieving your stress response,  
stimulation of the organs by increased oxygen-rich intake and increases endor-  
phins that your brain releases, improves overall mood, and increases personal  
satisfaction. Their recommendation was basically to find something to laugh about  
and have a good sense of humor, it's good for your health!

While I certainly understand that there is a time and place for seriousness in  
life, we need to be sure that there are times we laugh in this life!

Personally, I've always been one that loves to make people laugh. Over the  
years I've bumped into some who apparently believe it's a sin to laugh or even  
smile. They are constantly walking around with a frown on their face, seemingly  
mad at the world, and obviously wanting everyone else to join in on their mis-  
ery. For them, there is nothing in life to smile about, laugh about, or enjoy. Even  
though they are surrounded by the blessings of God in their life, their focus seems  
to always be on the negative side of things. You know the type; "Misery loves  
company!"

There's no doubt that this life can surely bring things that break our hearts. Just  
living in this fallen sinful world exposes us to some of the same trials, tempta-  
tions, and tribulations that even unbelievers face. Being a Christian doesn't make  
us immune to these kinds of situations. However, Christians look at life very  
differently. We know that in the grand scheme of things, Jesus is working for our  
good even in the most difficult times. All the hard things in this life are but tem-  
porary and there is coming a day when our Savior will right all wrongs, heal all  
diseases, mend all broken hearts, and wipe away all tears. Ultimately, everything  
is going to be alright in the end.

Then there's the other side of this life. The side where we bask in the bless-  
ings of our Savior. Our flesh, the devil, this unbelieving world, doesn't want us  
to focus much on this side. The side where we have a Savior that never leaves us,  
where we are saved by His grace, our sins are forgiven, we have been given salva-  
tion full and free, and one day we'll leave this world and be with Jesus forever  
and ever! Aren't those things something to smile about?

There are also wonderful things in life. The spouse that God gave us to have  
and to hold. Children that bring such joy and pride. Not to mention how crazy  
your grandparents are over those grandbabies! Hopefully, we have a church  
family with whom we worship and pray together. We make memories with our  
friends. Aren't those things something to smile about?

What about laughter? Laughter makes the work day go by faster. We can laugh  
with our loved ones as we share about funny moments and memories. These times  
bring us closer to one another and help us build stronger bonds of fellowship with  
family and friends. When's the last time you just laughed so hard your stomach  
muscles hurt?

Don't let this life steal away all the good stuff God has given to you! Look  
around you at all the blessings Jesus has bestowed on us! Embrace the joy we  
have in Jesus!

A happy heart is good for our body and soul, like good medicine! Smile at  
every opportunity that is given to you. Laugh with family and friends when the  
moment calls for it! I believe with all my heart that Jesus smiled, laughed with  
His friends, and enjoyed life with those around him. Children sure weren't drawn  
to Him because He had a frown on His face!

So go ahead, have a good laugh, and smile for all Jesus has given us!

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

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Let’s Love Like Jesus!

By Anita Davie, NCBAM Far West Regional Director

I met Mary during my first months with NC Baptist Aging Ministry, and have not forgotten her. She was living with her son and his wife. They had isolated her to one part of the house—the basement. She never went outside and no one ever saw her. Her basic needs were not met. Her daughter-in-law was abusive to her. And while Mary suffered this abuse, she was also suffering from cancer.



Mary lived in sight of a church but was out of sight. Sadly, her situation is not unlike many aging adults in our communities—and churches. Without hope, they suffer alone, weep in silence, and have no one to lean on.

But with more awareness, we can help the “Marys” around us! As many as five million elders are abused, neglected, or exploited each year in the United States. We may think these types of abuse are happening somewhere else, far away. Not here in North Carolina, not in my community, and not in my neighbor’s house. But they are.

Studies suggest only one in 24 cases are ever reported. Older adults are often reluctant to report mistreatment or admit it when asked. Neighbors are unaware—or think they should “mind their own business.”

Mary was one of the lucky ones. A daughter, who lived out-of-state, came for a visit and saw her mother’s mistreatment. The daughter reached out to a local nonprofit who then reached out to me. I connected Mary's daughter with a local church and turned the whole situation around for Mary. Someone knew of a trailer for rent; the owner got the utilities turned on; the church paid for the utilities and a few months’ rent; they helped Mary and her daughter move into the trailer; and furnish it with household items. All before dark on the first day!

- What are the warning signs of elder abuse?
- Bruises, burns, cuts, scratches, sprains, fractures, dislocations
  - Untreated medical condition(s) or not receiving prescribed meds
  - Isolation
  - Sudden changes in a will, power of attorney, or financial situation
  - Mental anguish and distress
  - Repeated requests to the doctor or pharmacy for prescription refills
  - Hesitation to talk openly; withdrawal from normal activities
  - Strained or tense relationship with family members or caregiver
  - Unsafe or unsanitary housing
- What can you or your church do?
- Pray for God’s guidance. And move!
  - If you suspect abuse, neglect or exploitation, make a report to your local Department of Social Services.
  - Visit the elderly in your community. Listen with your ears, eyes, and heart.
  - Give a caregiver a break! Provide respite, run an errand, help with the laundry, take dinner to them.
  - Visit those who live in isolation. See what they need. Show them that God loves them, and that you do, too.
  - Encourage your church to partner with your local Department of Social Services so that you can offer help or resources.

Anita Davie serves as Far West Regional Director for NC Baptist Aging Ministry. She is available to share more information about NCBAM with your church. Contact Anita [adavie@bchfamily.org](mailto:adavie@bchfamily.org).



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## I Didn't See That Coming

By Steve Williams  
Mitchell County



During our lives, many things happen that we never saw coming. On Sept 9, 1989, I lived in Monroe NC. They were calling for Hurricane Hugo to hit the South Carolina coast. I went to bed that night, not really thinking much about it because we lived over 150 miles away. The next morning I got up and it looked like a war zone from McClellanville SC to Gastonia NC. I never saw it coming. On March 12, 1993, Beverly and I were on our 15th wedding anniversary in Gatlinburg Tenn. It was flurrying just a little, and I asked the people at the motel if was supposed to snow. They told me not to worry about it. They had been calling for snow for days and nothing had happened yet. Well, the next morning I got up and it had snowed over 36 inches and kept snowing the next day. All I could see of my Honda Accord was the top of it and the antenna where the snow had drifted in the parking lot. It took us 3 extra days to make it home. I never saw it coming. On Sept 11, 2001, I was watching TV when two different planes flew into the Twin Towers in NY. No one saw that coming. On November 16, 2016, I took a group of senior adults to Gatlinburg Tenn. for a 2-day outing, and a wildfire broke out and burnt a big part of Gatlinburg down that night. I never saw that coming.

In the Bible, God used many different things in people's lives that they didn't see coming to make them stronger person. Like Moses, he lived like a king in Egypt then he spent 40 years in the desert tending to a bunch of sheep, little did he know that this was getting him ready to lead a multitude of Israelites people out of Egypt to the Promise land. Moses didn't see it coming. I hate to say it but many of us are like Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz. She dreamed there was someplace like "Over The Rainbow" where troubles would melt away like lollipops and gumdrops. She was sure that there was a trouble-free place that she could go. But on her way to that destiny, Dorothy encounters a whole lot of troubles; Evil Witches, a Scary Forest, Mean Flying Monkeys, and an Overbearing Wizard.

In the Christian Life, you can be sure that God has a Plan and a Purpose for our lives. And you can also be sure it is not always the shortest route or the easiest way to get there. See all the challenges that we face in life are maturing us and equipping us for God's big plan in our lives. Seldom does God take us from Point A to Z in life without causing us to stop at L, M, N, O, P, along the way. All our setbacks and detours in life are teaching us a very valuable lesson along the way. You say what is that? Let me illustrate it for you like this. When I was a little fellow my mom and dad bought me a punching bag and boy it was fun. You could take out a lot of frustration on it. I loved that punching bag, no matter how many times I knocked it down, it kept coming back up. I would hit it with a boom, it would hit the floor with a bang and then it was right back up. Over and over I would do that and it would just keep popping back up. The reason it did this is because there was a weight in the bottom of it, that was heavier than the air that was in the top. The foundation of the punching bag determined that it was going to come back up each time. I can guarantee you that somewhere down the line, some things are going to go boom in your life and you're going to hit the ground with a bang. But if you're on the right foundation you will come back up and be able to stand on your feet. Even when you don't see it coming. That's why we need to keep our spiritual foundation strong, so we will always rise back to our feet from the challenges that knock us down.

### Words of Wisdom:

- Life goes on and life is full of setbacks. You have to fight, that's all. N/A
- Progress requires setbacks; the only sure way to avoid failure is not to try. N/A
- Mentally strong people overcome setbacks with confidence because adversity only makes them better. N/A
- Occasional setbacks are probably unavoidable - part of the struggle of living in a fallen world. Other setbacks are due to our own sins and failures, or circumstances outside our control. Tony Evans

### Something to think about:

- Few Americans have had more setbacks than the Pilgrims who made seven times more graves than huts. They still set aside a day for giving thanks.

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



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The Ninth of Av  
By Kurt Bomar  
Avery County

Av is a month on the Jewish Calendar. This year it falls on the evening of July 26th through the evening of July 27th. It's an important day in the Jewish calendar and we should keep an eye on it every year. God seems to plan prophetic events around the Jewish calendar. Let's look at what's happened historically on the 9th of Av.

1. The spies returned from canvassing the promised land and the people said "We won't go in!" This led to 40 years of wandering in the desert and the death of that entire generation of Jews beginning on—the 9th of Av.
2. After years of disobedience, in 586 BC, the armies of Babylon destroyed the first Temple and massacred thousands of Jews—on the 9th of Av.
3. Because Jesus was rejected by the Jews, in AD 70, the second Temple was destroyed, again with numerous deaths—on the 9th of Av.
4. About 100 yrs later, the Romans crushed the Jewish city of Bethar killing over 100,000 Jews—on the 9th of Av.
5. The Crusades of the middle ages, which killed thousands of Jews began on Aug. 15th, 1096—the 9th of Av.

Are you getting the picture that this is not a happy anniversary for the Jewish people? But it's not over.

6. In 1290, all Jews were expelled from England—the 9th of Av.
7. In 1492, all Jews were expelled from Spain—the 9th of Av.
8. WWI began in 1914. This would lead to WWII and the holocaust in which 6 million Jews would be exterminated. It all began on—the 9th of Av.

This July 26th and 27th, let us keep our Jewish friends in prayer. Their unfaithfulness to God and their rejection of Messiah seem to be the reason for their suffering. Pray that they recognize Jesus as the true Messiah, for it is He alone who can break this curse.

Kurt Bomar is pastor of Walnut Grove Church.



Enduring Temptation  
By Christopher L. Scott  
Moses Lake, Washington

"Put it in your pocket and when you feel tempted, touch it and rub it." That was the common advice our addiction recovery small group leader would give people when he gave out the sobriety tokens.

Recovery is a life-long battle. And as a pastor I can verify that some folks who get off drugs, stop drinking alcohol, or shed a gambling addiction are never "free" of the temptations of their addictions. Many times I've seen folks clean and sober for years, sometimes decades, only to relapse into addiction. Usually, it happens, from my observations, when someone is going through an extreme trial in life or that person is placed in an extremely tempting situation. (Sometimes it involves both.)

But Paul's words to the Corinthian church give us hope when we battle temptations. This verse is a tool we can have in our toolbelt. It equips us for the battle against our struggles and trials that appear often in the form of temptations. Paul tells the Corinthians:

*"No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it."* 1 Corinthians 10:13 (NASB)

What a great source of hope this verse provides us! God will not let us be challenged beyond what we can handle. He will not let us get in over our heads. Charles Ryrie says when this verse describes a "way of escape" it means "power to be able to bear testing" (Ryrie Study Bible, p. 1423).

How do we do this? It will look different for everyone. We need to have a friend we can rely on that we can call at any time to say, "Hey, I'm struggling right now. Can we talk?" We need a small group that we can send a text message to and ask them to pray. We need a Scripture to memorize that we can quote in our mind when we feel tempted. We need a pastor we know we can call and organize a coffee or lunch with to discuss our struggles.

While facing temptation will look different for each person, the outcome is always the same when we rely on God. We will be able to endure them!



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



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## Pause . . . and Consider

### Still A Dream . . . Or A Nightmare?

By Ken and Jan Merop  
Cleveland, Tennessee



“Mommy, Mommy, help!”

Between soothing words, warm hugs, and a prayer for peace . . . maybe even a song . . . my child returned to sleep peacefully. But, at that particular moment between sleep and wakefulness, his fear was palpably real. Upon awakening, he could see the truth.

July 4 commemorates the birth of our nation. We remember truths from our heritage. It's a patriotic day of fun get-togethers and celebratory fireworks. We're wowed by the radiant bursts of light illuminating the sky and the accompanying boom in our chests.

With thanksgiving, let's honor God who bestowed his bounty on our nation. The American dream is still hope for all citizens of this great land. But, if we don't wake up soon and recognize that we're turning our backs on what made us great, we may be caught in a nightmare from which we can't awaken.

When the fifty-six courageous men signed the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, they declared by solemn oath to firmly rely on the protection of Divine Providence and pledged to each other their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor.

These men were well-respected prosperous, wealthy landowners who took a huge step of faith together. Freedom meant more to them than their possessions. They paid a high price and won freedom that was based on the laws and principles set forth by God in the Holy Bible . . . self-government and freedom to worship. The government was given enough power to serve along with checks and balances.

But today the lines of right and wrong are blurred. As we see in Judges 17:6, NIV, “...everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” Chaos reigns without adherence to absolute truth and a standard by which everyone can measure themselves. As the God of the Bible has been maligned, a new definition of tolerance has emerged.

So let's ask ourselves if we vote intelligently and with our values in mind. Do we live according to Biblical principles displaying God's attributes? Are our churches proclaiming the whole truth of God?

“For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God;” says 1 Peter 4:17, “and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?”

The American dream of our forefathers was not a nation of self-indulgence, but a godly republic of self-restraint based on God's laws that allowed its citizens to live “in liberty and justice for all.”

How I pray we might awaken and return to the truth of the original dream.  
Selah

#### *Blooming Sparklers*

*There's nothing like Fourth of July celebrations  
to get our hearts pounding.*

*The chorus of 'ooh's and ah's' is like  
an unrehearsed choir naturally blending.*

*But, it doesn't have to happen once a year.*

*Let your garden colorfully explode with blooms  
that nurture that same delight...yet without a sound.  
Let your heart explode in the wonder of God's creation.*

*Let the 'ooh's and ah's' begin!*

*“In the beginning God created...and God saw that it was good.”  
Genesis 1: 1 and 12b, NKJV*

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

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Contrary

By Todd Abraham  
Athens, Tennessee



1 John 2:16 "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father; but is of the world." Everything to do with technology is contrary to the word of God almost without exception. Technology feeds the carnal mind insatiably and keeps the human mind engulfed in a nonstop safari of new adventures. It stokes, like a fire, all the things the above scripture refers to as being of the world and not of God. But it doesn't mean God condones it or that the world is a better place because of it.

The major effect of the digital revolution is getting people's minds focused solely on carnality and things, things, and more things. It overloads the senses with endless wandering. Call it digital hypnosis. It pulls families apart, corrupts children, takes parents' attention away from their children, acts as a crutch for parents teaching their children, and brings temptation right in the secrecy of your alone space. It gives the powers that be the ability to observe, track, statisticize, and alter the behavior of the world population. It speeds up the exposure of illicit things to teenagers and even younger when their minds aren't even equipped to know how to process the information. It multiplies greed and pride and sensuality and perversion like nothing before in history. It makes sinning against God easier than it's ever been due to the reduction in effort to commit such things. It propagates lies with the greatest of ease because the information overload is so vast that the average person chooses to believe what they see not knowing where to begin to verify it.

It keeps the carnal mind in a state of distraction constantly urging the individual to keep it close so they don't 'miss' anything. It makes liars out of almost every human who has access to it insisting they can't live without it. It breaks up marriages and puts our children in imminent danger from those who know how to manipulate them to isolate them to harm them. With the vast amount of research I have done on technology, smartphones, and their overall impact, I have determined by the wisdom that God has given me that the world was a much better place without it. The #1 culprit is smartphones because of their portability. Parents who, without any fear of God or even seeking God for approval, allow their children to own these things. Their minds are so underdeveloped and the devil being keenly aware of this fact goes to work quickly through peer pressure and the fact that most children are intellectually smart enough to dive into debauchery quickly. They haven't been taught enough nor can they have been to know what they ought to say no to. And once they've seen something, it cannot be unseen.

If all that wasn't bad enough, everyone now almost seems to want to be the star of their own reality digital series. This speaks heavily to all three facets of what 1 John 2:16 teaches us. It goes hand in hand with greed which the bible teaches us that the love of money is the root of all evil. The devil is using this to groom the population of the world for complete free will and mind control. To reiterate, technology is the opposite of what the word of God teaches us about selflessness, meekness, putting others before ourselves, standing still and seeing the salvation of God, singleness of mind, not rushing into things, waiting on the Lord, and so on.

If you are a parent who has given one of these wicked devices to your underage children, God IS holding you accountable! You will pay for it. For most of the world today in any developed nation, technology, predominantly smartphones, is the chief idol and religion they worship and serve. The world is once again covered in gross darkness like the days of Noah with one exception. This is after the arrival of Jesus Christ. You best read about the wrath of the Lamb! Repent, Jesus is coming.

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

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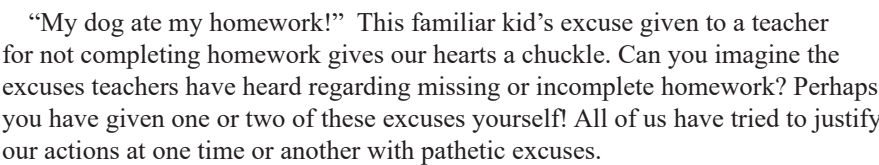
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## My Dog Ate My Homework! What is Your Excuse?

By Carol Wallace  
*Kingsport, Tennessee*



An excuse is an explanation that frees one from fault or blame; release from obligation; something offered for justification as a ground for being excused. What about humanity's excuse for not acknowledging God? He is our Creator and Savior. God's word tells us we are "without excuse."

*"For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse."* Romans 1:20

God has revealed to all humanity HIS invisible attributes. This revelation has come by way of all creation, “the things that are made.” The beauty of what God has created both in nature and in human beings speaks clearly of HIS power. We as humans are responsible for what we see, and humanity is “without excuse.” Through creation God revealed His divine nature to humanity and in response to this revelation, man should worship HIM – not creation. In worshiping creation rather than the creator, we are exchanging truth for a lie.

Would you be hard-pressed in giving an excuse for not appreciating the beauty of earth's spring awakening after a long chilly winter, the glorious days of summer, the magnificent colors of fall, and pure white snow falling from the sky in winter? Can you ignore the nourishing rain and warmth and light of the sun? Have you not observed the phases of the moon and the multitude of stars, the rhythm of tides and formidable sea creatures, beautiful birdsong filling the air with music, majestic mountains, the richness of the soil and natural resources of the earth? Can you explain the very air you breathe as anything other than the gift of God? Through creation, the invisible God becomes visible!

What about the instinct of right and wrong? We are taught as children right from wrong; as we grow, we learn of law and order to live and work together, but also, we have a natural inclination in our hearts. When people do the opposite of what is right, their conscience bears witness.

*'For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves' "...Romans 2:14*

*“Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another”...Romans 2:15*

Sin is humanity's "excuse" to rebel against the idea of a Lord who has the right to rule over them and an "excuse" to suppress the internal law of the conscience. Humanity is "without excuse" to acknowledge GOD as our Creator. Mankind is foolish to try to pretend before GOD or to think that our sins can be hidden from HIM.

Will you report the dog devoured your homework on judgment day? What will be your excuse for not acknowledging that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God, who died for you on Calvary and arose on the third day and now is in heaven interceding for all sinners (that includes you and me)?

Do not put off doing your homework and try to produce an excuse for not having completed it. God has given clear instruction in His word and those who have never read or heard the gospel story will be accountable by his own conscience. HIS creation and internal law (instinct) leave you without excuse.

Your eternal destiny homework can be completed today, as God has provided the answer. The gift of salvation is free, but it did not come cheap. Jesus gave HIS life for all to pay our debt of sin. The sin of yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Do your homework! It is as simple as A B C!

- Admit you are a sinner.
- Believe that Jesus is God's Son and that He died on the old rugged cross and took your sin upon HIM; he arose on the third day and has gone to prepare a place for you so that where He is you may be also.
- Confess your sins, pray, and ask for HIS forgiveness.

Proclaim Jesus to be Lord of your life and share HIS love with others. At the end of the age, God's judgment will be just. We will be accountable for what has been given and how we responded. Will your "homework" be complete? There will be "no excuse."

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*“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life” John 3:16*

*Solution on page 14*

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An Ancient Oven and the Body of Christ

By Tim Tron  
Burke County

*"And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."* – John 6:35

It was a rainy, overcast Saturday when in the moment of time, I found myself leading a tour at the Trail of Faith in Valdese, NC. As my group stood with me in front of the replica of a Waldensian Community Oven, huddled in close, trying to stay dry, I began trying to convey how important bread was to those ancient people's diet. A community oven could be found in every village of those Alpine valleys. As my words drifted along like the water dripping from the eaves of the structure underneath we stood, I realized how much this group of young people were more like those ancient peoples than their local Waldensian descendants. The entire struggle of making bread in such an antiquated stove very much paralleled the lives of these visiting youth. Coming from the Caribbean Islands and South America, they were part of an evangelism outreach program called "The Megabook Group." Their approach to evangelism was one of unbridled, unrestrained passion. The group's American leader espoused their unequivocal ability to reach people that others of our colloquial resources were unable to match. But this fruit of the spirit which they portrayed began long before arriving on our continent. Theirs began in those humble homes, shelters that were often a mere shadow of our American middle-class dwellings. Their parents had raised them in Biblical perspectives that were Christ-centered, free from Western cultural influences. These young people's journey began long before they boarded the airplane to arrive at our Western secular shores. Their story very much paralleled the story of the bread that this ancient oven would eventually produce.

As I shared how the bread was made, describing the oven's use in that process and attempting to convey what it was to taste that freshly baked loaf of succulence after it was just pulled from the hot coals seemed wholly insufficient. There was just so much behind the story that one couldn't know until it was experienced. In many ways, it has a very close correlation to how we come to know the Gospel of Christ – what seems delectable becomes ever more so when one understands the effort and struggle that went into bringing that morsel into being. Many have died to preserve the Word of God. That representation of God in the flesh was as to us as manna from Heaven. Jesus said, *"I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."*

Once upon a time, when I was the Director at the Trail, it occurred to me that the experience, the idea of bringing the Waldensian story to life, would be made even more realistic if we actually baked bread in the outdoor oven. After all, the replica was designed distinctly after one that existed in the Waldensian Valleys. Now, one of the most challenging parts of this endeavor had already been accomplished. The oven at the Trail was beautifully crafted. The stone masons had created a work of art using the field stones from the Burke County area. The replica was a fitting tribute to its predecessor. Now all that was left to do was to figure out how to bake bread in it. But there was one small catch – there were no directions. As in our search for Jesus, trying to go it alone can often be difficult, if not impossible. We need a guide. Jesus told his disciples that he would send a Comforter to guide them. And it is through the Holy Spirit and the Word that we are led. Yet, many still fail to follow the guide even reading God's word. Many attend church expecting the preacher to spoon-feed them every word instead of seeking it themselves. When you genuinely want to know something, you must seek it. As Jesus told the woman at the well, *"But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him."*

As in the case of our oven and how we were to use it - something that had been passed down from generation to generation had all but been lost. Then there were the physical challenges; our replica also had no door for the opening, and there were no temperature gauges or controls. There was much to learn before that first loaf was ever made. My search for understanding led me to several dead-ends, most of which were the locals in Valdese that hadn't ever actually used a working oven like ours – the ancient style. Again, another parallel. Unlike those ancient Waldensians, many, but not all, of their descendants cannot even begin to compare their commitment to faith as were their ancestors. Their faith had not been passed down from one generation to the next as in the days of old. Yes, it's easy to say you would die for your belief in God, but to find yourself burning at the stake, quoting scriptures from the heart as the flames tore into your very being, melting the flesh from your bones, is a different story. There is seldom any comparison between most modern believers to those of ancient times.

To know one's destination, one has to find it. Seeking something you want to reach without a map can be troubling, if not irritatingly frustrating. When we have nothing to read or study, we have to search for clues, for aspects of that goal which we want to achieve possibly left behind by our predecessors, or someone that successfully reached that special place, leaving hidden gems of knowledge for us to use. Imagine trying to find God without the Bible or anyone that knew anything about Jesus. You can honestly say it would be very difficult, if not impossible.

The oven itself was a semi-circular-shaped dome with a flue just outside the door. Years before I arrived, it had been used during an event with the help of an elderly couple that had used one like it back in the original valleys. Sadly, they had passed. All that was left were the traces of smoke residue and the tools they had used to control the fire and remove the ashes. But from what I could discover



through the inspection and understanding of what little was available on the internet, it was a matter of placement of fire and control of the temperature. The idea was that the fire would be built on the oven's floor, then after the chamber reached the right temperature, the fire would be removed, the floor mopped clean, and then the door closed, maintaining the heat for several hours. This allowed the whole village to bake their bread in one day, enough to last a week or more. To come together as a community, as Paul described in Acts 2:42, *"And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."*

Again, the search for instruction on how to make the old hearth work is much like the unbeliever's search in today's world, looking for answers about God. There are places on the internet, others who can be sought out for understanding, and there can be traces as the smoke on the flue, watching the actions of other Christians. The latter is probably the most significant sign of all.

It took several hours of trial and error before we eventually found the proper process to produce that first golden loaf. But that was not even the start of our challenges. Before we could begin the first fire, we had to find firewood. So, gathering as much help as possible, we were provided the forest to find the trees, but we had to go and do it physically. This meant cutting the trees, hauling the wood, then stacking it near the oven. There, by the oven, we began splitting the wood by hand. In all, even though we hadn't built the oven ourselves, we soon learned that to bring a single loaf to life, there would be a lot of work behind the scenes, much like ministry.

Although someone might find their way to Christ alone, usually, there is a concerted effort made by a group or outreach organization to make it happen. There may be years of study, worship, and devotion behind those souls who go out and share the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is most assuredly never the "add water" version of evangelism. Even in Christ's time, many misunderstood his mission. As Jesus quickly found, after the feeding of the five thousand, they came looking the next day for more food. He marveled that they saw the miracles, but their spirits were not filled, only their bellies. He told them, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal..."* In other words, just eating the right food isn't going to save you. Living right isn't going to send you to heaven. There is an effort that must be made to find Him and to receive Him into your heart. We are saved by Grace and not by works alone.

Now, through all of this, the gathering, cutting, and splitting of the firewood, there was a component of the struggle that uniquely, unexpectedly incorporated the help of several people, all of whom were attracted to the idea of making bread in an ancient outdoor oven. As time would tell, that camaraderie of effort soon turned into a fellowship of sharing the Gospel. You see, even though we had a destination in mind, there were hungry souls to be fed along the way. As we worked, we talked about the implications of sharing the bread on the Trail and how it might be perceived. We talked about how Jesus was the bread of life and how folks would receive this as part of their tour experience. This drew many discussions, which increased the awareness, and the reality of scriptures, bringing them to life before we even baked the first loaf.

While that group of young people listened to me describe how we made the fire in that ancient chamber of stone, they had no idea of the extent of time that would go into that moment. When we would pull out a golden brown, delectable-smelling loaf of bread from that oven, there would be countless hours of work, but even more rewarding, of fellowshiping with all who made that moment possible. It is no wonder that even the group that day had no idea of the beauty, the smell, or the inexplicably gratifying image of seeing the representation of the body of Christ being pulled from the hearth on a spatula fitting for an ancient oven to behold the Glory before you.

There are almost no words with which can adequately form the impression that we found the day that the first loaf was placed before the unsuspecting tour group. As we fed them the hot, fresh bread and said, *"This is the body of Christ broken for you,"* there was no wonder, and without expectation, as tears began to flow from the guests and, soon, those servers as well. We never realized the impact that all that had been done would lead to that moment when the Holy Spirit would come down and join us. This scene would repeat itself again and again, as we found that there was something beyond exceptional at the ancient outdoor oven. When the Gospel is given genuinely, without pomp or circumstance, in the original form for what it is, as Christ died for our sins, and that we can remember him each time we break bread in fellowship with one another, it is no wonder that when we do as He taught, we cannot help but be amazed at what the Holy Spirit can do through us. Alone, we are nothing. But when we receive the power from



*continued on page 35*

Freedom Life Ministries

By Jim Smith  
McDowell County

Freedom Life Ministries is planning its second Art Chocolate and Stories fundraiser on Saturday, October 21st from 6 pm to 7:30 pm at the Cross Memorial Baptist Church Family Life Center in Marion, NC. The event will feature a variety of art, chocolate, and stories, all of which have been created by people who have been affected by incarceration.

The event is a ticketed event, any donations will be accepted. All proceeds from the event will benefit Freedom Life, which provides support and resources to people who are incarcerated or have recently been released from prison.

The art at the event will be a variety of mediums, including paintings, sculptures, jewelry, and more. The chocolate will be made by local chocolatiers, and the stories will be told by people who have been affected by incarceration.

In addition to sampling the area's chocolate creations, and meeting the people behind the stories, there will also be live music and a silent auction of the artwork. The silent auction will feature a variety of items, including artwork and more.

The Art Chocolate and Stories fundraiser is a great opportunity to support a great cause and enjoy some beautiful art, delicious chocolate, and unique stories. Tickets are required, and can be purchased ahead of time or at the door.

Calling All Artists: Freedom Life is looking for local and regional artists to partner with us for the Art Chocolate and Stories fundraiser. If you are an artist who has been affected by incarceration, we encourage you to contact Jim Smith, Development Director. (jsmith@freedomlifeministries.org 828-413-9901) We are especially looking for artists – of all styles and mediums - of all ages - who will be assigned a testimony or story from a Freedom Life client and then will use that story to create art that explores themes of hope, redemption, and second chances. We look forward to hearing from you!

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



Roan Mountain Baptist Church

"Change"  
By Russell McKinney  
Mitchell County



In her newspaper column on gardening, Jan Riggensbach gives us a good word on how to plant bedding plants. She writes:

"Giving new bedding plants some rough treatment at planting time may be the best thing you can do to help them survive in the garden. When I was new to gardening, I tried to set tomatoes, petunias, and other bedding plants in the garden without disturbing their roots at all. Nowadays I am much more ruthless...If the plant has been growing in its pot so long that the roots are circling the bottom, I jab my finger into the bottom of the soil and pull down to untangle the roots...If the whole pot is filled with circling roots, I have to be merciless. I don't worry if I break some of the roots; that's better than allowing the roots to continue to circle when the plants are growing in the garden."

I think Riggensbach's gardening advice about breaking up encircled roots can also be applied to life. Oftentimes, the worst thing that can happen to a person is to continue to live the same life year after year after year. Such a circling of roots doesn't lead to health and growth. Instead, it leads to stagnation and rot.

Yes, change can be a good thing, a healthy thing. God told Noah to build an ark (Genesis 6:5-22). That was a change. He commanded Abraham to leave his home in Ur and journey to a land that He would show him (Genesis 12:1-3). That was a change. He commanded Moses to leave the safety of Midian, go back to Egypt, and lead the Israelites out of bondage (Exodus 3:1-10). That was a change. He commanded Amos to leave Tekoa and go prophecy to the northern kingdom of Israel (Amos 7:14-15). That was a change. Jesus commanded Matthew to leave his job as a tax collector and follow Him (Matthew 9:9). That was a change. Peter was instructed to eat meat that wasn't kosher (Acts 10:9-15). That was a change. These are just a few of the numerous, similar examples found in the Bible.

One of my favorites comes from the life of Jacob. Through an incredible series of events, Jacob came to the point where he was prepared to load up his large family and sizable holdings and move the whole show from Canaan to Egypt. You might ask, "Why would he even consider doing such a thing?" The answer is that he had learned that his long-lost son, Joseph, was now second-in-command of Egypt and wanted Jacob and the family to join him there.

Despite Jacob's legitimate concerns about making such a monumental move, he pulled up stakes and headed out for Beersheba. Beersheba, you see, was pretty much the southern edge of Canaan, which made it the jumping-off point to Egypt. This brings us to the best part of the story. While Jacob was camped at Beersheba, he offered sacrifices (Genesis 46:1) as a way of rededicating himself to God and saying, "Lord, I am about to make a major change in my life, and I want to know for certain that this change is Your will." Wasn't that a perfect thing for him to do at that time of his life? And God must have thought so as well because He gave him the assurance he needed by saying to him that night, "I am God, the God of your father; do not fear to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there." (Genesis 46:3).

Getting back to my opening illustration, what God was doing in all this was breaking up the encircled roots in Jacob's life. He was replanting Jacob in brand new soil by commanding him to make a radical change. Certainly, it was a scary time for Jacob, even painful, but the change would produce incredible blessings and fruit that simply would not be produced if Jacob stayed where he was.

Perhaps God is dealing with you right now about a major change that He wants you to make. If He is, I encourage you to follow Jacob's excellent example. Before you officially make the change, have your time at "Beersheba" by rededicating yourself to God completely and letting Him know that you don't want to do anything that isn't His will. Then, if He gives you the assurance and peace that the change is of Him, don't be afraid to launch out with Him. Putting it simply, don't let your fear of the unknown keep you from your land of Egypt and all the blessings that God has for you there.

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

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Keeping the Peace in Your Relationships

By Joyce Meyer

God created you to be a unique individual. You’ve probably noticed that every person is not the same; we all have different personalities with various likes and dislikes. And while we are often drawn to people who are different than we are, it’s these differences that can lead to strife in our relationships.

Sometimes we try to convince our spouses, coworkers, and kids to be more like us, but that’s not what the Bible teaches us to do. We’re all created for freedom and liberty, and if we want to win with people, we need to give them the right to be who they are.

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

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

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

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

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

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

First Corinthians chapter 12 provides the perfect illustration. It says we are all part of one body, each with our own distinct and important role to play. Verse 25 (AMPC) tells us “there should be no division or discord...but the members all alike should have a mutual interest in and care for one another.”

The truth is we all need each other, and when we learn to recognize and celebrate each other’s gifts, it develops a respect that can heal our relationships.

For Best Results, Try This...

When I’m having a hard time agreeing with others, there are a few things I try to do to maintain the right attitude.

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

There will be times when you won’t find a thing to agree on, and in those circumstances, the best thing you can do is trust God, let it go, and become an expert at forgiveness. Yes, some things are very important and you need to stand your ground, but there are so many things in life that really don’t make a difference. I don’t agree with Dave about all his opinions or 100 percent of everything he does, but I do agree with Dave. He’s a good man, and I love him and agree with his character and principles. Over the years, we’ve learned how to “disagree agreeably.”

You won’t always agree with your spouse, family, or friends, but you can still respect and appreciate them. As you do your part to “keep the peace,” God will not only honor your commitment, but He will also bless your life in greater ways than you can imagine.

I encourage you to trust God with your relationships. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you see the things you have in common with others. With God’s help, we can begin to set aside our differences and love people for who they are.

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



Overcome

By John McCoury  
Roan Mountain, Tennessee



For everyone born of God overcomes the world. “This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.” 1 John 5:4 Consider what is involved in this phrase the world. Think of the moral pressures that we face in the world today, the outlook and standards of the godless society that is surrounding us, constantly intruding upon our consciousness with tremendous pressure to make us conform to these attitudes and standards of life. Think of the temptation to cheat and lie; to get ahead at all costs; to be dishonest, not only in filling out our income tax but in every aspect of the business.

Another common pressure that comes upon us from the world is to be sexually immoral, which is especially evident among the young and the unmarried. We are encouraged to feed the fire and satisfy the urge, though it may be wrong and deadly. The pressures around us are tremendous these days, seemingly overpowering at times. There is the pressure to harbor wrong ideas, to react against others the way the world reacts, to strike back and give as good as you get, to be resentful and jealous, to be ambitious and cruel. Don't you feel all this? The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—all this is of the world.

How do you overcome the world? How can you go on, moment by moment, day after day, year after year, living a life that is absolutely contrary to that, based on totally different standards, totally different objectives, and different evaluations? And to endure not only for ten years but for decades, against that kind of moral pressure? How do you keep unmoved in the midst of this and not only remain unmoved yourself but reach out and win others to your side? John says it is by faith; that is all. Not by the faith that you once exercised twenty years ago when you first became a Christian, but by faith in the life of Jesus present in you now. By faith in Him at work in you, amid the pressure, countering it with the pressure of His own life. I once read of a captain of a ship who was describing what it was like to go through a storm. He described the ship amid the waves mounting on every side, with the wind blowing hard and the pitiless rain coming down. The ship seemed a helpless victim of the storm, caught up in the power of these mighty elements that were raging on every side. Its doom seemed sure. But he said, I stood there on the bridge of the ship and I grasped the railing. I felt the throbbing of the engines deep down inside the hull. The storm, the wind, and the waves seemed to be saying to the ship, 'You cannot come, you cannot come.' But I heard the answering throb of the engines saying, 'Yes, we shall; yes, we shall; yes, we shall.' And so we do. That is the way we overcome the world. If we give in, if we reflect the same attitudes and actions as the world, we have succumbed to the world and the wiles of the devil. We have lost our testimony and all power to witness. But if our dependence is on the life of the Son of God, His life is in us, and then, This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Father, I sense the call to battle against the subtle and devious forces of a worldly age. Grant that I might have renewed faith in Your power and move out to meet the world in a venture of faith that makes every day a thrilling adventure. How are we handling the pressures of life? trying to overcome our difficulties, or are we with growing faith resting in Christ at work in us?

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

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

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# YOUR GOVERNMENT PAGES

## NC Senate District 47



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

In 1996, North Carolina was the last state in the nation to grant veto power to the governor. Since then, 116 bills have faced a veto. Some of those have gone on to become law when three-fifths of the legislature voted to override the governor's veto.

Governor Cooper has issued nearly 70 percent of the gubernatorial vetoes in North Carolina's history – more than double the number of vetoes by his three predecessors combined.

Six of those vetoes have happened this legislative session. The North Carolina Senate has voted to override all six. The first two included bills to limit abortions to the first trimester of pregnancy and remove the state's Jim Crowe-Era pistol purchase permit. Both chambers of the legislature voted to override those vetoes along party lines, allowing those bills to become law.

The four bills most recently vetoed each had bipartisan support when they originally passed the legislature but largely failed to maintain that support for veto overrides.

Senate Bills 299 and 331 each passed the Senate unanimously. Senate Bill 329 passed with a 34–9 vote, with nine Democrats supporting the bill. Senate Bill 364 passed with a 34–14 vote, with four Democrats supporting the bill.

Nearly every Democrat flipped their votes to remain loyal to Gov. Cooper. Senator Mike Woodard from Durham was the only Democrat to maintain his original positions on all four bills.

Sen. Jim Perry (R-Lenoir), the primary sponsor of Senate Bills 329 and 331, said, "After voting to support these bills, Democrats have decided that loyalty to their party leader is more important than good policy. At the end of the day, Democrats have a constituency of one — Roy Cooper."

I hope that Governor Cooper, instead of pandering to his leftist base, would set aside his veto pen in favor of what's best for North Carolinians.

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

## NC Commissioner of Labor



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

Summer is here in western North Carolina! Please remember to stay safe in the heat while working and enjoying time outdoors. June was a very busy month for me, and I can't believe we are already halfway through the year!

During the month of June, I spent most of my time on the road traveling to Safety Award banquets across the state. I was able to attend several banquets in the western part of the state that included Monroe, Hickory, Asheville, and Gastonia. I always love the opportunity to spend time in western North Carolina when I am working because the people and the places make it feel like home. Our final banquet this year will take place in July in Statesville. I have thoroughly enjoyed meeting and talking to people all across North Carolina and seeing the commitment of both employers and employees to the safety and health of their workplaces. I want to thank everyone who applied and qualified for safety awards this year. Congratulations!

On June 5, Sonoco Recycling Winston-Salem was presented the Star Award in recognition of its recertification in the Carolina Star program. The Carolina Star program is designed to recognize employers and employees who have implemented effective safety and health management systems and maintain injury and illness rates that meet the criteria for participation. Congratulations to Sonoco Recycling Winston-Salem on this achievement!

Earlier in June, I had the opportunity to speak to a group of Supreme Court interns. I always enjoy speaking to groups of students and being able to share my background and years of political experience, talk about what the N.C. Department of Labor does for the citizens of North Carolina and provide a few words of wisdom that may help these students in their future endeavors.

On July 4, our nation celebrates Independence Day. May we be thankful for the freedoms that we enjoy! I hope everyone has a safe holiday!

## NC House District 86



Rep. Hugh Blackwell  
919-733-5805  
[Hugh.Blackwell@ncleg.net](mailto:Hugh.Blackwell@ncleg.net)

In April, the North Carolina Supreme Court reversed a prior state supreme court ruling that had held unconstitutional the photo ID state constitutional amendment approved by North Carolina voters. The new court ruling allows the requirement for voters to show a photo ID before voting to be implemented in the next election. That election will be certain municipal and local elections this fall. I am confident that photo ID requirements provide a critical mechanism to enhance confidence in the integrity of elections across the state.

Previously, in November of 2018, more than 55% of North Carolina voters voted in favor of the constitutional amendment. After the amendment was approved by state voters, the legislature enacted laws to actually implement the amendment's requirements. So, in December 2018, the legislature approved legislation to do so. That law included such things as the forms of photo ID that are acceptable, along with a list of reasonable exceptions dealing with such things as natural disasters and theft which might prevent a qualified, registered voter from being able to produce an ID. Governor Roy Cooper, who had all along opposed any requirement for voters to show a photo ID before voting, then vetoed the bill in an effort to prevent actual implementation of the amendment. When the legislature successfully overrode the veto so that the implementing legislation could take effect, the governor and his political allies began a process of tying up the actual use of photo IDs by filing lawsuits in both federal and state courts. Thus, despite voter approval of the photo-ID amendment and the veto override, Governor Cooper and his allies successfully prevented the use of photo IDs for voting until the April decision of the current state supreme court ruled the law can be implemented.

Although we expect the voter photo ID law now, at long last, will go into effect, there remains another effort by Democrats and their allies to kill the legislature's effort to build confidence in the integrity of our voting process. Thus, the attempt to stop photo IDs continues in the federal courts. In the still-pending federal lawsuit, however, the US 4th Circuit Court has already overruled the Greensboro federal district court's handling of the case once, finding that the facts of the case do not support a claim of racially discriminatory intent by the legislature. Indeed, the 4th Circuit said that the voter-ID legislation "contains three provisions that go out of their way to make its impact as burden-free as possible". Based on their preliminary rulings, we expect that the district court will strike down the voter-ID law but that a quick appeal to the 4th Circuit from the district court ruling will result in the court again being overruled and that voter ID will be upheld as courts have done in multiple other states.

*God Bless America*

# YOUR GOVERNMENT PAGES

## NC Senate District 46



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

Happy Independence Day! Since its founding, America has been and continues to be, a beacon of hope for people across the world who yearn for freedom. As President Reagan once said, “If we lose freedom here, there is no place to escape. This is the last stand on Earth.” As you celebrate the 4th of July, take time to be thankful for the hard-won freedoms we enjoy in this country. A few legislative highlights from the month of June include the passing of an election integrity bill that establishes election day as the deadline for accepting absentee ballots. It also prohibits private donations from being used for election administration. A second bill restructures the North Carolina State Board of Elections by splitting the appointments between the majority and minority leaders in the General Assembly. The new structure would ensure that one party does not have control of the State Board of Elections and the county boards. Take a look at SB 747 and SB 749 on [ncleg.gov](http://ncleg.gov) for details.

Additionally, the NC Senate successfully overrode 4 of Governor Cooper's vetoes including bills with Democratic support, and two that passed unanimously. Nearly every Democrat flipped their vote on the override attempts to fall in line with their party leader. The vetoes now go to the House of Representatives for consideration. Finally, the Senate and House have both passed versions of the 2023-24 budget, and conference committee members are negotiating a version to present to the Governor. I expect the final budget to be passed by the end of June and hope to be able to provide all the details in the August edition



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Dave Ramsey

I made a stupid new college-graduate decision and have a lot of debt. How do I clean it up before my marriage?

Dear Dave,

I’ve been struggling for about a year, ever since I made a stupid new-college-graduate decision to finance a car. It’s a 2018 Jeep Compass, and I owe \$21,000 on it. The trade-in value is about \$11,000, so I really got stung by the sticker price and everything else. I also have \$85,000 in student loan debt and around \$7,500 on credit cards. The good news is, I make \$63,000 at my job, and that should increase to \$75,000 by January of next year. My girlfriend and I are renting an apartment and engaged to be married in 2025. How do I clean all this up before then?

Austin

Dear Austin,

Well, the good news is, you have the rest of your life to never make this kind of mistake again. I’m really sorry you’re going through all this, son. What a horrible thing to experience right after college.

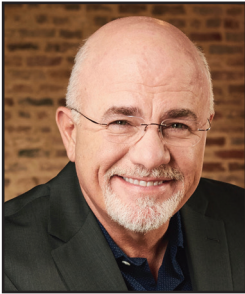
So, you’re \$10,000 upside down on a vehicle you owe \$21,000 on, right? The truth is, you’re kind of stuck. If you’re serious about getting out of this mess and not repeating the same mistakes twice, you’re going to be working like a dog for the next year or two. Right now, you need a serious side job nights and week-ends—maybe two. And I’m talking bare-bones living. No vacations, and no eating out for a while. You don’t need to see the inside of a restaurant unless you’re working there. Get what I’m saying? No unnecessary spending. Period. On top of all this, you’ve got to start living on a strict, written monthly budget.

Now, about your fiancée. I get the desire to fix things before you get married. But married people work together on this kind of stuff all the time. Believe it or not, there’s no perfect time to get married. I mean, it sounds like you two have already decided to go there and figured out that neither one of you are perfect. That’s just called being human. So, there’s really no reason to wait on tying the knot at this point. And the truth is, the two of you can whip your finances into shape faster and much more efficiently working on it together—as a married couple.

Austin, I want you to tear into this debt as your life depends on it. Because guess what, dude? It does!

— 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.*



By Tammy Hopson  
Mitchell County

The wooded trail led down a hill about a half mile to an old abandoned house sitting in a field. The field was still mowed from time to time by an old farmer that lived nearby. Beside the house stood a great old oak tree and by the looks of it, it had weathered many storms.

This place had become sacred to me. I walked down there many times just to pray underneath the tree and talk to God. Sometimes I went to read and other times my children would follow along giggling and chatting as they coaxed our dog to chase them down the trail. When they were with me we always seemed to walk a little further and continued on the other side of the field and through the pines to the shore of the French Broad.

But on one particular summer day in June, I went completely alone. Life had gotten out of hand and it felt like everything was falling apart, my marriage, my finances, my family.....everything. Overwhelmed, I headed down the path that led to the old oak tree. I walked slowly as everything was wrong and all the things I could not fix churned in my heart. I knew I just had to give it all to God. I pictured the oak standing in the field, its arms reaching high into the air as if it too was reaching for its Maker. I remembered all the times I went down to pray and felt that God had heard me every time. Soon my feet were running down the hill and towards the tree. Hot tears poured out of my eyes and down my cheeks. I had to get there fast. It was as if God was waiting for me there.

Once I reached the bottom of the trail I fixed my eyes on the big tree and ran underneath it. Falling on my knees I cried out loudly. I don’t remember the words I spoke but I knew God was listening. I stayed there with my face in my hands and poured my heartaches out to Him. Soon I felt His Spirit lift the heaviness from my heart. Oh, what a marvelous feeling! My cries had reached His ears! Standing up I wiped my face and turned to go back home. Suddenly I noticed the field. I had not seen it on my way down. I was too focused on the tree. But as I turned to look, I saw before me a million white daisies. The field was covered in blooms! As far as my eye could see there were beautiful daisies everywhere! The field was a blanket of white flowers! My heart gasped. Tears began to flow again and I could hear in my heart the words “I will bring you beautiful things.” I believed then without a doubt that those daisies were a gift, that God had commanded the daisies to bloom, especially for me! I stood for a moment in awe of the glistening white flowers. Then with my heart filled with joy, I ran and scooped up all the daisies my arms could hold! I was taking these home! I walked back up the hill, my arms full of flowers and my burdens at the foot of the tree. Once I reached the top of the trail I saw a man standing in the yard and I shouted to him as I held the flowers high in the sky “Look! I just traded my burdens for a bouquet!”

For several days after that, the daisies sat in a vase on my kitchen table reminding me of my walk to the tree. Since then many years have passed but God has always kept His promise to me. He has brought me blessings and beauty.

I have noticed an abundance of daisies this summer. Through them, I know God is nudging me and reminding me that when my heart is heavy if I will bring my burdens to Him, He will lift them from me and provide in their place.....the joy of a bouquet.

*“How much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?” Matthew 7:11*

*Tammy Hopson has been a Mitchell County resident since 1992 and lives in Red Hill with her family. She is a mother of six children and grandmother of 14. She has been a member of Hoyle Memorial Christian Fellowship in Lawndale, NC since 1992 and helps lead The HMCF Youth Group. tammylynnhopson@gmail.co*



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“Keep Growing”!

By Art Dmytryiev  
Yancey County

Jesus Christ said: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." (John 12:24 KJV). What does it exactly mean? The answer is at the foot of the Cross.

By His death on the Cross Jesus triumphed over the forces of evil. He who subjugated the demonic spirits during His earthly ministry has broken their power and made certain their ultimate doom. Jesus’ victory gives us victory over the evil forces that still seek to control us, as we walk with Him in peace, joy, and assurance of His love. Now the Holy Spirit dwells within us and empowers us. Continually committed to Jesus as our Savior and Lord, we are set free from the burden of our past deeds. No longer do we live in the darkness, fear of evil powers, ignorance, and meaninglessness of our former way of life. In this new freedom in Jesus, we are called to grow into the likeness of His character, communing with Him daily in prayer, feeding on His Word, meditating on it and His providence, singing His praises, gathering together for worship, and participating in the mission of the Church. We are also called to follow Christ’s example by compassionately ministering to the physical, mental, social, emotional, and spiritual needs of humanity. As we give ourselves in loving service to those around us and in witnessing His salvation, His constant presence with us through the Spirit transforms every moment and every task into a spiritual experience. The Word of God speaks: "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him". (Colossians 2:6 KJV).

Walking with Jesus is growing in Jesus. As He described the principles of His Kingdom: "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come." (Mark 4:26–29 KJV). The whole process permeates our intentions, our priorities, and our actions. So, we pray, learn, test, try, observe, and reflect - we grow in faith. When Jesus was on earth, He did not spend His time chasing after the things “of the world,” such as striving for wealth, popularity, or success. He spent His time on others, feeding them when they were hungry, healing them when they were sick, and comforting them when they were hurting. That is how Jesus offered Himself for others, and it is the example we ought to follow. We definitely can strengthen our relationship with Christ via fellowship with other believers. When other people meet us and see the so-called Christianity Fruits of the Spirit, they will be able to see God’s character and better understand what He is like. He is the One Who has the power to change people’s hearts. By choosing daily to commune with Jesus, by putting our faith into action, and by sharing in fellowship with other believers, we can keep our connection to God strong, continually growing in His love.

Finally, Spiritual growth, led by the Holy Spirit, knows no limits! Developing our relationship with Jesus Christ is a continual process including every area of our lives. So, this is our privilege of living a life touched by the Creator of the universe and sharing His love with others. The closer we become to Him, the more of a blessing we will be.

Dear Reader, this short message may sound like a challenge and a bit overwhelming, but do not be discouraged. Remember the words of Jesus that "with God all things are possible"! (Matthew 19:26 KJV). So, keep growing, and may the Lord Bless You! Amen!

Pr. Art Dmytryiev 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>



on High, we become more than we can be alone. Christ told his disciples before the ascension, "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." And after which, he instructed them, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father; and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

Yes, go forth like those amazing young people from the Megabook Group, unashamed, unafraid, evangelizing in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost unto the ends of the earth. Time is short. Eternity awaits. And lastly, remember, He will be with us to the end. Thanks be to God.

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



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## Thou Shalt Laugh

By John Martin

HEY, YOU GUYS CAN'T COME IN HERE!

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**God Bless America, Please!**

By Bruce Cannon  
Mitchell County



We have all heard the expression, “Christmas In July.” With July fast approaching (and may already be here when you read this), I want to use a Christmas theme for this article. I want to use a Christmas song sung by the group Casting Crowns. The song, “While You Were Sleeping,” has a tremendous message! It expresses the fact that while the Jewish nation was sleeping the Savior of the world was born. While they were sleeping (spiritually) He became man but they, like so many today, had no room for Him. While they were asleep, He lived a life of love and light among them for years and they missed it completely! And they crucified Him! How could they have been so blind? So deceived? Read the words of this song please and see if it doesn’t have a very appropriate message for the days in which we live:

“Oh, little town of Bethlehem Looks like another silent night  
Above your deep and dreamless sleep A giant star lights up the sky  
And while you’re lying in the dark There shines an everlasting light  
For the King has left His throne And is sleeping in a manger tonight, tonight  
Oh, Bethlehem, what you have missed While you were sleeping  
For God became a man And stepped into your world today  
Oh Bethlehem, you will go down in history As a city with no room for its King  
While you were sleeping While you were sleeping  
Oh, little town of Jerusalem Looks like another silent night  
The Father gave His only Son The way, the truth, the life had come  
But there was no room for Him in the world He came to save  
Jerusalem, what you have missed While you were sleeping?  
The Savior of the world Is dying on your cross today  
Jerusalem, you will go down in history As a city with no room for its King  
While you were sleeping While you were sleeping  
United States of America Looks like another silent night  
As you were sung to sleep by philosophies That save the trees and kill the children  
And while we're lying in the dark Theres a shout heard across the eastern sky  
For the Bridegroom has returned And has carried His bride away in the night,  
in the night  
America, what will we miss While we are sleeping  
Will Jesus come again And leave us slumbering where we lay  
America, will we go down in history As a nation with no room for its King  
Will we be sleeping? Will we be sleeping?  
United States of America Looks like another silent night”

As I write this article in mid-June several very troubling news stories have broken:

- 1) North Carolina legislators are considering H. B. 512 which would legalize video gaming machines across the state. This is a very dangerous piece of legislation that most assuredly will lead to gambling addiction and huge amounts of debt on the part of the players.
- 2) North Carolina legislators are considering expanding the legalization of the sale of medical marijuana. Loosening restraints on this “beast” will lead to increased opportunities for addiction.
- 3) Young children are being counseled without parental consent or knowledge regarding their changing their gender.
- 4) Professors, teachers, and others are losing their jobs for using the wrong pronouns to address persons who have changed gender.
- 5) Public schools are being used to indoctrinate children to support the LGBTQ? Community.
- 6) Our borders remain open allowing many to come into the U.S. illegally. It has been proven that many of those entering illegally are criminals in the country from which they left.

How can this, and so many more very troubling things, happen? The answer is: we have been sleeping as a nation and as the Church. We have failed to take note of our spiritual condition and have not begged our God for mercy, grace, forgiveness, and help. Check out these words to “While You Were Sleeping” again and see if they are not a commentary on our condition:

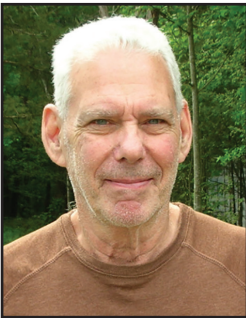
With all the lawlessness pervading America today, with the “civil war” between the races, with America so divided over transgender and LGBT!? Issues, and sin abounding unlike any of us have ever seen, and more people are talking about the coming of the Lord today than in the recent past. They are using Scriptures such as Matthew 24:7,8 to ask, “*Is this the beginning of sorrows Jesus spoke of in the Olivet Discourse?*” Are we seeing the precursor to the Great Tribulation period? Are we so close to the coming of the Lord for His bride that wedding music is beginning to be played in Heaven?

As we have our birthday this July the 4th pray with me that somehow, somehow America can wake up, confess her sins, and that God in His wonderful mercy and grace will be able to turn back this tremendous onslaught of evil that has risen in our midst today. “God Bless America, the land that I love,” PLEASE LORD. In Jesus' Name, we pray! Amen!

*Bruce Cannon is the retired 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.*

Eternal Torture or Eternal Annihilation for the Unsav

By Robert Garner  
Rutherford County



This opening paragraph is the basic summary of (Part 1) BRCN if you missed it last month.

So convinced of my previous position, now un-sealed proves superstition. A common worldwide delusion, “O LORD, let me never be put to confusion”, Psalm 71:1. The universe of all cultures, including myself, have been deceived by The Mythology of Plato, (Mith-Fairytale-Ology–the study of Greek gods by academics). Hade’s kinship god of Zeus, defeats his father’s generation of gods and rules the underworld domain of eternal torture for the unsaved soul.

If God Almighty does not have total and complete control over mankind’s soul, who does? Genesis 2:7, “*And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostril the breath of life; and man became a living soul*”. Mathew 10:28, “*And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell*” [Gehenna H1067grave, everlasting punishment]. Ezekiel 18:20, the soul that sinneth, it shall die.

The Rich Man and Lazarus is a “Parable”; (Strong’s # G3850, “an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. Also, G3850; a narrative, fictitious but agreeable to the laws and usages of human life, by which either the duties of men or the things of God, particularly the nature and history of God’s kingdom are figuratively portrayed”.

Incorrect study of this parable has led many to the false beliefs that the unsaved soul and body, have some form of eternal physical awareness in their grave after death. Remember, God knows the heart of every individual by “*the fruit of his doings*”, Jeremiah 17:10. Strong’s # G4145 defines a “rich” man perfectly, “wealthy to be rich, abounding in material resources, contrary to being rich in Christian virtues and eternal possessions”.

The rich man is contrasted with Lazarus, a beggar, both have died. The rich man is in his grave. Lazarus and Abraham are in heaven, life eternal with the LORD. The rich man requests Lazarus. Luke 16:22-31, “*And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of my finger in water, and cool my tongue: for I am tormented in this flame*”. The Rich Man, symbolically alive in his grave, wants to take hold with his finger, the Word of God, the Gospel, Strong’s # 5205, “that which refreshes and keeps alive the soul is likened to water”.

The rich man now recalls his conversations of cursing, pride, and lying against God Almighty. James 3:6, “*and the tongue [is] a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell*” [Gehenna: G1067]. Symbolically, the rich man is in full-blown spiritual torment. 2 Thessalonians 1:8,9, “*Those that know not God, and refuse to obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, will be punished with everlasting destruction in flaming fire from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power.*” Hebrews 12:29, “*For our God is a consuming fire*”.

There is a great “Gulf Fixed”, a permanent chasm of eternal space and time dimension. Nothing about the Gospel of our Lord and Redeemer Jesus Christ can ever pass between us. Luke 16:26, “*Abraham said, and beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot, neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence*”.

“Unquenchable fire” is a parabolic language for Hebrews 12:29, “*God is a consuming fire*” which destroys everything with complete and total destruction. Everlasting eternal hell fire for whatever is in view. Complete and total Annihilation, everlasting punishment for the body and soul is in view in Mathew 10:28, “*fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell*” [Gehenna of fire] H1067grave, everlasting punishment].

The literal Gehenna of fire was an unquenched fire pit of destruction in the valley of Hinnom, south of Jerusalem. The dump site fire was never put out, or quenched; it was a symbol of the wicked and their future destruction. Corpses, dead animals, and filth were cast out into the pit and burned. Maggots’ eggs continually reproduce as worms (dieth not) fed on filth and decay. The dump was a continually burning smoldering pit referred to by Jesus several times. Mark 9:48, “*where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*”.

Also, the LORD said in Isaiah 66:3-24, “*Those souls that delight in their abominations, and did evil before the sight of LORD, will not see the New Jerusalem above, the new heaven and earth He will make*”. Those who worship and love the LORD “*shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh*”. “The abhorring shame and contempt that these individuals are under is the fact that they remain perpetually under the sentence of God’s wrath for eternity, even though they are annihilated both in body and soul”. See the Annihilation Video Study here. Annihilation - Part 1 - YouTube From www.bmius.org

Luke 12:34, “*For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also*”.

Why is this study important? Without question, we know God Almighty has unlimited mercy as proclaimed by the scriptures, “*For His mercy endureth for ever*”. This combination of words occurs 254 times in the KJV bible. God Almighty does not torture the unsaved in their grave with eternal fire! He has eternal contempt and disdain (scorn) for those that are evil-doers and dishonors His name. Psalm 31:17, “*let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent in the grave*”.

Imagine having a loved one, a non-believer, someone with a focused evil

mindset. The loved one suddenly dies of mysterious activities. The difficulty of mourning that loved one’s death will not be intensified by thinking they will suffer eternal flames of torture in their grave. Psalm 136:2, “*O give thanks to the God of gods: for his mercy endured forever*”.

A consuming fire of punishment completely destroys the body and soul, Hebrews 12: 29, “*for our God is a consuming fire.*” Psalm 22:29, “*All they that be fat [Strong’s #H1879 figuratively rich] upon the earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him: and none can keep alive his own soul.*” Job 7:9, “*as the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away: so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more.*”

The elect of God must be drawn (John 6:44) by the Father to Jesus Christ. Only Christ can regenerate a man’s soul to salvation. When the redeemed of Christ suffer death, their soul instantly goes to heaven to be with the Father and the Son. They will receive a future new perfect sinless body and will be part of the new heaven and earth creation. They will have life eternal.

The unsaved sinner who bears their own sin, the unrighteous of God, will remain lifeless for eternity in their grave. Their corpse will decompose and deteriorate. An earthly sleep metaphor, it’s forever 2:00 O’clock in the morning. “*They shall not awake nor be raised out of their sleep*”.

The second death (Rev. 21:8), when Christ Jesus returns a second time, the earth and everything in it, all unsaved dead souls and bodies in the grave will be burned up with fire and brimstone in the lake of fire. Complete annihilation, everlasting eternal destruction, eternally forgotten as if they never were. 1 Th. 4:14-18, “*Those alive at the return of the Lord and believe Jesus died and rose again, will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall ever be with the Lord*”. 2 Timothy 2:15, “*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*”. Pray for the hope of eternal life, and trust in the faith of Jesus Christ; for there is no 20/20 hindsight correction or possibility to repent in the grave.

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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# Crossword

ACROSS

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

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

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

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

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

15 The twenty ninth book of the Old Testament.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

57 The body is a \_\_\_\_, though it

is made up of many parts (1 Cor 12:12)

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

59 30th book of the Old Testament

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Down

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

28 he himself gives all men life and breath and everything

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\_\_\_\_ (Acts 17:25)

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

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

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

33 he was riding upon his \_\_\_\_\_, and his two servants were with him (Num 22:22)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

47 wicked men have \_\_\_\_ among you (Deut 13:13)

48 In you, O LORD, I have taken refuge; let me never be put to \_\_\_\_ (Ps 71:1)

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

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

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

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

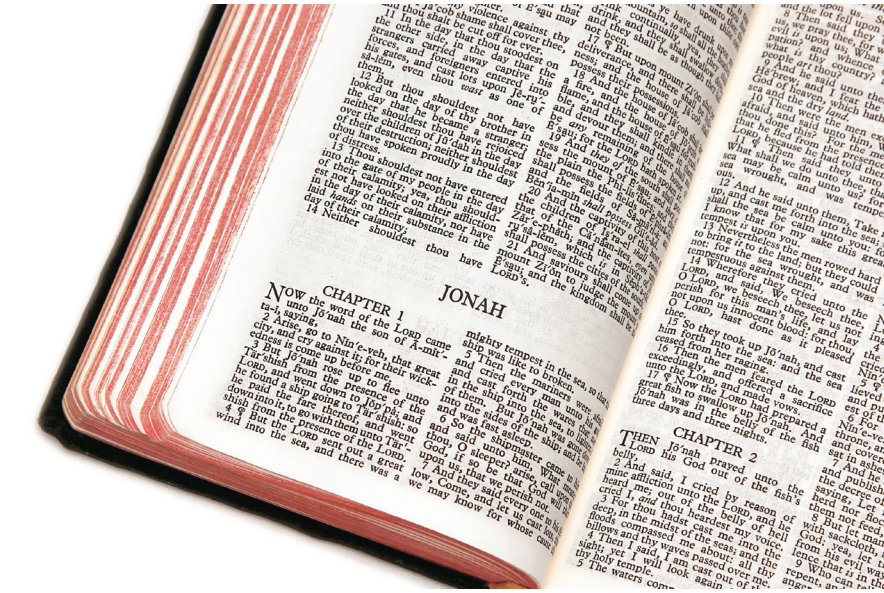
56 they will \_\_\_\_ out the bread by weight (Lev 26:26)

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

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

61 picnic pest (Prov 6:6)

Solution on page 14



The Weapon of Prayer

By Dr. Tom Walker  
McDowell County



Our text says in Ephesians 6:18: *“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.”*

We have been considering the weapons of our Christian warfare both offensive and defensive. It should never be forgotten that we are in a battle with Satan. His forces not only include fallen angels, but also human beings. There are some people the Devil uses to get his hellish ways carried out in this world. While the Devil does seem to win some skirmishes, we know from the Word of God who is going to win the battle. What a blessing to know we are on the Lord’s side and He is on our side!

We now move to the last weapon the Apostle Paul refers to in this important list of weapons, of which he has already referred. Because prayer is listed last, does not mean that it is the least important of all the other weapons previously mentioned. Prayer is extremely important because Jesus had much to say about it. Here are some references you might want to consider.

Matthew 26:41-----*“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”*

Mark 11:24-----*"Therefore I say unto you, “What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.”*

Jesus valued prayer to the extent he gave specific guidelines to our prayer in Matt 6:9-13—*"After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”* Christ did not give these words to constantly be the word-for-word content of our life of prayer. These are guidelines from which to pattern our petitions to God. We are to praise His name, to pray for His coming, to pray the will of God be done, for the Lord to forgive us and that we might forgive others, for us not to be led into temptation, and for the Lord to deliver us from evil.

As we consider this vital weapon in our Christian walks, let us look to a simple outline. First, the frequency of our prayers; second, the scope of our prayers; third the purpose of our prayers.

The Frequency of Our Prayers

He starts verse 26 by saying, *“Praying always.”* On the surface, it sounds like we are to pray twenty-four hours a day. Remember, Paul, is not putting prayer above putting on the armor. He has given the equipment of the Christian soldier, so now is stressing how important it is to pray and seek the Lord. When the Grecian armies went to war, they offered prayers to their false gods to make them successful in battle.

Praying to a god that does not exist is clear-cut foolishness, but spiritual warriors depend upon the Captain of our Salvation. We are to always be ready to pray whether we are in public, in private, within our own spirit, or spontaneously if we are asked to pray—on all occasions.

When the enemy attacks, we must be ready to pray and be alert. We are to pray continually in the Spirit of God and the power and sphere of the Spirit. Jude 20 states: *“But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost.”* That brings up the question, what does praying in the Holy Ghost suggest? It certainly does not indicate praying in an unknown tongue. Here is what I believe it means.

- \* to pray under His guidance and influence, under His energy and power
- \* that we ask and seek His divine help as we come to the throne of grace
- \* that we focus our minds and concentrate upon the Holy Ghost to help us to pray in dependence on His divine help
- \* that we ask and depend upon the Holy Spirit to cleanse our requests and make sure we are asking according to the will of God
- \* that we walk in the Spirit from day to day, offering unbroken prayers to God all the day long
- \* that we set aside time every day to wrestle in prayer before God and for the need of loved ones and for the needs of God’s people and others.

Certainly, we cannot pray too much. Most people could be convicted for not praying at all or not praying enough.

The Bible says in I Thessalonians 5:17, *“Pray without ceasing.”* Prayer is God's ordained way for man to receive things from Him. God moves, acts, and responds to prayer. Prayer is a law that He has established throughout the universe. Why? Because prayer stirs fellowship and communion with God and brings about a greater knowledge and understanding of God. It causes a person to learn more and more about God and stirs more trust as well as worship and praise of God. Prayer stirs and causes every good thing imaginable between God and man. This is the reason God destined prayer as the primary way for man to communicate with Him. This is the reason for this exhortation.

- What different interpretations can one make of I Thessalonians 5:17?
- 1- Praying without fainting as in the parable in Luke 18:1
  - 2- Praying with strength as in Romans 12:12
  - 3- Praying in everything as in Philippians 4:6
  - 4- Praying in any season of life whether things look good or bad.

The Scope of Our Prayers

Note the words *“praying with all prayers and supplication.”* The word *“praying”* speaks of a general conversation with God. It involves praises to God for who He is and for the blessings received. *“Supplication”* is a more intense word

that points to making a request or asking God for something specific. James puts it this way (5:16), *“The fervent, effectual prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”* It is important to notice the word “fervent.” It speaks of an energetic prayer and one that wholeheartedly zeroes in on specific requests.

Someone said there are four forms of prayer. There is adoration, which acknowledges the greatness of God and the smallness of man. In addition, there is the prayer of contrition and repentance. Also, there is the prayer of thanksgiving and gratitude. Finally, there is the prayer of supplication, petition, and intercession.

The Assistant in Our Prayers

Think about the words, *“In the Spirit.”* Rom 8:26 tells us about the involvement of the Spirit in prayer and how He assists us when we pray. *“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”*

Your prayers may seem weak and you may feel like a failure in prayer. But, take heart, be encouraged, because the Holy Ghost assists you in your prayer life if He dwells within you.

The Caution in Our Prayers

Note the words--*“Watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.”* We should watch, stay awake, be attentive, and be ready as we seek the Lord in prayer and supplication. According to the Bible, it is of the utmost importance that we do not go to sleep in the spiritual battle in which we find ourselves.

Because of the urgency of the hour, we must persevere. To persevere is to be persistent, or keep on doing something, despite difficulty or delay in achieving success. The Bible teaches persistence in prayer if we are going to get the help we need (Matt. 7:7-8).

We are to keep on asking and keep on knocking before the Lord in the petition. We need to supplicate because many others need our specific prayers for their needs. Don’t be too general in your praying; get specific if you want to get help for others or yourself.

Whatever we may fail daily, we dare not fail to pray because so many blessings are missed when we do not seek the face of God. If we are going to succeed in a spiritual battle, prayer is an indispensable way to succeed in that struggle.

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

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

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# Hurry, A Harrowing Hell

By Andrew Goins  
Watauga County

What is the relationship between this unhurried Christian life and the baptized imagination that enables us to experience our particular and peculiar places as bethels? Watching and waiting. We watch the world around us, with eyes wide open to the world we inhabit to develop the habit of not merely seeing but perceiving heaven on earth.

A hurried life is declaring war on time itself. It is trying to outpace time by getting things done and done quickly. But time marches forward, beating the drum of tic, toc, tic, toc, like an alarm clock waking us up to fears of failure, fears of living inefficiently and thus ineffectively. The lie believed is that "I am what I do." If I am what I do, I must do and do so efficiently. The church has believed this lie in becoming programmatic. The programmatic church is a parasitical church that sucks the nutrients from the rest of the Body. It believes people encounter God by doing and doing, not being. The parasite of programs slithers like a snake whispering the lie of justification by works. "You are what you do," it says. "You can become like God if you do more," it says. The American church believes this lie, and imbibes this lie by "plugging people in." This is how the church has waged a war against time that leaves Christians anxious, beaten up, and burnt out. We have raced time, but now we are out of breath.

So Jesus says "Blessed are those who are out of breath, for theirs is the kingdom of God." There is good news in that Jesus has come to give us mouth-to-mouth CPR. To breathe in us again. To restore our spirit by giving us His Spirit. This is what the church needs. We need to feel our loss of breath in the deep depths of the harrowing hell of a hurry. We need to repent. We have had our eyes fixed on justification by works for so long. We need to slow down. We need to stop. We need to rest.

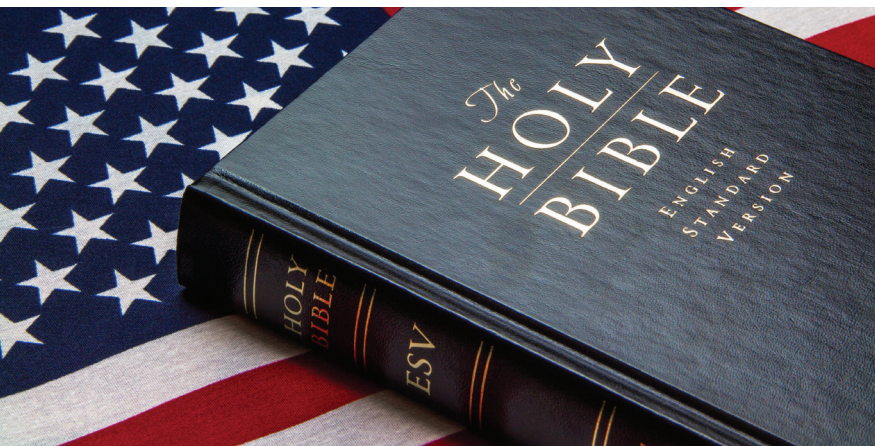
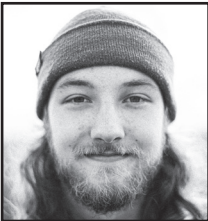
N.T. Wright writes "If the Spirit is the one who brings God's future forward into the present, worshiping in the Spirit of God who raised Jesus from the dead means standing in the overlap between heaven and earth and also at the place where past, present, and future are mysteriously held together."

We need to breathe deep the Spirit of God that raised Jesus from the dead so that we can see the heaven-earth-ness of now as the future and past piercing this present moment as we harken heaven and herald the resurrection life through the Spirit of God. How do we stand in the overlap between heaven and earth? We wait and watch.

Watching requires waiting. It requires waving the white flag of surrender on the war we have waged on time. We announce the kingdom by renouncing hurry. Rather than race time, we must inhabit time. We speak about time as though it is something we own. "I spend my time...I use my time...I have free time" as though time could be haggled, bartered, or possessed. We cannot possess time. Time possesses us. The poet Malcomb Guite uses the phrase "timelessness re-sounding into time." This encapsulates what the Christian life is about. The future and past pierce this moment which is a movement simultaneously within and toward eternity. How do we get in on this movement of eternity that is both now and not yet? By running the pace of the kingdom. It is a slow pace. Before Jesus announces the kingdom in pithy parables, he says "You will be ever hearing but never understanding, you will be ever seeing but never perceiving."

We are after "listening creation into speech" as kingdom people. This requires us to listen to understand, which requires pondering. Slowly turning over each word that worms its way into our souls. Words that whittle us like wood to kindle wonder with the kindling of worry burned, buried, and carried to our roots to nourish our bones and branches, sap and marrow. The listening that Jesus is inviting us into is a listening that requires slowing down and pondering in such a way as to allow each word to seep into our soul and settle our soul by turning our worldview upside down (right side up) to view the kingdom. To view the kingdom requires a different kind of seeing. It requires perceiving. Perceiving the pied goodness that covers creation as the waters cover the seas. It requires a waiting that leads us into watching. This perception is what it means to be filled with the Spirit and stand in the overlap between heaven and earth. This perception is also what it means to stand at the place where "past, present, and future are mysteriously held together."

Andrew Goins is on staff for a campus ministry at Appalachian State University called Ratio Christi. He also works as a youth leader and worship leader at Arbor Dale Presbyterian Church in Banner Elk. Andrew is committed to simply and thoroughly loving his wife Bethany, growing in his bible nerdiness, delighting in good books (theology, poetry, and select fiction), music, photography, creation, and in gathering people together for bible studies, a shared meal, or making music





# SALT & Light

Marion, NC | 2023



**Lt. Governor  
Mark Robinson**



**Judge  
Jeanine Pirro**

## SEPTEMBER 22-23 NEBO CROSSING CHURCH



**Dr. Ralph  
Reed**



**Dr. Robert  
Malone**



**Pastor Paul  
Brintley**



**Clarence  
Henderson**



**Coach Matt  
Doherty**



**Pastor John  
Amanchukwu**

The 6th annual Salt & Light Conference empowers and equips faithful conservatives across North Carolina to stand for their values at the polls and in the public arena. The Faith & Freedom Coalition conference celebrates its 6th year by welcoming 30+ national and state leaders to the platform who declare the TRUTH of God's Word to the cultural issues of the day.

Hosted by Nebo Crossing Church just off I-40 in Marion, this year's event brings those engaged on the front lines of the cultural battle to educate, equip, and encourage attendees to stand up and become part of the cultural conversation, encouraging attendees to follow the biblical mandate of being Salt & Light.



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