



# BLUE RIDGE CHRISTIAN NEWS



## Selah

### The September Project

By Sandy Mayle  
Erie, Pa.



Although the nearing of September signals the end of summer days, the dying of leaves, the finality of harvest... I think of autumn as a time for beginnings.

I think the reason centers around school. I still remember the excitement of new clothes and new schoolbooks, new teachers, and new discoveries. Although those days are far behind me now, when September approaches I'm once again yearning to start something new.

So come September 1 a few years ago, I was excited when the Lord led me to begin a new project: Every day of that month He would lead me to one Bible verse or section of scripture to memorize.

Do I hear you say, "Ugh, what was so exciting about that"?

Just this - each verse would be tailored to God's specific purposes and my specific needs. Together they would make a collection of personalized keys to walking my life with God. Of course, all of His Word would continue to be vital to me. But at the end of the month, I would have thirty verses memorized and recorded on a stack of index cards - verses handpicked by God Himself to help me as I make my way through the rest of my life.

But time and autoimmune disease and medication now fogged my brain. By now my store of memorized scripture consisted of verses I'd learned as a child or along my spiritual journey. I hadn't added much to the cache recently. Could I do this?

The Lord led me to the first day's verse, and then the second, and on we went. As it turned out, the project wasn't the major effort I feared it would be. Yes, I memorized the verses each day, but nearly all had been key to my spiritual growth in the past or were at least very familiar.

Day after day I opened the Scriptures in the morning and the Spirit led me to the day's verse, sometimes by popping a phrase into my mind, sometimes by impressing a certain book of the Bible to leaf through. He gave me verses like:

- "Who is he who will devote himself to be close to me?" (Jer. 30:21 NIV). A life-verse of mine, but oh do I need to be reminded of it sometimes!

- "The Sovereign Lord has given me an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen

like one being taught" (Isaiah 50:4 NIV). I needed an instructed tongue!

- "I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord" (Ps. 27:13-14 NIV). This was given during a very distressing family crisis.

Somewhere around day twenty-six, an interesting thing began to happen. The verses I'd been learning began to pop into my head while eating breakfast, taking a walk, or standing in the shower. They were lodging in my soul, giving me something to take hold of, think about, and put into practice.

I began to really believe that these thirty verses were not just random picks. Each morning the Holy Spirit knew what I would need for not only the day ahead but the days ahead. He was equipping me for my tomorrow.

On the last day of the month, God dropped the starting phrase of the final verse neatly into my mind: "For the word of God is living and active..." Within a few minutes I had located it in my Bible and read the rest of it: "...Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Heb. 4:12 NIV). What a great verse to end on! The Word I'd been hiding in my heart was - is - living and active, penetrating and authoritative.

Thirty verses were memorized. Thirty verses are hidden in my heart, yet always near at hand... a "living library" of my own!

What was so exciting about that September (or any month) Project? Try it and find out for yourself!

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*Sandy Mayle is a freelancer who has written for Focus on the Family, Prayer Connect, Just Between Us, and many other publications. She and her husband Dave have been married 48 years and have three sons and eight grandchildren. She can be contacted at [dasmayle@gmail.com](mailto:dasmayle@gmail.com).*



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

## God

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

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

## Jesus

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

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

## The Holy Spirit

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

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

## The Bible

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

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

## Humanity

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

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

## Eternity & Eternal Security

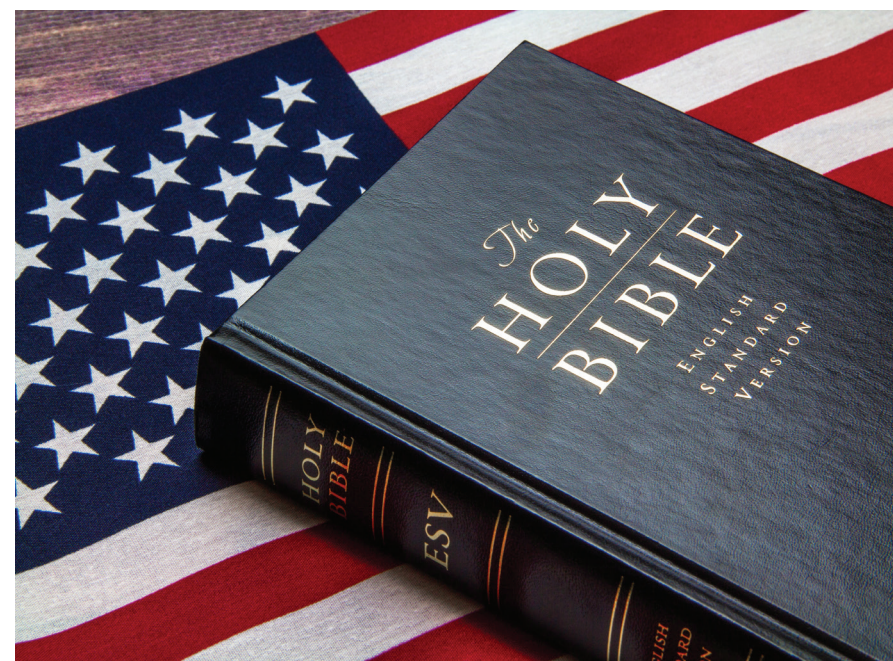
Our soul, the essence of our being, was created by God to exist forever. That forever is spent in one of two places: eternally present and in union with God because of His forgiveness and salvation or eternally separated from God because of sin and unbelief. At the moment that our physical body dies,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

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

## Salvation

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

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



By Doug Harrell  
Mitchell County



As I write this Life Lessons my mind is going back over some of the life experiences over the past eighty-one years. I am thankful for a childhood that was filled with good memories, fun times, also a work ethic that was instilled at an early age. I am thankful for being brought up in a church setting that taught me the values of a strong faith in God with Christian values that have stood me in good stead over the many years of my life.

I dream about days when the vast majority of people I knew or heard of were in church on Sunday, who believed in the teachings of the Bible, and there was not even a question about the sex of a child. That marriage was not even thought of unless it was a man and a woman. There were grades A through F in school and you received what you worked for.

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

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

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

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

Ezekiel the prophet talks about being a watchman for Israel and I wonder if each of us that proclaim to be Christians are not also called to be watchmen for this great country. If we who are Christians actually stood firm on the teachings of the Bible, stand with love, but nevertheless, stand strong for God's word would it not be a different situation?

*"Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. Again, When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul."* Ezekiel 3:17-21 KJV

Will our children's blood be on our hands because we did not cry out to them and teach them the value of a life lived for Christ and also the danger of eternal hell if they failed to follow in the footsteps of our Lord and Savior? Pray continuously for God's grace and forgiveness for this country, let His words guide your thoughts and steps each day.

*"if my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."* 2 Chronicles 7:14 KJV

As we go into this election cycle, study the platforms of the different people and truly measure their direction with the words of the Lord. Choose wisely who you want to be leading this great nation.

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

***Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. Isaiah 41:10***

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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

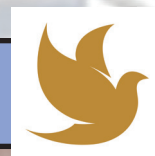
**Distribution:**  
Deborah Slagle  
Doug Braswell  
Amanda Silver  
Ashley Hoilman  
Albert Kaylor  
**Graphic Design / Layout**  
Lynn Elliott  
lynny@brcnews.com  
**Blue Ridge Christian News**  
152 Summit Ave.  
Spruce Pine, NC 28777  
Office – 828-765-6800

*“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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pastor@plumtreechurch.com

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# Marlene's Meditations

## Esther's 3 Ways to Reduce Stress

By Marlene Houk  
Burke County



Floating downriver on a tour boat while learning about the architecture of Chicago thrilled my detail-oriented self. Eventually, though, the moving deck, loud noises, and unfamiliar demands created stress. I remember stepping into a bathroom, desperate for quiet and peace.

What causes you distress? Uncertainty? The threat of Physical harm? Others' demands? Panic and overreaction have affected everyone, all ages, and generations, since the beginning of creation. Tension and anxiety rush down through millennia—from Bible times to the present—as we struggle for serenity. In the Old Testament book of Esther, losing control dominates every chapter until the dam of fear and despair bursts. But, flowing from the rushing water and overwhelming debris, God shows us three ways to reduce stress through the life-and-death drama of her life.

After five years in her role as queen, Esther had become comfortable with being cradled in luxury, her slightest whim fulfilled. She had inherited Queen Vashti's house and reigned supreme over it with vast power and influence. But the strain of maintaining calm rose as the undercurrents of power-hungry courtiers and the barrage of ulterior motives threatened her with their constant stream of wickedness.

Evil erupted as her people, the Jews, absorbed the horror of their impending ethnic cleansing (Esther 4:3). Their trauma burst into chaos and fear, creating confusion and a complete inability to focus on anything. They fasted with wailing and mourning, bringing an exclamation point to their fear of lying in sackcloth and ashes.

We can relate to the way the Jews reacted. Everyday life, a mind-bending crisis, or physical decline cause escalating anxiety. The storm of confusing reactions, imploding fear, and exploding words consume our hearts. These are normal responses. But, eventually, and especially if we prepare, our boats rise above the troughs of turbulent waves as we steer toward calmer waters.

Even amid the hurricane of deceit and drama, Queen Esther created a small oasis of stability and resolve that we can use today. Esther and Mordecai's story reveals that they thought rationally rather than ranting and raving. They illustrate how to sharpen our understanding from fuzzy to focused on our own hysteria.

Much as a trained athlete uses controlled power to swing around with a shotput and catapulted it into focused action, Esther and Mordecai harnessed their people's plunging fear and catapulted it into focused action. Esther re-directed their wild emotions from wailing to working by asking Mordecai to summon them to do three things: gather, act, and plan.

When Esther told Mordecai to "Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan" (4:16), she used two God-designed methods to turn the Jews' fear into action — exercise and teamwork. No matter the gathering place, the Jews would have had to walk at least a few city blocks, which took advantage of the benefits of physical exercise and group involvement. Exercise releases natural brain chemicals that can enhance your sense of well-being." And when we gather together as a team, our focus sharpens, our loyalty grows, and our efforts toward success increase. The ideas of exercise and teamwork as recovery tools in crises also work well today as Esther and Mordecai teach us.

The Queen also asked the Jews to act for her, to shift the focus of their fasting from inward (focused on themselves) to outward (focused on her). In turmoil, a helpful emotional exercise is to refocus. When we place our attention on the Lord and His community, the redirection diverts our fear. On her website, Dr. Baulch lists a range of actions from hobbies to necessary work that can serve to dispel fear. She calls them, "simple, everyday activities designed to help you to ride out the wave of your emotion until your thinking brain comes back online." This refocus would have enabled them to concentrate on her plan and their participation.

The most important part of Queen Esther's commands was her plan to help her people refocus from despair to defeating their enemy.

Her plan was to:

1. involve all Jews (Esther 4:16).
  2. intercede for herself and them (Esther 4:16).
  3. introduce new written laws to allow the Jews to defend themselves (Esther 8:5).
- Preparation before we face a crisis is critical. Here are three simple ways.
1. Gather godly people to help. Have a prayer team that you can gather at a moment's notice. Connect to godly and mature people who have focused on the Lord in life situations.
  2. Act in a way that reduces the impact of the crisis by diluting emotions. Practice recognizing when your thinking ability fades and then pray—giving your burdens to the Lord. Engage in simple physical activities until clarity returns.
  3. Plan to focus on the Lord, asking Him for help with a strategy. Pray Colossians 1:9, Proverbs 3:5-6, and Isaiah 26:3 (or one of many other verses) to help you avoid falling into an emotional pit.

I still remember the delight of gazing at the grandeur of the Chicago skyline from the sunny top deck. Even though tense, anxiety faded as I marveled at God's amazing ability to grant man knowledge to gather, act, and plan to build elegant structures with powerful purpose. Likewise, we can remove stress by following Esther's example: gather help, act wisely, and plan with God. Practicing her advice clears our foggy feelings and empowers us to trust God. He will go before us and work out His intent for our lives!

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

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**It Took Us Years**

By Jim Huskins  
*McDowell County*



In the summer of 1970, one of the preeminent song writers of the 20th Century got his first music job. John Prine was hired to entertain the patrons of The Fifth Peg Club each Thursday night. A few weeks into the gig, Prine decided that his audience deserved new material. On the way to one of those early performances, Prine wrote one of the iconic songs of his generation. He called it Souvenirs.

This unpretentious anthem is a tribute to the power and necessity of memorabilia. Somehow, a 23-year-old Chicago mailman captured in a few lines the perspective of a veteran of life, love, and loss. "I hate graveyards and old pawn shops, for they always bring me tears. I can't forgive the way they rob me of my childhood souvenirs."

A photograph or a ticket stub can trigger transcendent memories. Many craftsmen keep a treasured, old tool in a special place. My grandmother's nicknack shelf held a porcelain elephant that sometimes provoked stories about my ancestors. I regret that recent generations will have no stack of old letters. One of my favorite souvenirs is a wooden stick. It has a rusty steel ring on one end. The ring that used to be on the other end was dislodged by the same force which broke this short beam in the middle.

During my twenties, I determined that I would learn to work with draft horses. We should have bought a gentle, well-broke team, but that option was beyond our means. I managed to acquire a Belgian gelding and later a mare of comparable size. They were two years old. I cared for them over a winter, and in the spring my friend, Mike Hart, agreed to help me train them. We worked them at his farm for about three weeks. When they were doing well in both a sled and a sulky plow, I decided to move them home. Mike placed his hand on my shoulder and spoke intently. "Do not hook those horses until I am there to help."

I wish I had listened to Mike Hart. Instead, I harnessed the horses to my manure spreader and ended up in a dramatic runaway. By the grace of God, none of us were seriously injured. The real damage was psychological. My gelding's training was set back by months. My mare never did learn to work.

Our runaway ended abruptly when the horses dead-centered a utility pole. That collision broke the neck yoke which held up the implement tongue. This broken yoke is the treasured souvenir I mentioned earlier. Since that runaway, I have kept the broken beam where I can see it. It reminds me to avoid haste and foolishness. It also challenges me to heed good advice.

Souvenirs can be more than a tidbit from some pleasant vacation or successful fishing trip. Yearbooks from my Bible College display faces of spiritual giants who dedicated their lives to training preachers. My ordination certificate reminds me that I have committed myself to serving Christ by guarding and guiding His flock. A black book titled Pastor's Manual proves that many have preceded me in the grand work called Great Commission. This web of memory would be part of me without the associated objects, but precious tokens provide immediate awareness of my best work and intention.

Most Christians are unaware that God commands us to keep souvenirs. His Word says that we should display on our clothing items which function in the same way as my broken neck yoke. Numbers 15:37-40 reads, "Speak to the people of Israel, and tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a cord of blue on the tassel of each corner. And it shall be a tassel for you to look at and remember all the commandments of the LORD, to do them, not to follow after your own heart and your own eyes, which you are inclined to whore after. So you shall remember and do all my commandments, and be holy to your God."

The Hebrew word "tzitzit" refers to a tassel, fringe, or lock of hair. The woman who sought healing for her "issue of blood" touched Jesus' tzitzit. The context of God's command to wear them is a man who failed to "remember and keep the Sabbath." He paid for that failure with his life. We have been told that God's commandments no longer apply, but His Word says to keep them "throughout your generations."

Negative association is a powerful force. After that heart-pounding runaway, my horses were terrified of anything which reminded them of the event. I eventually learned how to train work horses. I never had another runaway. That broken neck yoke still reminds me of the disastrous results of foolishness.

Positive association is equally powerful. Our Father paid an unimaginable price for our salvation. Many who accept that gift ignore the fact that He has also given us a blueprint of how to live. His instructions are found in Torah. He tells us in both Numbers 15 and Deuteronomy 22 that we should arm ourselves with constant reminders of what it means to lead holy lives.

The Bible teaches that salvation is a process which we should "work out with fear and trembling." That process has no room for the delusion that sin no longer matters or that grace gives us license to be Godless. We are told to not "follow after our own heart and our own eyes." Our Father knows our forgetfulness. He told us how to live, and He provided souvenirs of our call.

An old, broken stick reminds me to never harness myself to loads that I have no business pulling. Four braided tassels—which I tie from harness thread—remind me that I should never attempt to detach myself from God's commandments. Jesus thought of everything. The only question is whether we will live on His terms or on our own.

*Jim Huskins is pastor of Obedient Heart Fellowship.*



## Choose Joy

By Christy Lowman  
Burke County



This has been a rough year for my family and others. My book sales are down, and my business is slow this year. We've also had a lot of home repairs that needed to be done, plus other unexpected expenses. So, I found myself overwhelmed and grouchy for several days. One day last week, I was distracted by the things that were going on and was miserable. I decided to change my focus and my attitude. I was going to choose joy and love every day instead. No matter what, I am still blessed by God and have so much to be thankful for. Plus, many people have it harder than I do.

I thought since I'm trying to focus on joy that I would write about an animal that makes me happy. This was a little hard to do because all animals bring me some kind of joy.

I settled on the dragonfly. I absolutely love watching dragonflies dip in a cool pool of water to cool their bodies off in the summer. It fascinates me how they can fly every which way. They can even fly backward and hover in one spot for a few minutes like hummingbirds. They can do this because they have muscles in the thorax part of their body which allows them to control and move each of their four wings individually. This gives them superior flying ability. They can also fly up to 34mph. The dragonfly's amazing flying skills have inspired engineers to make robots, drones, and other devices with the same capabilities as dragonflies.

Dragonflies do loop-de-loops and other amazing flying stunts when they are hunting for food. They are carnivores and catch their prey in mid-air, grabbing them with their legs. They use their serrated mandibles (jaws) to pull off the wings of their prey so they can't fly away before they eat them. They can eat up to 100 mosquitos a day. Dragonflies cannot sting and will usually not bite people.

Their amazing vision also aids them with catching food and staying safe. Their head is made mostly of 2 giant eyes. Altogether, their eyes have 30,000 facets which provide the dragonfly with almost a 360-degree field of view. They only have one blind spot, which is directly behind them.



Although dragonflies eat insects, they also eat tiny fish and tadpoles. What they eat depends on which metamorphic stage they are in at that time. They also have several kinds of predators like bats, birds, mammals, fish, and several different reptiles.

Dragonflies live a long life compared to most insects. The average lifespan of most dragonflies is 6.5 years. They spend the majority of their life in water. They go through 17 different molting stages before they crawl out of the water, shed their skin, and become dragonflies.

The largest dragonfly, named the Giant Darner, is 5 inches long and 5 inches wide with its wingspan.

Dragonflies live on every continent except for Antarctica. Some species even migrate. Scientists have put tiny trackers on their wings to see how far they will travel. One type of dragonfly, the Globe skimmer, undergoes the longest migration that scientists know about. It travels 11,000 miles to and from the Indian Ocean.

G Force is a measurement of the pull of gravity on your body. A great example of G forces is the Carolina Cyclone at Carowinds, where riders experience 3.5 Gs during the ride. During the ride, passengers feel weightless as they go downhill and much heavier as the coaster speeds uphill. Most people will pass out around 4 or 5 Gs. A dragonfly can experience 4Gs just by flying in a straight line, and as much as 9 when making a turn in the air!

Dragonflies are fascinating creatures that come in a large array of colors. A lot of them are iridescent colors of red, blue, gold, and green.

Talking about and studying the amazing animals God has created brings me great joy. I encourage you to find what God does that makes you happy and spend time thinking about it. Remember to give all your worries and hard times to the Lord. He will take care of them for you and instead focus on the good things in your life.

Nehemiah 8:10 *"The joy of the Lord is your strength."*

Romans 15:13: *"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."*

I pray that we will all give our cares over to You, dear Lord. So that we may feel Your peace, and comfort in troubled times. I pray we will focus on nothing but pure joy that comes only from You! In Jesus's name, I pray, Amen.

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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).*

## Speak Your Mind Without Losing Your Testimony

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



This article is the third of a series of messages that traces Paul's Mediterranean Sea journey to Rome. After Paul had completed two successful missionary journeys, Luke chronicles his faithful testimony of the Lordship of Jesus amid adversity. In the story found in Acts 27-28, Paul was sent as a prisoner of Imperial Rome from Caesarea in Israel to Rome to stand trial before the higher courts of Rome. While on trial in Caesarea, Paul had appealed to Caesar. His appeal was granted and he was sent under Roman guard to Rome. They set sail and during this difficult voyage, Paul would continue to find God's promises, guidance, and provisions along each leg of the journey.

In Acts 27:9-13, we read that as the ship had made very slow progress because of difficult winds, they found themselves reaching the Island of Crete just as winter and the stormy rainy season were about to begin in the Mediterranean region. Biblical historians suggest that the travel itinerary that Julius, the Roman centurion, had originally chosen was to take a ship going to the Aegean Sea with hopes that Neapolis (located up north past Ephesus and Troas) would be a port of call. Then, he would march Paul and the other prisoners overland on the Egnastian Road to Dyrrhachium on the western coast of Greece. They would then cross the Adriatic Sea and take the Appian Road to Rome. Apparently, when Julius arrived in Myra, he changed his mind and transferred to a grain ship coming from Alexandria (Egypt) sailing directly to Italy. The idea seemed to be a good one, but the beginning of the trip proved problematic. They sailed slowly for many, many days. They labored to sail or row against the wind until they slipped under the southern part of the Island of Crete. They made their way "under the shelter of Crete" until they arrived at a city called "Fair Haven." They had already lost a great deal of time-fighting the wind—so much so that the fast of the Day of Atonement had passed. What Luke is telling us is that they were approaching the middle of October. Ship movements on the Mediterranean Sea were dangerous at that time and nearly impossible by the middle of November.

Apparently, while they were harbored at Fair Haven, Julius held a conference with the owner of the ship, the ship's captain, and Paul (who possibly represented the other prisoners on board). On imperial business, Julius wanted to hear everyone's opinion on whether they should proceed under the threat or not.

It was at that point that Paul spoke his mind and his thoughts. The fundamental question is: was Paul speaking his own mind or the mind of Christ? You see, Paul's testimony was everything to him. When he had answered the call both to follow Jesus as Lord and Savior of his life and to preach and teach the gospel as the Lord's disciple and servant, Paul recognized that his testimony was everything to the power and effectiveness of the gospel message. Paul declared (1 Cor. 1:23), *"but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness."* Paul insisted (1 Cor. 2:2), *"For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified."* And in 2 Cor. 4:5 Paul confessed, *"For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake."* In Galatian 6:14 he lamented, *"But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."*

I believe that as Paul spoke, he was speaking the warnings of the Lord. He admonished them for putting all at risk and he warned them that they would do so at great peril. I wonder! When you and I speak, what are we saying and under whose authority are we speaking? So many people are bad-mouthing the church, the preacher, each other, and even God. What are they speaking? What are they preaching?

Listen! If you want to gossip, tell the redeeming story of Jesus crucified and nothing else! If you want to give an opinion, let your opinion be of the mighty love, grace, and mercy of the Lord—who gave Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of all. If you want to give some advice, then let your words ring true of the redemption of Christ, of salvation full and free, of the faithfulness and goodness of God. If you want to talk about the church, tell of the wonderful calling and the amazing fellowship of the Holy Spirit that exists in the Body of Christ. If you want to talk about your pastor, do so with prayers unto the Father—that His power and presence will anoint Him to preach Christ crucified. If you want to talk about your deacons, tell of how God uses imperfect men to accomplish His will and ways in the life of the church. If you want to talk about a fellow church member, let your mind and voice speak of the truth of their love, respect, and commitment to serve the Lord as redeemed and set aside children of God. If you need to warn of sinful and destructive choices, let your voice speak out with humility, compassion, and a desire to redeem and build up the testimony of faith in the Lord.

Let your voices be heard! Only guard your hearts and minds. That's what Paul told the Philippian believers (Phil. 4:7), *"And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."* *"Be anxious for nothing,"* Paul said in verse 6, *"but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."* In verses 8-9, Paul commanded, *"Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you."*

Paul's testimony was everything to the power and legitimacy of the gospel message. And here in a time of crisis, we see that Paul demonstrates how a servant of

*continued on page 11*

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### Witnessing Tips

By John B. Sorenson



Do you ever get nervous about sharing the Gospel? For May, we at Evangelism Explosion have partnered with the Go Movement and many other ministries to equip and encourage Christians to share their faith. So this month, I'd like to share three witnessing tips that could be the confidence booster you have been waiting for to get started: being intentional in sharing the Gospel, looking for "Divine Appointments," and using words to communicate what Jesus has done to others. Ready? Let's get started.

#### BE INTENTIONAL

Some time ago, I was on a radio show; and a young lady was interviewing me. At some point, she realized that I was talking about intentionally sharing the Gospel with others. She bemusedly said, "So you mean you'd actually start a conversation with someone with the express purpose of sharing the Gospel?" In her mind it was disingenuous; but actually, it's a picture of authenticity and intentionally loving others.

You see, I'm a huge introvert. So for me to learn to witness and obey Jesus, I had to learn to be intentional. Jesus commanded in Matthew 28, "Therefore go and make disciples of all the nations..." He also said, "If you love me, you'll keep my commands." I do love Jesus, so I needed to learn to keep his commands! In fact, I had a mentor who showed me a great example of intentionality. Dr. D. James Kennedy, the founder of EE, was this way! He'd be having a normal conversation with a person; and the moment that he decided to share the Gospel, he would slap his knee. That was the moment he decided to introduce Christ into the conversation.

Now every day of my life, I try to be intentional and to talk about spiritual things with others. And today, I'd like to invite you to do the same. So try it! Look for opportunities to bring Jesus into your conversations.

#### "DIVINE APPOINTMENTS"

The Holy Spirit is softening and drawing hearts to Himself each day all around us. And we can be a part of His work. One of the very best ways to join the Holy Spirit is by praying for what we like to call "Divine Appointments." I can't tell you how many times He has led me to a person who was waiting for someone to share the Gospel with them. One day in Arizona, I met a twenty-one-year-old named Raymond who was waiting at a bus stop. He told me that he was in a recovery program that talked about God but hadn't shared much about how he could know Him. Raymond was sitting there wondering how he could find out more when we walked up. With tears in his eyes, he accepted Jesus after hearing the Gospel and said, "Thank you! This is going to change my life." I have to say... that day was a lot of fun!

Now, here are a few things you to know regarding "Divine Appointments." Firstly, we need to open our eyes to where the Holy Spirit wants us to go and who we're to talk to. The best way to go about this is by going to Him in prayer. And it's not just strangers the Holy Spirit can lead us to as well, it's also people that He's placed in our lives. It could be a coworker, a spouse, a family member, a friend... I'd encourage you to start praying if you haven't already for God to be working in their hearts even right now. It's not our job to change them — that's the Holy Spirit's work! But we are, however, called to be faithful — to share with them and to pray for them.

And secondly, after we pray for the Holy Spirit to lead us, we need to be faithful to follow through and share the Gospel with those that He leads us. This is an act of faith, and God always blesses obedience.

#### USE WORDS

"Preach the Gospel at all times; use words when necessary." I've heard this famous quote attributed to Saint Francis of Assisi over the years; but, you know, there's actually no evidence that he actually said it? And, to be honest, it's silly if you think about it. The truth is you can't preach the Gospel without words. I've seen this in my own life. When I lived in Nebraska many years ago, I was good friends with my neighbor. I did all sorts of good things for him, hoping he would see the way I lived for Jesus. I took the trash out for him, shoveled the snow during the winter in his driveway... and I did it all thinking I was sharing the Gospel with him. But truthfully, if I would've died during that time, Bill would have thought, "Wow, John was a really nice guy. I wish I could be more like John." You see, that wasn't the message I was trying to get across at all!! In fact, it was the opposite of the Gospel—showing him that I was a good person because I did good things.

Now, please don't mishear me—it is absolutely vital in our growth and walk with Jesus to obey Him and to grow to be more like Him. We absolutely should be living out the Gospel, but merely doing so is not enough. We also need to communicate it.

It reminds me of the verse in Romans 10: "So then faith comes by hearing..." The Gospel is made up of propositional truths that have to be communicated and understood. In fact, saving faith is made up of knowledge, assent (or agreement), and trust. To know the Gospel, someone has to share it with you, and then you can agree with it and then put your trust in it—the saving work of Jesus Christ. So then, do you see? It's impossible to share the Gospel without words!

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



By Carol Wallace  
Kingsport, Tennessee



Do you prune your vines, trees, bushes, roses, and other plants? Ask a gardener the purpose of pruning and you may hear reasons such as

- Prune to remove unwanted growth.
- Prune to remove dead, diseased, dying, and damaged growth.
- Prune to remove growth that may pose a risk to the plant's health.
- Prune to improve flowering and fruit production.

What does the Bible say about pruning?

John 15:1-2 *"I am the vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit."*

**Jesus is the true vine and God the Father is the vinedresser.**

**There are two types of branches, fruit-bearing, and baron.**

**Baron branches will be pruned and thrown into the fire.**

**Branches cannot bear fruit independent of the vine.**

The vinedresser prunes, trims, and cleans the weeds that impede fruitful branch growth. With love, the vinedresser is constantly clipping diseased leaves of arrogance, vain ambition, bad relationships, revenge, envy, and other unhealthy obstructions of growth and production. Fruit-bearing branches (believers) must be connected to the vine to bear fruit, abiding in the vine (Jesus), and giving glory to the vinedresser (God).

What fruit does the vinedresser want to see in His harvest? *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."* Galatians 5:22-23

**God is the vinedresser.**

**Jesus is the vine.**

**We are the branches.**

Will we be fruit-bearing branches or branches that are baron, diseased, pruned, and cast into the fire? We read in Genesis about the fall of mankind and the forbidden fruit. The fruit of the Spirit is not an edible fruit, and it is not forbidden. It is the gift of the Holy Spirit, a viable life characteristic fruit visible in our day-to-day witness for the souls of mankind. The fruit of the Spirit revealed in Christian life is Christlike traits bearing benefits for the upbuilding of God's eternal kingdom and His glory.

There are days when our best efforts may seem unproductive or useless, and we may feel we are "fruitless" in our journey. God is always there to hear our prayer for help as we seek His guidance and wisdom, and HE can use even the smallest effort to HIS glory. The gift of longsuffering is challenged as we lean into our faith and seek His peace, love, and joy to continue to face the challenges of this life. As we seek to cultivate the Spirit's fruit in our lives, seeds of God's love are planted, and the Holy Spirit works to convict hearts.

There is a beautiful song "I Am the Vine" by John Michael Talbott, I would encourage you to listen if you have the opportunity. "I AM the vine, and you are the branches, Live in Me and you will never die."

Blessings to you as you work for His harvest and reap an abundance of fruit.

*My husband, Larry and I reside in Kingsport, TN and are members of Buffalo Ridge Baptist Church in Gray, TN. We grew up in Fall Branch, TN and were both saved at a young age. We have two children, Jonathan (Tammy), and Kala and one grandson, Gaije. I am a retired Administrative Assistant and have enjoyed serving in various Children and Ladies Ministries through the years.*

## You're Children are Suffering

By Todd Abraham  
Athens, Tennessee



I was recently at a restaurant in Madisonville, TN sitting in a booth behind a mother and her daughter who looked to be about 10. The longer I sat there, the more furious I became. Because the mother spent probably 95% of her time on her stupid smartphone and left her daughter there to suffer for it. It took every ounce of restraint for me not to be very blunt and rebuke her for it. This is not an uncommon occurrence by any means. You see it everywhere you go and it's heartbreaking.

Mothers neglect their babies to spend time on those useless little idols called smartphones. Parents shove it into the hands of their toddlers so they won't have to be bothered by them. Are moms and dads ignoring their pre-teen children to do what? What is more important about that dumb phone than the children God gave you? The children He expects you to nurture and teach and train them up in His ways. And, God forbid, the ire that rises in me when I see any child under the age of 18 owning a smartphone; especially if they are middle school or younger! You might think it's none of my business and you are right. But it is God's business if you claim to be a Christian parent and God made it my business when He ordained me to write this article and publish this Christian newspaper. What ought to scare you if you are a Christian parent guilty of any of these wrongs is that you are heaping the wrath of God on yourself. Because, in case you forgot, those children you have are a gift of God and they belong to Him. You are under strict commandments to teach them His ways and correct them according to His standards until the time they become an adult.

Don't shoot the messenger friend. I am only writing what God puts on my heart to warn you for your own good. As I have said before, you should be thankful there is at least one preacher on this planet with the agape love to warn you of your transgressions the right way. Not for personal gain or notoriety but because I fear God more than man. Christians are supposed to be different from worldly people. If there is no difference between your lifestyle and language from worldly people and you claim to be a Christian, there is a woe on you! Especially if you are also a self-proclaimed Christian parent. As the title of the feature article in this issue explains, God is not winking anymore. Judgment is coming and it begins at the house of God. 1 Peter 4:17 *"For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?"*

I'm a Christian parent myself but my son is 22 now. But when he was a minor living with me, he did not have a smartphone. Again, I am appalled at how many Christians want to be like the world these days! Filthy-mouthed like the world, dress like the world (meaning total lack of modesty), go all the places rank sinners go and still claim to be Christians! It only shows me they have no fear of God at all, whatsoever. If any part of this article describes you, you better repent and seek God with all of your might for Him to show you the strait and narrow way that leadeth unto righteousness and life. And remember this exhortation is from Him, not me!

*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).*

***Behold, I will bring it health and cure, and I will cure them, and will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth.***  
***Jeremiah 33:6***



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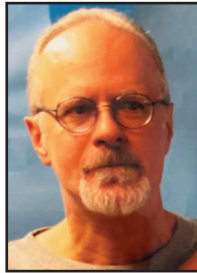
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**“Beyond Redemption?”**

By Tony Ball



The laws of this society have determined that there are some people beyond the hope of redemption. Those given the death penalty and those given life without parole. Let us look at the death row group in a Biblical-sense. Many Christians, here in the South, support the death penalty, in essence claiming those lives are beyond redemption; in both a spiritual sense and also in a societal sense. However, history shows us that the American criminal justice system is broken; seeing how many prisoners have been executed and afterwards been found to be innocent of the crime. Should we allow innocent blood to stain our hands since as a society we are responsible for allowing such draconian laws to continue to stand? Should we, as Christians, support the death penalty, allowing this broken system to determine when to end a God-given life, usurping God's authority with our faulty human logic? Can we determine that a soul is beyond redemption and thus extinguishing that life? Does God proclaim a person is beyond redemption if that person commits an act, such as murder? Should we not follow Christ's example on how He dealt with the death penalty cases?

First, let us look in the scripture to see if a murderer is beyond God's plan of redemption. First Moses, a murderer (Ex. 2:11-12) was later used by God to lead His people out of bondage and into the promised land (Ex. 3:10-17). Later, King David shed innocent blood, trying to hide his adultery (2 Sam. 12:9). He was afterwards declared "A man after God's own heart" (Acts 13: 22-23). Likewise, Paul, when known as Saul, had followers of Christ put to death (Acts 8:1, 9:1, 21). He was afterwards used by God (Acts 26:20). It would appear no one is beyond God's reaching hand of redemption (Isa 50:2)!

Now let us consider the three death penalty cases Christ was involved in. Almost every Christian would instantly think of the woman caught in adultery, which when the law demanded death (John 8:4-5), Christ showed loving mercy and compassion (John 8:11). Another death penalty case involved the woman at the well, who by self-incrimination came under the law of death (Deut. 22:22; John 4: 17-18), yet Christ offered her eternal life (John 4:14). And lastly, when the multitude called for death by crucifixion (Luke 23:21), He gave them a heart of forgiveness (Luke 23:34).

Therefore, should not we, as followers of Christ, actually follow His example? Where is the heart of mercy, compassion, and forgiveness, if not in the chest of a Christian? Knowing then, that the death penalty is wrong, shouldn't we strive to have our lawmakers abolish it? (James 4:17)

*Tony Ball, a Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary prisoner who continues in the prison system ministering as a Chaplain in a prison or a similar position.. although still serving what those of us who know his situation feel is an unjust LIFE WITHOUT PAROLE prison sentence.*



**The Joy of Reading**

By Caron Cline  
Burke County



September 6th is National Read a Book Day. I am a book nerd and have been since I learned the art of reading and comprehending a good story. The greatest day of my 9-year-old life came when my parents drove me to the public library for my very own library card. Every other Saturday, someone would drive me to town where I would check out the 4 book limit. All would be consumed before it was time to return them. The second floor housed the children's section, and I searched the shelves for biographies and mysteries. As I matured, my tastes changed to include romance novels and thrillers. Books offer our imaginations an opportunity to travel to exotic places and study the cultures and lifestyles of people far different from ourselves. There is power in the written word, for good and for evil. Authors understand that power and many have used their persuasive skills to manipulate and deceive. Others have used their talent to encourage, challenge, and motivate. Readers must exercise wisdom when choosing books because their message will be imprinted permanently upon the mind. Those impressions have the power to change thoughts which in turn change actions. The words that we read are deposited into our minds and are then made available for future withdrawals. For maximum dividends, the information we deposit should be true, honest, just, pure, and lovely. Discernment is the key to the proper feeding of the mind, therefore, just any old book will not do!

Fortunately, there is one book that will never damage the mind, in fact, it contains the power to heal the mind. As we stare into the mirror of the living Word of God, this book reveals our true character, but the reflection is disturbing. Sin has brought death and darkness, hopelessness, and despair. The story is one of horror, an image of the walking dead. However, a second gaze in that mirror reveals another character; One who steps into focus with a plan for deliverance, Jesus, the God-Man. He came and lived a perfect life, fulfilling God's Law; died the death that we deserved, satisfying God's requirement of a blood sacrifice; and rose from the dead on the third day, proving God's acceptance of His death, burial, and resurrection. The theme has changed from one of horror to one of unconditional love. Our reflection is now one of light and beauty, hope and peace. However, the plot thickens even more as we discover that not only have we moved from death to life, but we have received the ultimate and permanent gift of God's own Spirit. The Holy Spirit is our wedding ring, sealing our promise of an eternal inheritance in the heavenlies. We bear His Name and operate under His power 24/7! Another glimpse into the mirror of God's Word offers a shocking reflection. We now strangely resemble the Lord Jesus, Himself! The old has passed away and all things have become new! No book can compare to the Word of God, a tale of mercy, grace, and redeeming love! Drink daily from this fountain of living water, stand in the streams of grace, and splash in the river of God's love. The story of redemption never ends, and we will live happily ever after...

*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.*

***Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. 1 Peter 2:24***

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## Humor

By Buddy Freeman  
Madison County



A preacher visits an elderly woman from his congregation. As he sits on the couch, he notices a large bowl of peanuts on the coffee table. He asks, "Do you mind if I eat a few of your peanuts?" She replied, "No, not at all." They chat for an hour and then he realizes that he has eaten all the peanuts. He said, "I am so sorry that I ate all your peanuts." She said, "Oh, that's alright, ever since I lost my teeth, all I can do is suck the chocolate off them."

True story – when I was Campus Minister, Dr. Robert Morgan (a real cut-up) yelled a me, "Come over here, I want to thank you." I asked, "Why do you want to thank me?" He said with a smile, "I was down in the Math Lab when I thought about you and it reminded me to pay my sewer bill." I could have killed him!"

A dentist is the only fellow who can tell a woman to shut her mouth and get away with it.

STRANGER: "Good morning, Doctor, I just dropped in to tell you how much I benefitted from your treatment." DOCTOR: "But you're not one of my patients." STRANGER: "I know. But my Uncle Bill was, and I'm his heir."

The man went to the doctor with an odd ailment. "Doctor," he said, "I've never had this before-my heart squeaks." The doctor said, "Lie on the table. He made a quick examination, then went to an oddly familiar tool. The squeak stopped. The man asked, "What was it doc?" the doctor said, "I just oiled your suspenders."

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

the Lord Jesus offers his/her thoughts or opinions. In Acts 27:9-10, we read that Paul admonished them and then warned them of the impending danger of their choice. He didn't rant and rave. He didn't threaten them. He didn't talk over them or try to control their choice. He didn't need to—for although he didn't know the details of God's plans, Paul knew that the Lord was with him and would accomplish His plans and purposes no matter what! Here is the key to Paul's godly approach. He spoke: (1) the truths of God; (2) he was prompted by the Spirit of God; and (3) he spoke in order to accomplish the plans and purposes of God (and not his own).

God's truths lead all to repentance, salvation, and reconciliation through Christ. And it is the power of the Holy Spirit that empowers us as children of God to stand firm, speak truth, and live out our testimonies of the Lordship of Christ. Paul had been saved and transformed into a child of God by faith in the risen Savior—so that he would be a mighty witness of the gospel of Christ Jesus. When given the opportunity to speak, let your voice be heard. But always remember to speak your mind without losing your testimony!

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



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## "The King's Law" (James 2:8)

By Shawn Thomas  
Angleton, Texas



In Leo Tolstoy's *War & Peace*, he writes about how during the French war with Russia Napoleon commanded a group of his soldiers to go downstream and find a good place to ford the river and cross to the other side. When the officer in charge received the command, he asked if he and his men could have the privilege of NOT looking for an easy place to cross, but to swim across right where they were, in the presence of the Emperor. And so they did. Thirty of his men drowned in the attempt, but the officer and a few others made it to the other side — and stood there, proudly exhibiting their zeal to serve their Emperor!

We Christians could learn a thing or two from the world — among them that our King deserves our radical obedience. If a MAN, like Napoleon, can receive such fanatical obedience from his followers, then what does the true King, the Lord Jesus, deserve from us? In James 2 we see "The King's Law" that our Master would have us obey, to His honor and glory.

James 2:8 says: "If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law, according to the Scripture, 'you shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing well."

This summarizes God's standard for us in treating other people: and it's very familiar to most of us. James calls it "the royal law" or literally "the King's Law." What is this "King's Law"? He says it is: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Of course, the "King" James refers to here is King Jesus. He gave this law when the Pharisees asked Him which was the greatest command.

— First, He said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. This is the great and foremost commandment."

— Then He added, "The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' And He said: "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."

In these 2 sayings, Jesus summed up the whole moral Law of God:

- Love God with all your heart
- Love your neighbor as yourself

These are some of the most quoted verses in the Bible, and rightly so, because they summarize everything that God wants from us in such a simple way:

- Our first and most important relationship is with God. He's the King; we owe everything to Him. He's our God. So we're to love Him with all we have.
- But we also have relationships with other people. How should we treat them? This is the 2nd great commandment: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

It's so simple. If you want to summarize how we should live the Christian life, it's just: Love God and Love Others. Our vertical relationship with God, and our horizontal relationships with other people: Just "Love God with all your heart," and "love your neighbor as yourself."

This second command summarizes how we're to treat other people. Love them like you would yourself (or as Jesus said in the Golden Rule in Matthew 7, treat them the way you would want to be treated.) It's so genius; it's so simple. We don't need endless books and laws on how we should treat people in 100,000 different situations; in every situation, just "love your neighbor as yourself" and treat them the way you would want to be treated, and you'll do the right thing.

President Andrew Jackson owned some slaves at his residence, the Hermitage, near Nashville. "A slave at the Hermitage, Alfred (asked) Roeliff Brinkerhoff, a tutor Andrew Jackson, Jr., had hired for his children:

'You white folks have easy times, don't you?'

'Why so, Alfred?' (Brinkerhoff) asked.

'You have liberty to come and go as you will,' he replied.

(Brinkerhoff said) I thought it wise to turn his attention to the brighter side ... I showed him how freedom had its burdens as well as slavery; that God had so constituted human life that everyone in every station had a load to carry, and that he was the wisest and the happiest who contentedly did his duty, and looked to a world beyond, where all inequalities would be made even.

Alfred did not seem disposed to argue the question with me, or to combat my logic, but he quietly looked up into my face and popped this question at me: 'How would you like to be a slave?'

It is needless to say I backed out as gracefully as I could, but I have never yet found an answer to the argument embodied in that question."

(Jon Meacham, *American Lion: Andrew Jackson in the White House*, pp. 303-304)

That's a pretty piercing question, isn't it? "How would YOU like it?" That's a powerful and easy way to test ourselves about anything we might feel led to do: "How would YOU like to be treated that way?" That should show us whether something is right or wrong. And it applies to any issue we face with other people:

- how would YOU like to be greeted that way?
- how would YOU like that decision to be made about YOU?
- how would you like for that to be said about YOU?
- how would YOU like to receive that punishment?
- how would YOU like to get the raise that you're suggesting?
- how would YOU like to be told something in that way?

The Bible says we don't need to look up a whole bunch of "rules" to help us know how to do the right thing in every different situation. Instead, just think, "How would I like to be treated in this situation?" — and then do that! "Love your neighbor as yourself." Treat them the way that YOU would want to be treated. James says, if you will just keep this "King's Law," like Jesus said, then you don't have anything to worry about. You'll be good. You'll do the right thing. That's the standard. That's the King's Law.

There's only one problem with that. None of us live it out perfectly. Try as we will, we all fall short. This is why James goes on later in this chapter to encourage us to practice "the law of liberty." The "law of liberty" is the gospel. Because we all fall short of "the King's Law," we need His mercy. And that's what God provided for us in the death of Jesus on the cross, where He paid for all our sins. Now, having received God's mercy, we are to show this same mercy to others.

James adds: "For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy!" This is what Jesus warned us about in the Sermon on the Mount when He said, "By your standard of measurement, it will be measured to you!" (Mt. 7:2) In other words, if you are gracious and merciful, then you will be shown grace and mercy. But if you do not show grace and mercy — then you will not be given grace & mercy yourself, either! James ends this passage by admonishing us: if you don't show mercy to others who have fallen short of the King's Law, then YOUR judgment will be just as merciless, as what you are showing that other person — and that should be a terrifying thought to us all!

*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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# Anne Ministries

By Chastity Ogburn  
Avery County



Matthew 19:26 But Jesus looked at them and said, *“With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”* The month of September is always a special month in the life of Anne Ministries. It was on September 13, 2018, that God woke me up in the early morning hours and gave me the name that He wanted for the ministry He was calling me to. Anne Ministries was the God-given name and God showed me why it would be this name. Anne means “grace” and certainly God had poured out His grace over my life. God showed me that September morning that His grace and His hand had always been there. God’s plan for Anne Ministries was to share and extend that same grace that God had poured out over my life to those who are hurting and need hope and healing through Jesus Christ. The ministry began by offering Bible studies and support to those who had experienced loss from a past abortion and to those who had experienced loss from a miscarriage, stillbirth, or infant loss. Extending God’s grace to those hurting is where Anne Ministries began. God called me to write and share my personal testimony of God’s grace and in September of 2020 *“His Grace Covers All”* was self-published. This book is used as a ministry tool and shares how God’s grace through forgiveness, hope, and healing changed my life and led to a deeper faith and trust in Him. God’s grace is truly amazing! September 1, 2021, God led us to open the doors at our current location in Newland, NC. Anne Ministries now extends God’s grace to those in need offering pregnancy support services and recovery support services.

September is the anniversary month for the ministry. It is a time to reflect and celebrate all that God has done in the life of Anne Ministries. I remember in the beginning days when God’s call to ministry was strong in my life and fear was trying to rear its ugly head. God doesn’t give us a spirit of fear according to 2 Timothy 1:7, *“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and love, and of a sound mind.”* Fear comes from the enemy. Trust and faith overcome fear. Psalm 56:3, *“What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.”* I am reminded of the lyrics in the old hymn, “Trust and Obey”. What He says we will do, where He sends we will go, never fear only trust and obey. Trust and obey, for there’s no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey. God has taught me so much by obeying the call and trusting in His timing and plans.

Matthew 19:26 says, *“With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”* All the good in the life of Anne Ministries, God did it, friends! There have been so many God moments when the only answer is ... That was God. Hallelujah! Thank you Jesus we get to be a part of your great plans. We get to see your mighty power at work! We give all praise, honor, and glory as we celebrate all that God has done!

We would love for you to join us on October 5, 2024, at our 2nd Annual Fall for Life Fundraiser Banquet. The event will be held at the Avery County Cooperative Extension Center. This will be a great opportunity for you to learn more about Anne Ministries. There will be a silent auction at 6:00 pm followed by a delicious meal catered by Bella’s Italian Restaurant, a special time of testimonies, and guest speaker Dawn Rogers with Agape Pregnancy Support Services. For more information to register contact Chastity at 828-742-1973 or you can visit [anneministries.com](http://anneministries.com).

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

***And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. James 5:15***

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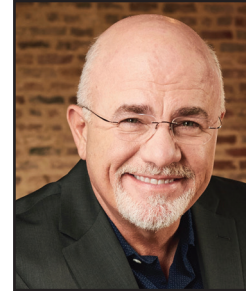
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# Dave Says

By Dave Ramsey



Dave,

Recently, I began running my farm operation debt-free. I have 350 acres, and all the varying expenses often make it difficult to budget correctly. I also have about \$240,000 in debt from bad financial decisions in the past. Do you have any suggestions for budgeting in a volatile industry like mine? Thomas

Thomas,

First, you want to set up a separate budget and run a profit and loss statement. You’ll want to estimate the income for the year as best you can, and you’ll need to estimate your expenses item by item and category by category for the year. After that, you’ll want to break it down by month. This is called laying out a business pro forma—a business budget.

Next, you’ve got two goals to work toward with your profits. By profits, I mean after you’ve paid household expenses. That includes a living wage, enough to operate, keep food on the table, the lights on, and that sort of thing. After basic living expenses are out of the way, your net profit in the business should be divided between retained earnings—or savings—and debt reduction. The idea is that you’re going to put the lion’s share toward paying off debt for now. Still, you need to have something set aside for a rainy day. In your case, that could be taken literally.

Keep in mind that in business, retained earnings are used for more than just emergencies. They’re also for buying more land, equipment, and anything else that’ll grow your operation. But you always want a pad in there. What if you have an unusual year, and your budget estimates are way off? It could be unexpected expenditures or the fact you simply had a bad year. In business, that’s an emergency, and you’d take that out of retained earnings.

Doing a budget, whether it’s in business or personal finance, gets easier and more accurate with time and practice. You won’t get everything right the first couple of tries, but with a little time and experience your budgeting skills and estimates.

Dave,

How do you feel about someone buying a vacation home, and then renting it out when they’re not there? Randall

Dear Randall,

As long as you’re debt-free and buying with cash, I’m cool with it. A vacation home is a really nice “extra” as you start building wealth. It’s still basically a very large, very expensive toy. Still, it could become something of a money maker for you if you play your cards right.

But here’s another side to vacation home rentals that most folks don’t consider. You might make some money, but there will almost always be several weeks during a year when it sits there empty. Chances are you won’t get rich renting it out, but if you’re talking about something more of a plan to offset the annual costs of your toy, I don’t think you’ll be disappointed.

Be ready to deal with lots of spills on the carpet and damage from your guests, along with general maintenance and repairs. There’s always something that needs attention when you own a property. But if you can handle all that financially and emotionally, I think you’ll be fine.

Best of luck, Randall! –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](http://daveramsey.com) and on Twitter at @DaveRamsey.*

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

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S	P	U	R		T	R	E	E		T	H	R	E	E
H	A	L	E		A	D	D	S		A	R	O	S	E
E	N	L	A	R	G	E		T	A	L	E	N	T	S
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# Vitamin BA

By Steve Henry  
Burke County



In a world filled to the brim with negativism, it is easy to become overwhelmed and become a victim of this flesh rather than the victor that He says we are. I was finally tired of listening to this flesh saying, "Well, I'm just a poor old sinner saved by grace". A dab of truth but not at all the way God sees us and not the way He wants us to see ourselves. I discovered all I needed was a healthy dose of Vitamin BA (Biblical Affirmations).

Dosage: Twice a Day, Out Loud, in front of a mirror if possible, because "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God".

BECAUSE OF HIM:

- I am more than a conqueror.
- I am well able to overcome anything life throws at me.
- I am a winner.
- I can do all things through Him.
- I am a success.
- I am abundantly blessed in all things.
- I am absolutely, unbelievable, incomparably, immeasurably, wealthy because all things are mine (1st Cor. 3-21)
- I am free spiritually, I am free physically, I am free politically, I am free mentally, I am free emotionally, I am free financially (John 8: 32 and 36).
- I am strong spiritually, I am strong physically, I am strong politically, I am strong mentally, I am strong emotionally, I am strong financially (Joel 3:10).
- I am energized, I am experienced, I am excited, I am enthusiastic, I am exuberant, I am ecstatic, I am empowered, I am expectant.
- I AM EXPECTANT, I AM EXPECTANT, I AM EXPECTANT!
- I would rather be grateful than hateful, I would rather be a river than a swamp.
- Today, I am smart enough, I am wise enough, I am clever enough, I am resourceful enough, I am able enough, I am confident enough, and I am connected to enough people to accomplish my heart's desires. I have enough to pull off miracles, enough is all I need, enough is what I have, and I have more than enough, I have Jesus!!!
- Every day and in every way, I am getting better and better.
- I am inferior to no one!
- I am a leader that deserves to be followed.
- I am courageous.
- I am a vanquishing victor.
- Inch by inch, EVERYTHING is a cinch.
- Champions are willing to do the things they hate to achieve the things they love, I am a champion.
- Success is a journey.
- We won't stop before the top.
- I will not fear because YOU are with me.
- I will not doubt because YOU are with me.
- I am better not bitter.
- I will think of others more than myself.
- God is watching me right now, I am watching me right now, giving Him praise on a stage somewhere in front of thousands of people who are now thinking, "I want some of what he has," because of the tremendous success God has made me to be, He is smiling and so am I.
- Be all you can be, and let Him determine what "All you can be" is, with His help, we can see that high.
- I am who I am because The Great I AM says that I am!
- I am confident, I am competent, I am capable.
- I am an eagle; I WILL use the storm winds to soar higher and higher.
- I am a great thinker, therefore I am great.
- I am a giant slayer.
- I am a giver.
- I am a forgiver.
- I am prosperous.
- I am favored.
- I am a visionary.
- I am supernatural.
- I am encouraged.
- I am an encourager.
- I am a good and faithful servant.
- I am accepted.
- I am professional.
- I am a crusader.
- I am a favor-ite.
- I am complaint-free.
- I am a possibility thinker.
- I am a vision setter.
- I am the salt of the earth.
- I am a mountain mover; it's who I am, it's what I do!
- I am like an ant, I WILL NOT be stopped.
- A friend of mine helped me get started with this list and through the study of His Word over the years I have added to it. Feel free to use it for yourself and maybe add some of your own as you study His Word to discover who you truly are in Him, and especially because of Him.

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.

## Healthy Thinking (Part 1)

By Ryan Bridgeo  
Avery County



You are an amazing creation. You are fearfully and wonderfully made. Of all the works of God's hand, you are His masterpiece. Did you know, that in the average lifespan, the human heart beats more than 3 billion times? The human eye is capable of seeing 7,000,000 colors. The human nose can detect 1 trillion smells. There are 100 billion neurons present in the brain. The blood vessels that are present in the brain are approximately 100,000 miles long. That is a greater distance than 4 trips around the earth. We are an amazing creation, and we were created in the very image of God. 2 Timothy 1:7 *"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."* We have a powerful, sound, mind, that was given to us by God.

It is important to understand that our minds and our brains are not the same things. If we compare our brains and our minds to a computer, our brains would be like the computer processor that calculates and processes information, and the hard drive would be like the storage of our memories. Our minds would be comparable to a computer's operating system, like Linux, Windows, or Mac. Whatever operating system you are running will determine how that computer works and processes information. If we try to use an operating system that isn't designed for a particular computer there are going to be many system failures and vulnerabilities to the computer's overall function and ability. For example, if you format a MacBook and try to install Windows on it there will be many problems. Although it is possible, it will not function as originally designed.

Our bodies, our minds, and our brains work best when we apply God's original design. His software for our hardware will work best and produce the best results. So, we must format the sin-corrupted software of the old man and install a new operating system that is compliant with our new creation spirits. Romans 12:2, *"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."* God wants us to experience transformation in our lives, but He will not make that happen. We must partner with His thoughts to experience the renewal of our minds and lives. Then we can understand His will and plans for us.

Now there is a certain way that God wants us to think. Philippians 4:8 says, *"Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things."* This is a healthy way to think, and it will produce healthy emotions, healthy relationships, and healthy lives.

But when we think about other things it can be very unhealthy. Romans 1:28 (NIV) says, *"Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done."* These people didn't think the knowledge of God was worthwhile. They started to have thoughts that were contrary to His and they partnered with those thoughts. So, God gave them over to a depraved mind and they did things that should not be done. Romans 1:21-23 says, *"because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things."* In these scriptures, we see the process of a depraved mind. 1st, they did not glorify God as God, 2nd they were not thankful, 3rd they became futile in their thoughts, 4th their foolish hearts were darkened, 5th they became fools. And finally, they did things that ought not to be done.

A major sign of a depraved mind is idol worship. Now, this doesn't have to look like someone bowing down and worshipping a statue. Idol worship is worshipping anything over God. In the above scriptures, they knew about God, but they didn't honor Him as God. They didn't give God the final say in their lives. They honored their own thoughts and ideas above His and when they did that, they made themselves out to be god. We can see this a lot today. People take bits and pieces of the Bible, maybe parts that they like, maybe parts that are easy for them to follow, but the other parts that are harder for them or that others disagree with they ignore and honor their own thoughts and ideas instead. This is idol worship. This is saying that God is God in certain areas, but I am god in these other areas. We have no right to do this. Either He is Lord of all, or not at all. These thoughts that don't agree with His, need to be cast down, and His thoughts need to have the final authority in our lives.

When we have serious trouble with our vehicles, we often need to take them to the dealership for them to find out what is wrong. They know more than the average mechanic because they designed the automobile. It is the same way with God. God is our creator. We are His masterpiece. He knows how we are designed to operate. Like the computer, your spirit, soul, and body are going to function at its best with the correct operating system. That operating system looks like doing things God's way and giving Him the final say and authority in your life.

Ryan Bridgeo can be reached at 828-765-6919. For more information you can visit the church website at [www.plumtreechurch.com](http://www.plumtreechurch.com) or email [pastor@plumtreechurch.com](mailto:pastor@plumtreechurch.com)

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## Thomas Nelson, Jr

By David Streater, Ph.D.  
Burke County



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

Many of our Founding Fathers are not well-known, but they still made meaningful contributions in a variety of ways.

Thomas Nelson, Jr. is in this category as he served our Country and sacrificed for the greater good. Nelson, the oldest of five sons, was born on December 26, 1738, to Elizabeth Burwell and William Nelson. To eliminate confusion, Thomas Nelson, Jr. added Junior to his name as his uncle, Thomas Nelson, lived in the same town.

Nelson received his primary and intermediate education at home, where Reverend Yates tutored him. During his mid-teens, as a gentleman from an elite family, Nelson traveled to England to further his education. He returned home to Virginia after graduating from Cambridge in 1761. While sailing home, Nelson was elected to the House of Burgesses. Being selected was exceptional, as he was only 22 after being away for eight years.

As a member of the Burgesses, Nelson established a movement to stop trade with England. He also formed the Yorktown Tea Party. This 1776 utilitarian act involved Nelson and his collaborators boarding the British ship Virginia and “dumping tea into the York River.”

When the royal governor dissolved the House of Burgesses, Thomas and his colleagues unified at the Raleigh Tavern. They continued their work toward liberty and discussing politics. Becoming a member of the Virginia Provincial Convention of 1775 led him to become the commander of the Virginia Militia. Soon after, Thomas was elected to the Continental Congress and started experiencing health issues.

Due to his health problems, Nelson surrendered his military commission. Nelson and Richard Henry Lee worked on a proposal drafted by Edmund Pendleton for Independence. “It was at this time that Nelson was recognized as one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence.”

In 1779, Nelson was reelected to Congress with failing health and returned to the Lower Virginia Militia as its commanding general. During this period, Nelson also assumed the role of civil governor, overseeing both functions and becoming a force to reckon with. As a wartime general, Nelson led military forces (a battalion of George Washington’s army) to Yorktown.

Nelson and his troops were forceful at the Battle of Yorktown from September through October 1781. The Redcoats commandeered Nelson’s house for their field command headquarters. Nelson ordered his troops to fire cannons and paid them for each projectile hitting his house. Soon after, the British surrendered at Yorktown on October 18, 1781. Nelson performed other noble acts besides having his house bombarded.

Because Congress would not approve additional troops, Nelson helped finance “the birth of the cavalry as well as outfitted and trained the unit.” In June 1781, Nelson was elected the second governor of Virginia, resigning five months later due to illness. By this time, he was in dire straits, physically and financially. The war destroyed Nelson’s business properties and finances. The federal government never repaid him the two million dollars “for his loans to help finance the French fleet and their efforts during the war.”

Penniless and never reproving slavery, Nelson died from asthma on January 4, 1789, at 50. Since his death, a high school, a college, and several counties have been named in his honor, along with other kudos. Thomas was first buried in an unmarked grave to evade creditors; later reinterred in the Grace Church Graveyard, Yorktown, Virginia. Thomas Nelson, Jr. was a steadfast patriot who gave his all to America despite his blunders.

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](http://FoundationForward.com) to learn more about our existing settings. Vance and Mary Jo Patterson are the benefactors and originators of Foundation Forward, a 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 Charters 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. Contact Dr. Streater ([david.streater@mymail.barry.edu](mailto: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.*



**Hey y'all, we are Steven and Jennifer Painter. We started out as some of those folks who saw a sad story on the news about a child who had been neglected or abused and said, “why did this have to happen? We would have gladly taken that child and loved him/her!” Yet we didn’t make a move to actually BECOME that family because “it was never the right time” or “we don’t know where to start”. But really, when IS it the right time? Answer: now. How do we get started? Answer: just make the call! There are children NOW who need someone to bridge that gap. Contact McDowell DSS to learn more. 828-652-3355.**

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## Growth Through Sorrow

By Christopher L. Scott  
Moses Lake, Washington



Many times I wish I could unsend some of the emails I have composed. I will send something and wish that I had not hit that “send” button. This often leads to sorrow and an apology I make to the person to whom I sent the email. Yet each time it happens, I feel I grow in my discernment about what should or shouldn’t be handled by email, and these sorrowful feelings and apologies happen much less often now than they used to occur years ago.

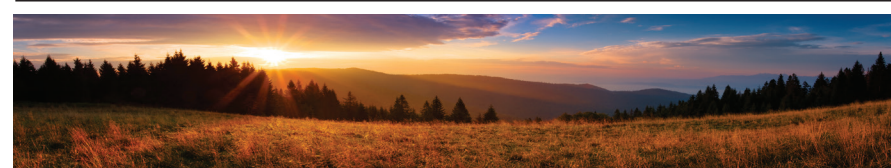
The apostle Paul felt the same way with one of the letters he sent to the believers in the city of Corinth. *“For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death”* (2 Corinthians 7:10, NASB).

The specific event that Paul is referring to here is the third letter that he wrote to the believers in the city of Corinth. That third letter was carried by Titus (2 Corinthians 7:8-12) and was direct and severe in its criticism of the Corinthians. In that letter, Paul rebuked the Corinthians for tolerating a sinning member in the congregation. After sending it, Paul wished he had not sent it.

In 2 Corinthians 7:10 Paul tells his readers that the sorrow that the world feels is pointless while the sorrow that Christians feel has a purpose. When Christians make mistakes we have a purpose in our growth which is to become more like Christ each and every day. *“When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory”* (Colossians 3:4).

For Christians, the point of our sorrow is growth. Paul had learned how his letter hurt the Corinthians and as a result, Paul grew through that experience. John Maxwell, in his book, *Sometimes You Win—Sometimes You Learn*, writes “If we want to succeed in life and to learn from our losses, we must be able to face reality and use it to create a foundation for growth” (p. 41). We too, each day, have opportunities to grow in our faith. Sometimes it comes through our mistakes, but those mistakes bring sorrow that makes us grow more like Christ.

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



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## Doodles in the Mind

By Tim Tron  
Burke County

*“This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground.”* – John 8: 6-8

As a child, the sounds beyond my bedroom before dawn always took on a life of their own. One such morning, when staying overnight with my maternal grandparents, I had been awakened in the darkest hour before daylight to the sound of someone moving around in another part of the house. My imagination soon began to fill in the gaps of “What could be” without knowing what really existed. For some reason, the combination of tinkling and rattling became someone rummaging through what sounded like the silverware drawer. Convinced someone had broken into our house and was stealing all our eating utensils, a dreadful fright began to overwhelm my being, but instead of a paralyzing fear, it became a discomfort so great that regardless of my well-being, it was necessary to investigate firsthand.

As silent as the morning mist over the summer’s pasture, the little, innocent child crept from his chamber with great trepidation. The darkness beyond the bedroom door seemed all the more daunting as the moonlight cast a blue-gray panorama of shadows into the humble living room of that tiny farmhouse. Into the pallid chasm, the little trembling frame crept, peering into the kitchen through the darkened archway.

Nothing. Nobody. Emptiness.

The mental aberration had vanished and now could be anywhere. There was only the gray shadows of a daunting silence – “Must return to my bed at once before it jumps out and kills me, whatever it is.” With great haste, I raced back to my bedroom. My grandparent’s door was slightly ajar. As I passed, it was more than comforting to hear the roar of my grandpa’s snoring. The image of his large, demanding frame came to mind, instantly dashing away the evil that had almost consumed my soul. Diving back into the safety of the still-warm covers, I was resolved not to let my ears deceive me ever again.

The irony of my ill-conceived predawn conjecture was that I have never known nor been a victim of any crime of theft. Up to that point, all my young life had been spent living in the vast countryside of southern Indiana, in the rural fields and forests surrounding New Harmony. There was seldom any crime to speak of in that day and time. So, for my thoughts to turn to someone or something breaking into my grandparent’s house was as ludicrous as it was scary. The void of knowing and not knowing had allowed my mind to fill in the blank with something that had no guidance nor direction – instead, the fears of a little boy’s imagination had found their place.

There again, in whatever adventure in life we have looked forward to, there has been some speculation on our part as to what we might find when reaching the destination. Our minds create all manner of imagery. And in so doing, how many times have you arrived at “that” place only to find your mind had done something much grander than what lay before you? What a deflating feeling. Or possibly, you had underimagined, causing the reaction, “Wow, this is more awesome than I could have ever imagined.” Whatever the case, reality rarely matches what our mind transposes upon the present.

*“But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”*

Even when the scenes or visions are explained to us in detail, it’s almost impossible to grasp the full breadth of the imagery that the person may be trying to describe. In art, the use of vagueness helps to create the illusion of a multitude of leaves or blades of grass. To attempt to paint each one would be futile and confusing. Similarly, as an author describes a story, there are times when allusion, leaving out something that allows the reader to imagine on their own, becomes ever more powerful than if they had attempted to describe every detail of that which had been left to the imagination. Are these gaps in scripture’s definitions likewise God’s way of allowing our imaginations to run wild, or is it something more? I’d prefer to think the latter, for in this world, our imaginations often lead us down paths of inequity rather than paths of righteousness if left up to our human nature. In the Gospel of John, we read about Jesus, the Son of Man, stooping before the Sages and Pharisees as if he wasn’t listening to their accusations of a woman that they had caught in the act of adultery. Knowing the law of Moses, they had an airtight case. They would bring it before this man, the self-proclaimed Son of God, and see what crazy thing he might dream up to counter what they knew was an open and closed case. Their plan was to entrap him in his own words. Yet, as they spoke to the rebel preacher, after looking into their eyes with humbled compassion, a look that stirred something deep inside them, he stooped to the ground before them, head down, and began to draw something with his finger as though



he wasn’t listening.

But, oh, how he was listening. Jesus knew the true intentions of their hearts. To this day, the speculation about what Jesus wrote that morning on the ground before the accusers of a woman caught fornicating with another man, someone who was not her husband, remains a debate. However, my purpose for this piece is not to figure out what he wrote but rather to contemplate what our minds tend to do with those empty spaces that scripture allows. To not know what he wrote is as important as what we conceive of this action, and likewise, what those estranged legalists at that moment when Christ knelt before them to make a point – something so significant, so revealing to each of them, that they dropped their charges. Which, in and of itself, was huge considering that there was no way they could lose in a court of law – for the witness of two or more was all that was necessary to convict someone in that time, which they had indeed obtained. Yet, they each walked out as if in shock, convicted of their own conscience.

In my mind’s eye, I see Jesus kneeling, and as one might doodle in the dirt as they collected their thoughts, I can see him doing likewise, not really drawing anything in particular. Watching with keen, condemning eyes, each one aware that they must have had some sort of impact for this renowned prophet not to respond immediately. It could be considered here at this moment that they had a possible couple of retracted expectations as they looked upon the ponderous attitude of Jesus – one of anger, the fact that he seemed to ignore them, or fear, realizing that if it were true, this was the Son of God, that what they were about to experience might threaten their very life.

Those who were angered by this act of disrespect, as if they were owed some sort of obligatory praise for their discovery, were suddenly taken aback at the irreverence of the man before them. His doodling, a pause in the moment, became a torment, a reason to wonder, “Why would he sit there doing that instead of giving us the attention we deserve!?” Could it have been that Jesus was actually contemplating the verse, *“There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, not, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes.”* It was obvious that his silence spoke louder than words. In the still of that instantaneous moment, they, each one of them singularly, stood before a kneeling God, naked, the insignificant before the infinite, baring their intentional deceit and equivocally realizing the ignorance of their actions when compared to the presence of the Holy Father. Like a spiritual X-ray, they could see in the reflection of his pause their own ignorance and infinitesimally pettiness. But when he stood and said, *“If there be any one of you without sin, let him cast the first stone,”* and returned to the ground, continuing to draw with that same finger, the one that could have easily pointed at each one of them – the finger of condemnation. Instead, it pointed toward the earth, where each man returns to in his sin.

The statement, from Christ, rising to address them to the return to the position of submission, their thoughts a whirlwind of self-condemnation and guilt, for in the momentary halting of time, each mind went to why they were there and to their own inequities. But to see the Son of God rise, as the morning sun standing from the horizon, each soul guilty of worse things in their own life, because each had tried to cover their faults, their based life of lies, each no less guilty than the woman that they had discovered in the brutal, senseless act of the flesh. There was no more hiding. Their thoughts had been redirected, but not of their own accord, but by the hand of God.

Each of us has an innate desire to turn the predawn darkness into something darker, more evil than we want – for this thing we do, that which we do not want. It is by our very nature that we are predisposed to such actions. It is in the presence of the Holy Spirit that we can become healed of ourselves, turned from our past, facing the convictions that are the sign of receiving Him into our lives. It is only then that we can begin to heal from our base, barbaric beings with which the world wants each to become one.

We can become angered by this control, or we can fear it – it is up to each of us how we perceive God’s direction for our lives. Ignorance and innocence are often coupled, as are pride and corruptible natures that lead to anger for something beyond their grasp. The desire to control every aspect of one’s life is as sinful as fornication outside of marriage in the eyes of God – for all sin is equal in the mind of God. When we give in, to have a contrite heart, it is then we kneel before the Father, submitting our control over to His will, not our own.

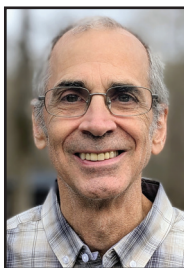
Those thoughts of a child are as a child, innocent and unknowing. When we realize we are no longer children but grown beings responsible for our actions, we must consider the direction in which our lives are headed. The random scratching in the dirt by Our Lord, our Father, oh how my heart would have loved to have seen them, for in their meaningless image within the dust of the earth of which he created us, his hand once more drew for us a path of life, to have the opportunity to be with him in eternity should we recognize that pattern in the dirt that is revealed to us, should we accept it.

These are just some of the thoughts that the often perceived vacuum of scripture sometimes allows—although there is never any void, for its purpose is intentional. I hope that in them, you, too, consider the possibility of what God is saying in your life. As those ancient accusers become convicted and seek that path from the dirt to the heavens, we have one life to live, and where it ends is a choice we all have to make.

Make your choice today, choose wisely, and be sure to kneel once in a while and draw something in the dirt with your finger for those around you to see and

*continued on page 19*

By Thomas Thorne  
McDowell County



“Herod” is both a name and a title used in the gospels. The “Herods” in the Bible can be easily mistaken. We see Herod mentioned at the birth of Jesus. We also see Herod mentioned during the life of John the Baptist, and later in the lives of Peter and Paul. Was this the same person? It would seem unlikely given the time frames involved. Was there more than one individual who went by “Herod?” Over the next couple of lessons, we will do a brief review of the Herods of the Bible.

There are actually six different Herods in the New Testament, and they are all somehow related to each other. Here are thumbnail sketches of each of them to help you keep track of who’s who.

## 1. Herod the Great (ruled from 37 B.C. – 4 B.C.)

The Herodian kingdom was a client state of the Roman Republic. Herod the Great was the powerful king of this client state from 37 B.C. – 4 B.C. He was the second son of Antipater, an Idumean (Idumea was south of Judea) who was appointed procurator of Judea by Julius Caesar. Herod the Great ruled over the territories of Galilee, Samaria, Judea, and Idumea west of the Jordan River (from north to south), and several regions east of the Jordan such as Perea, Batanaea, Auranitis, and Trachonitis.

One of his wife’s names was Mariamne. She was the granddaughter of the Hasmonean (Jewish) King Aristobulus II. That made Mariamne, Herod the Great’s Jewish wife, and she was actually his second wife. Aristobulus ruled as part of the Hasmonean dynasty from 66 B.C. – 63 B.C. As a reminder, the Hasmonean dynasty came into existence after the revolt of the Jewish people initially led by Judas Maccabee. From about 140 B.C. – 63 B.C. the Jewish people once again had a kingdom. That kingdom was known as the Hasmonean dynasty.

In summary, Jewish/Hasmonean leader Aristobulus II (ruled from 66 B.C. -63 B.C.) Alexander of Judea (son) and Mariamne (daughter – second wife of Herod the Great).

Therefore, Mariamne claimed herself to be part of royalty, and Herod by marrying Mariamne, a Jew, could claim himself a Jewish convert and therefore hope to appease the Jewish/Israelite people he was ruling over. Eventually, Mariamne was convicted of evil, and Herod had her executed in 29 B.C. Herod also had three of his sons killed: his first-born, Antipater, and his two sons with Mariamne: Aristobul, and Alexander.

Herod the Great, who was also known as “Herod the Builder” is credited for magnificent building projects such as:

- The fortification on the eastern edge of the Judean Desert known as Masada,
- the port of Caesarea,
- the Hippodrome at Caesarea Maritime

He also started what is known as “Herod’s Temple” in 20 B.C., although it wasn’t finished until 63 A.D., long after his death. He was the Herod who tried to trick the wise men after Jesus’ birth (Matthew 2:1-15) and the Herod who had the babies in Bethlehem killed (Matthew 2:16-18).

## 2. Herod Archelaus (ruled 4 B.C. – A.D. 6)

The second Herod mentioned in the Bible is Herod Archelaus. Archelaus was one of Herod the Great’s three sons mentioned in the Bible. Upon Herod the Great’s death, he received one-half of his father’s territory, the area surrounding and near Jerusalem (Judea and Samaria) as well as Idumea, to the south.

We find reference to this ruler in Matthew 2:19-23, where we read that an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph (Jesus’ father) and told him to “take the child [Jesus] and his mother and go back to Israel” (verse 20). But when Joseph “heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee” (verse 21).

Joseph was afraid of moving Mary and Jesus back to Israel because Bethlehem was in Archelaus’ territory. Joseph’s fear mentioned in verse 22 was justified as Archelaus, who was now ruling over the territories of Judea, Samaria, and Idumea, was recognized to be just as cruel as his father. God’s warning to Joseph was not to return to Bethlehem, but instead to move back to the northern district of Galilee, to the town of Nazareth. The ruler of Nazareth was Herod Antipas, another son of Herod.

Eventually, Archelaus was replaced by a Roman procurator less than ten years into his reign. A procurator was an individual in ancient Rome who was in charge of the financial affairs of a province, or imperial governor of a province. Pontius Pilate was the governor of Judea who presided over the trial of Jesus. It was Pilate who “washed his hands before the crowd [and said] I am innocent of this man’s [Jesus’] blood, see to it yourselves” (Matt. 27:24).

### Summary

In summary, the first Herod mentioned in the Bible was Herod the Great, who ruled over the territories of Galilee, Samaria, Judea, and Idumea (from north to south, west of the Jordan River) and several regions east of the Jordan.

Upon Herod the Great’s death, his territory of rulership was split among three of his sons: Archelaus, Antipas, and Philip. Archelaus received one-half of his father’s territory, the area surrounding and near Jerusalem (Judea and Samaria) as well as Idumea, to the south. In next month’s issue, we will examine the land that his other two sons received, go a little further into the dynasty of the Herods, and hopefully clear up any remaining confusion about “the Herods of the Bible.”

Shalom

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)

contemplate.

Thanks be to God.

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

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# Snow Hill Baptist Church

## Disqualified

By Dean Honeycutt  
Mitchell County

It is heartbreaking when you work hard at something, and it does not turn out the way you expected. All the long hours and dedication seem wasted. Olympic athletes train long hours and work extremely hard to be the best they can be. And only the best of the best will come home with medals.

Decorated competitive swimmer Alex Walsh knows what it is like to put in demanding work. She is a 2020 Olympic silver medalist and multi-gold medalist of the Pan American and World Championship games. Olympic swimmers are very technical and swim with accuracy and perfection. Their intense training workouts help them strive for perfection.

Walsh placed third in the 200-meter individual medley in the 2024 Paris Olympics. However, the medal was taken from her when she was disqualified for an illegal turn coming out of her backstroke. One minor mistake cost her the medal. The Bible says we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God. We do not want to admit this, but we are not good. We think we do good and act good, but we are not good. Jesus said none is good. When we think about ourselves, we compare ourselves to other people. We have not stolen or murdered anyone so we conclude we are good. However, the truth is we are disqualified from God's standards. "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." James 2:10.

We cannot blame our sin on Adam, or our culture, we are responsible for our sin. We cannot ignore our sin or pretend it does not exist. "Therefore, to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." James 4:17

Is God responsible for our sins since He created us? No, God is not responsible for our sins. The Bible says God cannot be tempted with evil neither does He tempt man to sin. We sin because we choose to sin.

So, the bottom line is we are disqualified. This is a "hard pill to swallow" when we think everything is okay and we are trying our best. But our best is not good enough. The Bible says our righteousness is filthy rags. We do not want to admit this, but it is true.

I praise the Lord there is one who is qualified and who never sinned. Jesus Christ is qualified, and He is without sin. Jesus Christ God's only Son came from heaven to earth to die on the cross for my sins. He did for me what I could not do for myself. He paid my sin debt. His blood paid for my sin and washed me clean before God. When I trust the Lord as my Savior, God does not see what disqualifies me, however, He sees the righteousness of His Son Jesus Christ in me. This righteousness of Christ qualifies me before the Father.

I want to thank God for saving me and giving me the gift of eternal life. Are you Saved? Do you have a relationship with Jesus? Have you repented of your sin and trusted in Jesus Christ as Savior? You can place your faith in Christ today and follow Him as your Lord and Savior.

God bless you.

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.

**And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease. Matthew 10:1**



# Pine Branch Baptist Church

## The Tremendous Need For Earnest Prayer

By Bruce Cannon  
Mitchell County

There are so many reasons the Church needs to earnestly pray. First, a careful study of people living around our Churches reveals that an overwhelming percentage do not attend Church. It is estimated in some western North Carolina areas the percentage of people who do not attend can range as high as 75%. When one looks at the attendance trends of all denominations it is noted that most congregations have gotten significantly smaller in size over the past decades.

A second reason for prayer concerns the rise of activities the Bible refers to as "iniquity". In Matthew 24:12 the Scriptures state that in the latter days "iniquity shall abound." This simply is a "catch-all" category for the actions we are seeing so prevalent today such as drug use, the breakdown of the home, the lack of a work ethic, criminal activities, drag queen shows and so forth.

A striking similarity is easily seen in that the smaller and weaker the Church gets, the greater influence iniquity will have over society. It is the voice of the Church empowered by the Spirit of God that holds evil in check. And if the Church is frail, evil will abound.

And while all of these things are true and seemingly leave us without hope, the truth could not be further from that. God has always used the dark times to draw a remnant of believers to prayer, faithfulness, concern, and so forth. Someone has said that the darker the night, the brighter the light shines. Jesus in Matthew 5:14-16 said, "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." It is time for the Church to be filled with passion for her Lord and perform extravagant displays of lavish love. What better place to exhibit boundless zeal and holy passion than in the place of prayer?

Read these great Scriptures concerning prayer and take to heart the promises made:

John 15:7 - "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

Luke 11:9 - "And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

Psalms 34:17 - "The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles."

The psalmist asks in Psalm 43:5, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

It's not time to be discouraged, defeated, or depressed! It's time to be filled with hope because the God of the universe will hear our prayers and will answer. It's time to let our light shine!

Pray with me that this present darkness will give way to a glorious time of revival and movement of the Lord as our King hears our prayers and will send a great revival in our land AND as we get ever nearer the coming of the Lord for His Church.

Bruce Cannon has been called to serve as pastor of Pine Branch Baptist Church in Spruce Pine.



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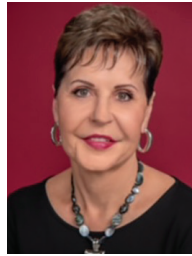


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# Enjoying Everyday Life

## The Dangers of Doubt

By Joyce Meyer



God loves boldness and He wants us to be confident of His love for us. He wants us to know without a doubt that we are made right with Him through the sacrifice Jesus made for us on the cross—especially on those days when we feel unworthy of His love.

To live boldly means that we're willing to step out in faith to try new things and pursue our God-given dreams and passions without letting the fear of doubt overshadow our faith.

Doubt is a fear that can bring a lot of confusion: Did I make the right decision? I don't know. Maybe I did. Well, maybe I didn't. We can go back and forth like that in our heads forever. But I've found that when I'm confused, it's better to stop, turn off my brain, and just look at what's in my heart—not for what I think I should do, but what I believe I should do.

Sometimes it becomes very clear what God wants us to do; other times it's less obvious. But before you jump ahead, give God a chance to speak to your heart. James 1:5-6 (AMP) says, *"If any of you lacks wisdom [to guide him through a decision or circumstance], he is to ask of [our benevolent] God, who gives to everyone generously and without rebuke or blame, and it will be given to him. But he must ask [for wisdom] in faith, without doubting [God's willingness to help], for the one who doubts is like a billowing surge of the sea that is blown about and tossed by the wind."*

I hope that you noticed it says, "If any of you" need wisdom. God isn't looking for perfect people; they don't exist. So, no matter where you are, God wants to help you! Isn't that good news?

God will never leave you or forsake you, and He will always remain faithful to His Word. All you have to do is ask and receive, dismissing the doubts that set themselves up against His Word. If you can do that, there's no telling what God will make happen in your life!

Romans 4 gives a wonderful account of the story of Abraham, one of the great heroes of faith. Verses 18-19 say, *"In hope against hope Abraham believed that he would become a father of many nations, as he had been promised [by God]: 'So [numberless] shall your descendants be.' Without becoming weak in faith he considered his own body, now as good as dead [for producing children] since he was about a hundred years old, and [he considered] the deadness of Sarah's womb"* (AMP).

Abraham considered the facts. But he still believed God was greater. Verse 20 says, *"But he did not doubt or waver in unbelief concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong and empowered by faith, giving glory to God"* (AMP).

Instead of relying only on what we see around us, you and I can choose to believe God's Word. And we can open our mouths to speak words of thanks, like this:

"God, I remember the good things You've done for me and how You've been faithful to those who've trusted in You through the ages. I'm giving You praise today because I know You'll always be faithful."

Like Abraham, we all have times of waiting that God uses to test and stretch our faith. But He promises to work all things out for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).

Honestly, if we can keep a good attitude throughout the process, our wait time might be shorter than it would be if we decided we'd rather murmur and complain. God wants to use the challenges we experience to draw us closer to Him so that when our prayer is finally answered, and our day of breakthrough comes, we'll be stronger in our faith and able to withstand any opposition that comes against us.

Hebrews 10:36 (AMP) says, *"For you have need of patient endurance [to bear up under difficult circumstances without compromising], so that when you have carried out the will of God, you may receive and enjoy to the full what is promised."*

It takes boldness to believe God's promises are for you and not just for everyone else. It takes boldness to cling to His promises when the world around you says, It will never happen! And it takes boldness to step out in faith and try something new. But be encouraged. God isn't concerned about you making mistakes. He knows you're not perfect and He wants to give you His wisdom and strength to do everything He's put in your heart.

So, stop doubting and step out in faith...and believe God can do something amazing in you and through you. He wants to see boldness in you!

For more on this topic, order Joyce's four-part teaching resource *Overcoming Fear with Faith*. You can also contact us to receive our free magazine, *Enjoying Everyday Life*, by calling (800) 727-9673 or visiting [www.joycemeyer.org](http://www.joycemeyer.org)

Please note: The views and opinions expressed throughout this publication and/or website are those of the respective authors and do not necessarily reflect those of Joyce Meyer Ministries.

*Joyce Meyer is a New York Times bestselling author and one of the world's leading Bible teachers. Through Joyce Meyer Ministries, she teaches practically and candidly, openly sharing her experiences and helping millions of people to apply biblical principles to their situations and ultimately find hope and restoration through Jesus Christ. Her book *Battlefield of the Mind* has been a perennial bestseller, teaching people how to win the war in their minds and "think about what they think about." Joyce holds conferences across the United States, and her *Enjoying Everyday Life* program is broadcast on TV, radio and online to millions in over 100 languages.*



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## A Tribute to Pamela Blume: Faithful Friend, Advocate, and Leader

By L.A. Williams

The Christian Action League lost a dear friend, a passionate advocate for the cause of Christ, and a former board member on Monday with the passing of Pamela Lee Walker Blume. The 72-year-old wife of longtime Baptist pastor and former Biblical Recorder editor Allan Blume, Pam Blume served organizations at the state, national, and international levels, in addition to ministering alongside her husband for half a century. Those close to her say her friendly demeanor and sense of humor put others at ease.

“A true friend is a rare and precious gem, enriching every moment with their presence. They understand the art of listening, offering a shoulder to lean on, and sharing words of wisdom. Their laughter brightens even the darkest days, and their support provides a steadfast anchor,” said the Rev. Mark Creech. “Pam Blume embodied all these qualities, and I am eternally grateful to God for the gift of her friendship.” Creech worked with Blume as executive director of the Christian Action League during the 15-plus years that she served on the CAL Board.

“Like every member of the Board, she was deeply concerned with the church’s role as ‘salt’ and ‘light’ in our culture and lamented the church’s often insufficient engagement with critical social issues,” he said. “While some conservative churches today might address issues such as LGBTQ rights, same-sex marriage, abortion, and religious liberty from a biblical perspective, many remain silent on other crucial matters like gambling and alcohol. Pam was determined that these issues should also be addressed both from the pulpit and in the public arena.”

He described her as a staunch advocate for alcohol abstinence and harm reduction to the point that she took great pains to ensure that liquor would not be served at a political event she was helping to organize.

“She said it wasn’t going to happen on her watch, even if there was backlash from it. And you know what, it didn’t happen,” Creech recalled. “Pam wasn’t trying to be difficult or judgmental; her approach was driven by a genuine concern for those affected by alcohol use and abuse.”

Creech said Blume exemplified “the highest standards of Christian womanhood.”

Allan Blume called his wife of 52 years the “most gifted and talented person” he had ever known.

“She got to serve in a lot of different areas. God used her, and she made an incredible impact on a lot of people through the years,” he said in a Biblical Recorder article published on Tuesday.

Pam Blume was a member of the International Mission Board’s board of trustees from 1996 to 2004. She also served on the Southern Baptist Convention’s Committee on Committees and the Christian Life and Public Affairs Special Committee of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina.

She helped Ashley Allen launch the Baptist State Convention’s Embrace women’s ministry and was instrumental in helping establish a formal partnership between the State Convention and the Baptist Union of Moldova. In addition to Moldova, Blume also took part in mission trips to Nigeria, South Korea, Pakistan, and Turkey.

According to the BR article, she was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2012 and underwent chemo for the next dozen years.

Allen said that despite her health struggles, Blume did not complain.

“She found her peace, her comfort, and her joy in Christ, and she walked with Him throughout the entirety of her cancer journey,” she told the Biblical Recorder. “Those are some of the biggest lessons I have learned from her over the past 12 years.”

“She continually trusted the Lord to give her strength to deal with this,” Allan Blume reported.

Blume’s Celebration of Life service is set for noon on Friday, Aug. 9 at Liberty Live Church Hampton campus in Hampton, Va. The live feed of the service can be found online at [libertylive.church/livestream](http://libertylive.church/livestream).

Memorials may be sent to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions through local Baptist churches or via the web at [imb.org/generosity/give-now](http://imb.org/generosity/give-now).



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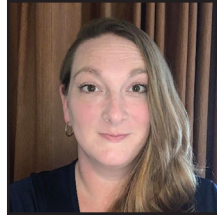
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# MY Life Center

By Leah Johnson  
Mitchell County



“I’m pro-choice, and I’m not your enemy.” That was part of a conversation I recently had. This phrase and interaction have been rolling around in my head and heart ever since. Quite frankly, it has challenged me and made me want to examine my own heart and attitudes. I thanked the person for coming up to me and engaging in conversation. I didn’t try to change their mind, and they didn’t try to change mine. You know what we did? We talked about the parts we did agree on, and we hugged each other. The thing is, when you are looking at a person eyeball to eyeball, it can be very hard to paint them as your opponent. Being pro-life includes loving all life; even the lives of those we disagree with.

Somehow we have concluded that being kind to someone...even hanging out with them, means we agree with them or we are compromising what we believe. My absolute favorite quote keeps coming to mind; “Never sacrifice being kind on the altar of being right.”

Most of us would say we don’t count average, everyday people who happen to be pro-choice as our “enemy”. If we take a really honest look at our conversations, thoughts, and social media though, “enemy” would be pretty accurate. I think, somehow, we have bought into the idea that because abortion is so horrific, and leaves a wake of devastation and loss in its path, it gives us the right to oppose people connected to it by any means necessary. It means a lot of times, we punch with our words, and we punch HARD. The problem is, sometimes the punches land straight on the noses of other human beings. Standing up for what we believe in, and calling sin out, is righteous. Things tend to go sideways when we see another person we disagree with and use it as an excuse to attack their character and them as a person. We start demonizing them instead of the sin. Our country is so divided. We are falling deeper and deeper into an us vs. them mentality, and something needs to happen to turn the tide.

Y’all know what we stand for here at the Center. We are 110% pro-life, and live it out to the best of our ability every day. We are all about standing up for what is right and speaking truth. Abortion is wrong. When you really start looking at it hard, you realize the whole scheme is straight from the pit of hell. We want to see it eradicated in our lifetime. In the midst of what we do, we wind up rubbing shoulders with a lot of people who don’t look like, talk like, act like, think like us. It’s made us aware of our own preconceived notions and pride in our lives. It’s been refining, and in a lot of ways, it’s pushed us closer to Jesus.

There are a lot of things going crazy right now in our world, and I think these principles can apply to a wide variety of issues, but specifically when it comes to being pro-life: speak up for what is right, vote Biblically, put your time and money where your mouth is. Absolutely, do all these things! Maybe we also need to consider purposefully seeking out those who don’t think the same as we do. Meet up for coffee, and share a meal. Talk about the things you can agree on. Pray like crazy, and build a relationship. Who are the people with the greatest influence in your life? I’d wager they are the ones who show you the greatest love and understanding, not the ones who yell at you and attack you. What could it look like if we took the posture of knowing where we stand, and being bold enough to say to those believing differently, “I am pro-life, and I am not your enemy”?

M.Y. Life Center (Formerly Tri-County Pregnancy Center) is located in Burnsville at 112 Mercy Street. We offer compassionate support and love to anyone facing an unexpected pregnancy or wishing to prepare for childbirth and/or improve their parenting skills through the life-changing Good News of Jesus Christ. To contact us or learn more about our services, visit [www.mylifefamilycenter.com](http://www.mylifefamilycenter.com).

Leah Johnson is a wife and mom of two. She is the Executive Director at M.Y. Life Center and volunteer Advocate for Mitchell/Yancey Forgotten Initiative.



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## "The Test of Prosperity"

By Russell McKinney  
Mitchell County



Quick, name the toughest test to pass spiritually. Did you say, "Disease"? Did you say, "The death of a loved one"? Did you say, "Troubles"? Did you say, "Disappointment"? Well, there's no doubt that none of those tests are spiritual gimmes, but would you believe that for many people the correct answer would be, "Prosperity"?

King David was such a person. When he was a young man, he had enough of a spiritual wonder that God Himself rated him as a man after God's own heart. David was most likely still in his teens when he was anointed by the prophet Samuel as the king of Israel. Not long afterward he brought comfort to the demon-tormented Saul, the sitting king, by playing soothing music on the harp. Then came the day when he famously slew the Philistine giant, Goliath. David was on a spiritual roll!

Unfortunately, however, David killing Goliath caused King Saul to become insanely jealous of him, and that began many years wherein Saul tried to kill David. Those were hard years for David, years that saw him and his band of followers living in constant hiding from Saul and his troops. Was David's behavior perfect and above reproach during those years? No, not by a long shot. But was he always God's man, a man whose basic spiritual center was right? Yes. David remained that way up through those years on the run, Saul's death, David's ascendancy to the throne of Judah (the southern part of Israel), and his ascendancy to the throne of all Israel seven years later.

What happened next? Oh, the story keeps getting better. As king of the land, David unified Israel's fiercely independent twelve tribes and led Israel's army in the conquering of Jerusalem. Then he expanded Jerusalem and built it into his capital city. A major part of that was his bringing the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. We can truthfully say that, during those days, David's decisions were spot on. Additionally, his army was unbeatable, all the people loved him, and God was pouring out His favor upon him. God even made a covenant with him that David's royal line would be established forever.

You see, after all those years of struggling to formally claim his anointing as king and make the nation of Israel the greatest and most godly nation on earth, David had now "arrived." His life was just as he wanted it to be. Overall, he had remained true to God during all his troubles and now he was living in a season of major prosperity.

Tragically, though, the next story from David's life is the one about him having a one-night stand with Bathsheba, the wife of one of David's most loyal soldiers, Uriah. That one-night stand resulted in Bathsheba getting pregnant and David then indirectly having Uriah killed and hastily marrying her to prevent a royal scandal. You see, David emphatically failed the test of prosperity.

Noted pastor Chuck Swindoll has said, "When testing comes we get purified, but when prosperity comes we get vulnerable." How true. So tell me, is your life looking pretty good these days? Are you enjoying more ease, comfort, and worldly blessings than you have ever known? Would you call it a season of prosperity for you? Then you'd better put in extra effort to stay on top of your game spiritually. If you don't, you might just go the way of David by forgetting the Lord amid all that prosperity!

*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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## Is A Recession Imminent? How The Christian Faith Is Relevant To Financial Fears

By Dr. Jim Denison



There were some massive news stories over the weekend:

- Debby strengthened into a hurricane overnight and may bring “catastrophic flooding” to Florida.
- Kamala Harris earned enough votes to become the Democratic Party’s presidential nominee.
- The US sent jets and warships to the Middle East as Israel prepares for severe and perhaps imminent Iranian retaliation.
- US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin revoked a plea deal for the accused September 11 plotters.

But I would guess that none of these feel as personally relevant to you (unless you live in Florida) as the financial news of recent days that is causing many to wonder if a recession is imminent:

- The Dow closed down more than 600 points on Friday.
- The Nasdaq fell 10 percent below its record high on disappointing earnings from Amazon and Intel.
- US hiring unexpectedly declined sharply in July.
- Unemployment rose in the month as well.
- Investors fear that the Federal Reserve made a mistake by keeping interest rates at current levels.

The cacophony of bad news is sparking a global sell-off. Earlier today, Japanese stocks suffered their biggest one-day drop in history. European stocks have fallen more than 2 percent in early trading this morning.

Many have been struggling financially for some time. In a new CNN poll, 39 percent of US adults said they worry they won’t be able to make ends meet. The percentage of past due credit cards is at its highest level since 2012. Young adults are discouraged, and sixty-year-olds are “staring at financial peril.”

How is the Christian faith relevant to times like these?

Humans have four fundamental needs

New York Times opinion columnist Nicholas Kristof writes that the Chinese term for “crisis” (weiji) is composed of the characters for “danger” (wei) and for “opportunity” (ji). Accordingly, he notes, “We’re in a period of great danger but also one pregnant with opportunity for a new path—if we can seize it.”

The path we have been on for generations isn’t working. Secularism by definition values only this world and thus measures success by materialistic means. But this is what philosophers call a “category mistake,” akin to asking how much the number 7 weighs or the color of a C scale. In this case, we are using creation as if it were the Creator, valuing the means as the ends.

And this does not work because it cannot work.

Humans have four fundamental needs: belonging, self-esteem, control, and meaningful existence. None can be met fully by material possessions. No matter what we have, it isn’t enough. There’s always more to own, more people to impress, more races to win.

In a consumption-based economy, we are conditioned to be consumers who choose what we want now over what we want most. In a post-Christian culture, we are conditioned to be existentialists who choose what we want in this world over what we will want in the next.

However, the financial anxiety of these days offers us, in Kristof’s terms, an “opportunity for a new path.”

“He bestowed on us at once every good grace”

St. Alphonsus Liguori (1696–1797) described God’s love for man:

He gave him a soul, made in his likeness, and endowed with memory, intellect, and will; he gave him a body equipped with the senses; it was for him that he created heaven and earth and such an abundance of things. He made all these things out of love for man, so that all creation might serve man, and man, in turn, might love God out of gratitude for so many gifts.

But he did not wish to give us only beautiful creatures; the truth is that to win for himself our love, he went so far as to bestow upon us the fullness of himself. The eternal Father went so far as to give us his only Son. When he saw that we were all dead through sin and deprived of his grace, what did he do? Compelled . . . by the superabundance of his love for us, he sent his beloved Son to make reparation for us and to call us back to a sinless life.

By giving us his Son, whom he did not spare precisely so that he might spare us, he bestowed on us at once every good: grace, love, and heaven; for all these goods are certainly inferior to the Son (my emphasis).

The God who “is” love (1 John 4:8) loves us more than any human can. He loved us before he made us. He created our race knowing that we would cost him the life of his Son. He loves us despite sins we do not know we have committed and those we do not yet know we will.

To prove this love, “while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). Billy Graham commented: “We cannot save ourselves; even one sin, the Bible teaches, would be enough to keep us out of heaven. Nor can a Savior who is less than God save us, for only God can forgive sin and make us part of his family forever.”

And this is just what Jesus has done. He would do it all over again, just for you. “We are of such value to God”

We’ll say more across the week about the transforming relevance of God’s love for us. For today, let’s close with this reflection by St. Catherine of Siena (1347–1380):

“We are of such value to God that he came to live among us and to guide us home. He will go to any length to seek us, even to being lifted high upon the cross to draw us back to himself.”

In her view, “We can only respond by loving God for his love.”

Do you agree?

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



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## Noise? No . . . That's Music

By Ken and Jan Merop  
Cleveland, Tennessee

The hustle and bustle of noises in the tourist town couldn't be ignored. Add the crush of humanity on vacation along with high 90s temperatures, and I was ready to leave almost when we got there.

Earlier in the day, we had visited a tranquil spot in the north Georgia mountains where beauty and stillness enveloped us. The cool shadiness of the morning under the many trees was welcome as we knew the heat of the day was approaching.

Surrounded by beautiful varieties of bushes . . . some flowering . . . others finished with their blooming season . . . refreshed us. Birds chirping in the distance and a lake of almost turquoise blue reflected nature surrounding it.

At one point, we took a stroll on the narrow, lakeside path.

After a while, a bench beckoned us to sit down and just savor the natural, God-given beauty before us.

"Isn't this peaceful?" I said to my husband Ken. "It is so still, so quiet."

Just then, water lapped the shoreline.

He remarked, "Except for that noise."

I replied, "That's not noise. That's music!"

He nodded in agreement; for the lake lapping the shoreline was music playing in the backdrop of stillness.

The Bible speaks about nature's music.

It says in Isaiah 55:12 NKJV, "*For you shall go out with joy, and be led out with peace; The mountains and the hills shall break forth into singing before you, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.*"

I recall vacations in Colorado when the Aspens were in full color. As the autumn breezes passed through the groves of trees, their leaves clapped out a song of praise to their Creator.

Verse 15 of Psalm 89 speaks of singing praises to God as Creator and its benefit, "*Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound!*"

Surely, we were blessed that day to hear the joyful sound . . . songs . . . of nature whispering peace to our souls as we basked in its rhythm.

Have you heard the majestic symphony while watching wave after wave of ocean waters crash onto the shore?

Looking up into a vast sea of stars reminds me of another celestial song glowing with his countenance. As it says in Psalm 19: 1, "*The heavens declare the glory of God. And the firmament shows His handiwork.*"

Or who can ignore the serenade of stillness after a snowfall?

Jesus once said that even the rocks would cry out in praise if the people did not.

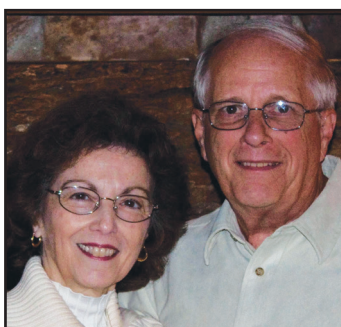
So, when you are still and hear the sounds of nature. It's not noise. That's music. Selah

### Three-Part Harmony

*A trio of waterfalls is not silent.  
As the triplets cascade over the mountain,  
rocks, and boulders to the pool below,  
it is like hearing a song in three-part harmony  
praising the Creator's majesty.*

*"He waters the hills from His upper chambers;  
The earth is satisfied with the fruit of Your works."*

*Psalm 104: 13*



By Regina McIntosh  
Yancey County

### BRAND NEW

*When I don't know how to pray,  
Just don't know what to say...*

*I remember who You are, Lord – how You stay the same,  
You gave Your life, accepted the shame,  
Even though our sins would proclaim...  
You were never the one to blame!*

*When I don't know how to pray,  
When the words won't come, because I've gone astray...*

*I remember who You are, Jesus – how you gave all  
You tore down the wall,  
Between my heart and His,  
The One who is...*

*The Creator, the Maker, the Great I AM...  
The Giver of life, who gave us the Lamb.*

*When I don't know how to pray,  
Just don't know what to say...  
Even when I've gone astray,*

*I know that You, my precious Savior, have made a way  
And, despite the cost, on judgment day...  
I can truly say... I won't have to pay...*

*Despite what I owe,  
Because I know,  
I'm white as snow,  
Because my soul's aglow...*

*With the love, the hope, the faith, the grace  
Because You saved me from the darkest place,  
With salvation that time can't erase,  
With redemption that nothing can replace....*

*Because of You, Lord, even when I don't know how to pray,  
I can know that Your love and grace made a way  
And I'll always be able to say...*

*Thank You, Lord, for everything You gave  
When You came into this world to save  
Reminding each of us to be brave  
Because we know You arose from the grave...*

*And, someday soon, we'll all be with You,  
In heaven, where we'll be brand-new!*

*Thank You, Lord – for being You  
The One who makes all things new,  
The One whose love is so very true!*

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>



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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[jamie@highcountrycpa.com](mailto:jamie@highcountrycpa.com)  
[www.highcountrycpa.com](http://www.highcountrycpa.com)

By Jim Smith  
McDowell County



Freedom Life: A Beacon of Hope for Reentry in Western North Carolina  
Marion, NC – In the heart of Western North Carolina, where the mountains rise and the rivers flow a small but mighty organization is making a significant impact on the lives of individuals returning from incarceration. Freedom Life, based in Marion, NC, is a non-profit Christian ministry dedicated to providing comprehensive reentry services to individuals who have been released from prison.

Founded on the belief that everyone deserves a second chance, Freedom Life offers a wide range of programs designed to help formerly incarcerated individuals successfully transition back into society. These programs include:

- **Housing Assistance:** Freedom Life works with local landlords and property management companies to secure affordable housing for individuals upon their release as well as operating 3 transition houses.
- **Job Placement:** The organization provides job training, resume writing, and interview preparation to help individuals find employment and achieve financial stability.
- **Life Skills Training:** Freedom Life offers courses on budgeting, time management, and conflict resolution to equip individuals with the skills they need to succeed in life.
- **Mentorship:** Mentors provide guidance, support, and accountability to individuals as they navigate the challenges of reentry.
- **Spiritual Guidance:** Freedom Life offers spiritual counseling and support groups to help individuals find meaning and purpose in their lives.

The impact of Freedom Life's work is undeniable. Many individuals who have participated in the organization's programs have gone on to lead successful, productive lives. They have found jobs, reunited with their families, and become active members of their communities.

Freedom Life is also committed to raising awareness about the challenges faced by individuals returning from incarceration. The organization advocates for policy changes that will help to reduce recidivism and create a more equitable society.

As the need for reentry services continues to grow, Freedom Life is expanding its reach and impact. The organization is working to establish partnerships with other community organizations and government agencies to provide even more comprehensive support to individuals in need.

Freedom Life is a shining example of the power of faith and community to transform lives. Through its commitment to providing hope, support, and opportunity, the organization is helping to create a brighter future for individuals who have been impacted by incarceration.

Freedom Life Reentry Services Hosts "Art, Chocolate, and Stories" Fundraiser coming in October

Marion, NC – Freedom Life Reentry Services, a local nonprofit dedicated to supporting individuals returning from incarceration, is excited to announce its upcoming "Art, Chocolate, and Stories" fundraiser. This unique event will showcase the talents of both formerly incarcerated individuals and local artists while raising funds for the organization's important mission.

The fundraiser will feature two events, one in McDowell County and one in Avery County. At each event, guests will have the opportunity to hear inspiring testimonies from individuals who have participated in Freedom Life's reentry program. These individuals will share their personal journeys, highlighting the challenges they have overcome and the progress they have made in their lives. Following the testimonies, local artists will unveil original pieces of artwork inspired by the stories they have heard. These artworks will showcase the creativity and talent of the artists and serve as a testament to the resilience and hope of the individuals who have shared their experiences.

To complement the art and stories, the event will also feature a variety of delicious chocolate desserts. Local dessert makers will create unique treats inspired by the themes and emotions of the shared testimonies. Guests will have the opportunity to sample these delectable desserts and enjoy a sweet treat while supporting a worthy cause.

In addition to the art, stories, and desserts, the event will also include a silent auction of the original artworks created by the local artists. Guests can write their names down for a chance to win one of these unique pieces of art.

To provide a delightful atmosphere, the event will feature live music from a local string trio. Their soothing melodies will create a relaxing and enjoyable ambiance for all attendees.

The "Art, Chocolate, and Stories" fundraiser is a wonderful opportunity to support Freedom Life Reentry Services and learn more about the organization's important work. By attending the event, you can help provide individuals returning from incarceration with the resources and support they need to succeed in life.

For more information about the event dates and locations, please contact Freedom Life or go on the website at [www.FreedomLifeMcDowell.org](http://www.FreedomLifeMcDowell.org), [www.FreedomLifeAvery.org](http://www.FreedomLifeAvery.org) or [www.FreedomLifeYancey.org](http://www.FreedomLifeYancey.org)

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

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

## Declare His Praises

By John McCoury  
Roan Mountain, Tennessee



*"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."* 1 Peter 2:9 The church is called to be a witness, and a witness is one who declares and demonstrates. Notice the structure, You are ... that you may. This is our primary task as Christians. We are indwelt by Jesus Christ so that we may demonstrate the life and character of the One who lives within. The responsibility to fulfill this calling of the church belongs to every true Christian. All are called, all are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and all are expected to fulfill their calling amid the world. The expression of the church's witness may sometimes be corporate, but the responsibility to witness is always individual. It is your individual responsibility and mine. But here a problem comes forth: the problem of possible counterfeit Christians. It is easy for the church (or the individual Christian) to talk about displaying the character of Christ and to make awesome claims about doing so. However, the image Christians project is not always the true, biblical image of Jesus Christ. Humility, patience, love, unity, and peace — these are the true marks of Jesus. Christians are to witness, but not arrogantly or rudely, not with an attitude of holier-than-thou complacency, not in sanctimonious presumption, and certainly not against a background of ugly church fights, Christian against Christian. The church is not to talk about itself. It is to be lowly in mind, not boasting of its power or seeking to advance its standing. The church cannot save the world — but the Lord of the church can. It is not the church for which Christians are to labor and spend their lives but for the Lord of the church. The church cannot exalt its Lord while it seeks to exalt itself. The true church does not seek to gain power in the eyes of the world. It already has all the power it needs from the Lord who indwells it. Further, the church is to be patient and forbearing, knowing that the seeds of truth take time to sprout, time to grow, and time to come to full harvest. The church is not to demand that society make sudden changes in long-established social patterns. Rather, the church is to illustrate positive social change by rejecting evil and practicing righteousness, thus planting seeds of truth that will take root in society and ultimately produce the fruit of change. Lord, keep me practicing the true purpose of the church, which is to exalt you in everything. Where do I need to shun evil and practice righteousness?

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

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### Burke County

Annual Morganton Festival! Get ready for a weekend of non-stop entertainment at the 42nd Annual Morganton Festival presented by UNC Health Blue Ridge. The Pepsi Stage, located at the corner of North Sterling and Avery Avenue, bursts with local favorites and exciting new acts! Kick off the fun on Friday, September 6th at 7:30 pm with a performance by the Old Colony Player's Guild. Afterward, head over to the Courthouse Square Stage for free music by Brandon Bethel and Drake Milligan.

All entertainment continues until 11 pm. Saturday, September 7th brings a diverse line-up: • 10:30 am: Learn the classic North Carolina Shag with the Sandy Beach Shag Club. • 11:30 am: Immerse yourself in traditional music with the Morganton Junior Appalachian Musicians (JAM Kids). • 12:30: Break • 1:30 pm: Witness the gravity-defying feats of Tumblemania's acrobatic show. • 2:30 pm: Be dazzled by the talented dancers of Sherri's School of Dance. • 3:30pm: TBD • 4:30 pm: The Old Colony Player's Guild returns to the stage. • 5:30 pm: Prepare to be captivated by Miss North Carolina and Miss North Carolina's Outstanding Teen! Don't miss out!

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Leave your furry friends at home - this is an animal-free event. Come Play in Our Streets! For more information, call 828/438-5252 or visit [www.morganton-fest.org](http://www.morganton-fest.org)

### Mitchell County

Mt Zion Community Methodist Church will host their monthly Gospel Sing-A-Long on Friday, September 6, 2024 beginning at 7pm. If you love singing the old favorite hymns or just listening to the music then you will receive a blessing from the service. Join us as we lift our voices in praise to our Lord and Savior. Light refreshments are served following the service. Mt Zion is located at the Mitchell/Avery County line across from Mayland Community College on Highway 19-E.



## Sudoku

Solution on page 14

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

## How to Act Your Age

By Dr. James L. Snyder  
Ocala, Fla.



I just celebrated another birthday. Every time I turn around, I have another birthday. I guess I'm going to have to stop turning around.

This year, I turned 73, which is a landmark as far as I'm concerned.

After celebrating my birthday, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage asked, "Do you think you'll be able to act your age this year?"

I just smiled because I didn't know what she was saying. How do you act your age when it changes all the time? It's hard to realize how old I am because my age changes every year. Just when I think I have it all under control, I have another birthday.

I remember my teenage years. It's easy to act your age when you're a teenager because you can do whatever you want.

When I turned 16, I got my driver's license, and I was rather excited to drive.

One evening, I asked my father, "Dad can I borrow your car for tonight?" With a big smile, he said, "Yes, you can."

He gave me the car keys, and just as I went out the door to get into the car, he said, "Oh, by the way, there's no gas in the car, you'll have to go and get it filled up at the gas station."

He looked at me and smiled and I knew exactly what he was doing.

I can drive a car, but there is a cost to driving a car.

Then, when I was 21, I became a full-fledged adult. I'm not sure what that means, but I had arrived, or so I thought. I was now in charge of my life, and I was so happy about it. Nobody was ever going to tell me what to do.

I carried this attitude around for quite a while until I realized that being an adult has a price tag to it.

All through my life, I have been trying to act my age at every level. It's been hard, but I have been trying as best I can. It seems I'm not a very good actor.

The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage's birthday is two days after mine. I arranged it that way on purpose so that I would always remember her birthday.

We were both celebrating our 70th birthday and went out for evening supper. We made our order and then after we finished our order we had a piece of cake brought out.

Looking across the table, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage said, "Well, my dear, how does it feel to be old?"

I reached across the table, grabbed her arm, and began to squeeze it. Looking at her, I said, "It feels rather good."

Her voice had a very sarcastic tone; she said, "Are you ever going to act your age?"

At my age, it doesn't matter. I'm wondering if there's some kind of thespian school that teaches acting your age. I should take some of these classes for sure. My problem is that when I turned 73, it was the first time I had done so. I have no idea how I should act at 73. I went to a bookstore the other day to look through the books, trying to find some book that would help me act 73. I found none.

I was tempted to write a book on that subject, but as I meditated on it for a while, I realized that by the time I finished writing a book called "Acting Your Age at 73," I would have another birthday and be 74. What's a geezer to do?

The other day, somebody asked me how old I was. I told them that I had just turned 73, and they looked at me, smiled, and said, "You sure don't look that old." I smiled and then walked away. Later, I began thinking about what that person said. If I'm correct, he was insinuating that I was entering my second childhood. Oh boy. My first childhood didn't turn out very well, and I don't know how my second childhood will turn out.

A lot of people are infatuated with birthdays. I don't know how many restaurants I've been to when there were birthday celebrations. Everybody was singing Happy Birthday. And I usually joined in on the celebration because sometimes I've gotten a slice of birthday cake. That's how you act your age.

As I was thinking about my second childhood, I wondered if maybe I could do a lot better this next time. In my first childhood, it went so fast that I really couldn't keep up with anything. By the time I had caught up, I was retired.

Being retired gives you many opportunities to rehearse acting your age. I don't always get it, and I stumbled on the script, but I'm trying. When I stumble on the script, I can blame it on getting old and my memory failing.

It is very difficult to act my age. Now that I'm 73, I have moments when I want to act like I was 37 or even 25. The problem is that I didn't have enough practice being 37 or even 25.

In thinking about this I was reminded of what David said. "Now also when I am old and greyheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come" (Psalm 71:18).

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

**Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:  
Psalms 103:2-4**

# NC Baptist Aging

## Full Circle of Love: Dan Lambeth's Lifelong Bond with Baptist Children's Homes

By Carol Layton

Dan Lambeth's journey with Baptist Children's Homes (BCH) is a testament to the enduring power of love and care. In 1967, nine-year-old Dan came to live on the Mills Home campus. His house mother, Estelle Couch, provided Dan with nurture and guidance, and now, at age 66, the same ministry has come full circle—by building a wheelchair ramp to support Dan's safety and independence at home.

Dan spent only 14 months at Mills Homes' Hutchinson cottage, but his house mother Estelle Couch made a lasting impression on the young boy. "We as children were loved and cared for. I was there in third grade as a flunkie. Miss Couch made me study with no play time until I got my grades up. She got me straightened out and I went from all F's to all A's."

Dan also credits Estelle Couch with creating a tradition that enabled the boys' teachers to better understand them and their situations. "Miss Couch would invite all of our teachers to the cottage once a year for supper."

Dan has never forgotten Miss Couch and the changes she brought to his young life. In 2000, he was part of a committee that established the Couch-Pinnix Scholarship fund in honor of his beloved house mother as well as Lugenia Pinnix who retired after serving 21 years as a dietician at Hutchinson Cottage. The scholarship fund benefited students attending Davidson County Community College.

Dan also fondly remembers "Miss Pinnix", the cook for the cottage who made special cakes for each of the boy's birthdays. Dan's tenth birthday occurred within days of him leaving Mills Home. Dan remembers, "My cake was decorated with cowboys and Indians and I tried to leave it there, but she made me take it with me and told me she would make another one for the cottage."

Toward the end of her life, Lugenia didn't drive and so Dan drove her to Troy to visit Estelle. When Estelle Couch passed away in 2004 and Lugenia Pinnix in 2006, Dan attended both of their funerals. Dan remembers sadly, "They raised all those children and I was about the only alumni there."

As a faithful reader of Charity & Children, Dan, now age 66, knew of BCH's ministry for aging adults—the North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry (NCBAM). When he began to need a walker and had difficulty with the steps leaving his home, he contacted NCBAM and was able to have a ramp built that makes his life much safer now. Dan was able to purchase the materials and greatly appreciated the work of crew chief Matthew Hunt and other volunteers from the United Methodist Church in Archdale who constructed his ramp.

Dan's 14 months as a child in care at Mills Home had a lasting impact on his life. As an adult, he was a faithful son to both his parents in their later years. "I helped my parents until they passed away. And before my grandmother passed away, I used to drive her to church and Winn Dixie."

Dan continues to attend alumni Homecoming events at Mills Home and has had cookouts and trips with other Mills Home alumni over the years. He deeply appreciates the guidance and compassion he received as a young boy as well as the assistance extended to him as an adult.

Dan Lambeth's story is a powerful reminder of the lasting impact that love, care, and community can have on a person's life. His journey, from a young boy at Mills Home to an adult supported by the same ministry, showcases the transformative power of God's love.

Dan's life and experiences inspire us at BCH and NCBAM to continue to fulfill our missions. Please consider contributing to the circle of care, whether through donations, volunteering, or spreading the word about the work of BCH and NCBAM. Together, we can ensure that more children and adults receive the love and support they need to thrive, just as Dan did.

Carol Layton is the Director of Communications and Administration for NCBAM at Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina



*This wheelchair ramp, constructed by volunteers from the United Methodist Church greatly increases Dan's safety and independence and allows him more opportunities to attend church, get fresh air, and be part of his community.*

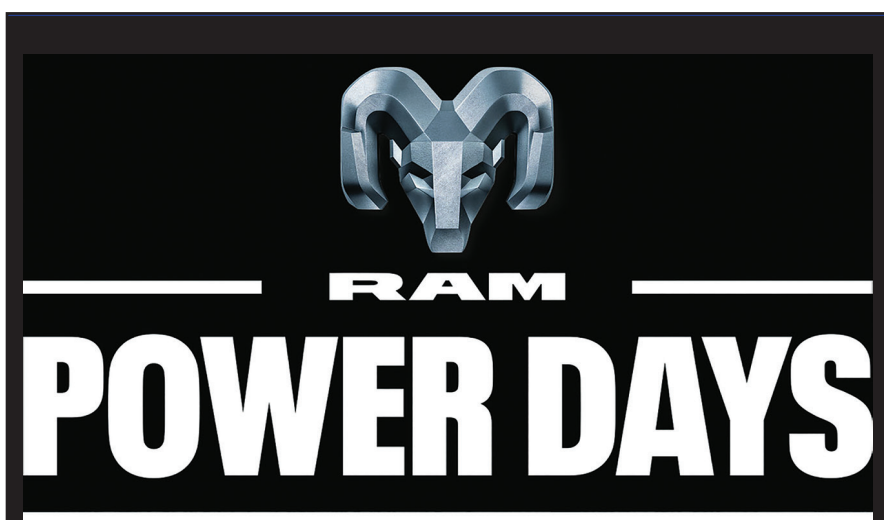
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## The Lord's Supper – A Unifying Meal

By David H. Sable  
Watauga County



The Lord's Supper is the high point of an Anglican service. Being reformed, we value robust Biblical teaching and preaching but this helps lead the congregation through confession, repentance, prayer and ultimately receiving the bread and wine. This is a unifying meal that draws men and women from all walks of life and leads us forth with empty hands to participate in some mysterious way in the very once-for-all sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ.

It is an exclusive meal for those who have put their faith in Christ and have been baptized. The supper unites those from different races and ethnicities, different levels of maturity and economics, different struggles with temptations, and even diverse (yet orthodox) theological and political opinions. Such a picture points ultimately to the marriage supper of the Lamb where the grand expression of Christ's restoring and bringing into one will be displayed.

In contrast, the French Olympics opening ceremony parody of Leonardo Da Vinci's The Last Supper (officially called La Cene Sur La Scene Sur La Seine —The scene of the Last Supper on the Seine River) argues in contrast for a libertine vision of freedom. It began with a representation of the famous fresco where the apostles were depicted by drag queens and LGBT icons. When the meal is unveiled, we see a mostly naked blue man rising and singing sensuously. The attendants, including a young girl, begin to frolic and embrace in a hyper-sexual manner.

According to Jonathan Pageau, an expert in religious symbolism, the Olympic piece celebrates openness, diversity, and inclusion. While these attributes may be necessary for a society to function, the only way in which diversity can truly be celebrated is by using this technique of carnival — a means of turning unity upside down. Carnival is made up of shocking, grotesque, and over-the-top symbols to suggest inversion, scandal, and chaos. It is intended to disrupt the sensibilities, trouble the senses, and divide. For example, the rainbow flag — a symbol of multiplicity, not unity; the drag queen as a symbol of ambiguity featuring a man dressed as a woman but also with a beard; a child amid adult sensuality; disproportionate smurf-blue people—all designed to off-balance the expected and up-end the norm. This is a carnival.

Pageau argues that traditional imagery of carnivals in the West (Mardi Gras, Halloween, feast of Fools) are moments of inversion and chaos showing the extent of human culpability and fallenness. Yet these temporary excesses historically have been followed with moments of repentance, fasting, and return to normalcy (for example, lent following Fat Tuesday or All Saints Day following Halloween). In contrast, the French Olympic messaging was an anthem for something more permanent. In the unsettling of normality and its queering of the world, it argued for a libertine freedom that could only be achieved with the permanent upending of social norms and the created order.

True freedom it suggests can only be found in obtaining whatever one imagines using whatever technological means necessary to overcome the hindrance of reality. If one missed the point, the celebration culminated in the singing of the secular hymn Imagine where John Lennon sets forth a world without government or religion heaven hell economic boundaries, or any other restraints that may get in the way of pure, unaffected choice that is promised to bring forth in some inexplicable way a unifying brotherhood of all.

But on a Sunday morning in our little Anglican church, we all come forth in repentance, gratitude, and empty hands. Many of us experienced first-hand the catastrophic results of the vision of libertine freedom. We saw the shallowness, experienced the boredom, felt the destructiveness, and were betrayed by the implausibility of its promises. We come forward as lost sheep who wandered about in the lusts and spiritual aimlessness of our own disordered imaginations until the shepherd led us to Himself. We come to the supper not intending to upend, disturb, or set off balance. We come in humility turning away from the tyranny of our own unfettered desires to receive in humility the gospel promise that unites us as Christ's very body.

*David B. Sable lives in Deep Gap, NC with his wife Loretta. They have two grown men. He serves as a member of Christ the King, an Anglican fellowship in the ACNA in Boone, NC*

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# YOUR GOVERNMENT PAGES

## NC Senate District 47



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

This summer has been one of the history books in American politics. Within six weeks, we saw the alarming debate performance from the current president, the assassination attempt on the former president, and the announcement that the vice president would be the presidential nominee for a major political party, despite never having received any votes for that office in a primary.

Still, Election Day is over a month away. How many more “October Surprises” will the next six weeks bring?

Perhaps the most disheartening aspect of the Kamala Coup is seeing the legacy media rally around the narrative that the vice president and her campaign are crafting. We’ve had years of Harris revealing her far-Left policy preferences through both interviews and actual policy choices as a U.S. Senator. Her ideology alone would be enough to dissuade the American public, not even factoring in her disingenuous persona and record as a prosecutor in California.

It is the Harris campaign’s right to try to rebrand themselves. If they want to lie to the American public about the vice president’s beliefs, it is our responsibility to see through the façade.

But to see institutions such as the media and nonprofits carry water on her behalf is borderline Orwellian. For example, Kamala Harris was scored as the most liberal U.S. Senator in 2019 by a nonpartisan group called GovTrack. After her ascension to the Democrat presidential nominee, they took down that page of their website.

Legacy media are falling over themselves to prop up the Harris-Walz campaign. They tried to erase our collective memory of Vice President Harris widely known as the “border czar” in the early days of the Biden administration, when she was tasked with, and massively failed at, securing our Southern Border. This summer, media told us that phrase was a Republican scare tactic, despite those same outlets and reporters having used the term themselves. They also fell right in line with the selection of Tim Walz as Harris’s Vice Presidential pick. They were quick to repeat the talking points about the Minnesota Governor being “folksy” instead of highlighting his tyrannical COVID policies and riots of 2020.

If President Trump wins this November, it will be despite the media’s best efforts to the contrary.

To me, the most important thing that Americans and North Carolinians can do this election season is remain grounded in the things that matter. Politics and policy obviously affect our lives, but the important things - faith, family, and community - are not determined at the ballot box.

That being said, there is a clear choice this November between electing leaders who share those values, and those who prioritize power and control at all costs, even if it means lying to the American people and circumventing the will of their own primary voters.

## NC Commissioner of Labor



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

It’s hard to believe summer is almost over and we’re headed into the cooler days of September. I love the summertime, but I am looking forward to Fall and Football!

As I mentioned in last month’s column, August kicked off the traditional county fair season. September opens with one of the largest fairs in our state – the N.C. Mountain State Fair in Fletcher. This year the N.C. Mountain State Fair celebrates its 30th Anniversary. I will participate in the fair’s safety press conference with Agriculture Commissioner Steve Troxler on Sept. 5 and will tour the fairgrounds with our Elevator and Amusement Device Bureau staff.

The N.C. Mine Safety and Health Conference is Sept. 11-13 in Beaufort. The conference is jointly sponsored by NCDOL’s Mine and Quarry Bureau and the N.C. Aggregates Association. The Mine and Quarry Bureau provides critical safety and health services to operators, employees, and contractors in the aggregate industry. As part of the event, I will be providing the welcome and opening remarks at the General Session.

The Carolina Star Safety Conference will be happening Sept. 18-20, at the Koury Convention Center in Greensboro. Last year’s theme was “Re-Focus, Re-Engage, and Re-Commit” and the conference had 627 participants from across the state. I am looking forward to this year’s conference having even more participation. Our Recognition Program staff and the Carolina Star Safety Conference Board of Directors put in a lot of hard work to make this conference the success that it is.

Later this month, several members of my staff will be attending the Occupational Safety and Health State Plan Association (OSH-SPA) meeting in Boston, MA. There are 29 states and territories that have an OSHA-approved state plan, and this meeting provides an opportunity for those state plans to meet and discuss what is going on in their states and to also talk with Federal OSHA.

I hope everyone enjoys the upcoming Labor Day weekend!

## NC Senate District 46



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

I hope everyone has had a good summer. School bells are now welcoming students, and fall is just around the corner. With fall comes election season and with that, I wanted to share important information from our State Board of Elections concerning voter engagement. First off, please visit [vt.ncsbe.gov](http://vt.ncsbe.gov) to see the list of Voter Tools that you can access to confirm locations of early voting sites and election day precinct locations. With the Voter Search tool, you can ensure your ID – needed to vote in the November 2024 election - matches up with your registration name and address. You can also view your sample ballot and track your ballot after voting.

The following are significant dates to remember as we approach the season of voting:

Sept. 6, 2024: County boards of elections begin mailing absentee ballots to eligible voters who submit an absentee ballot request form. If you know of any military service members or other citizens living overseas or anyone that might want to vote by mail, please remind them to request an absentee ballot at [votebymail.ncsbe.gov](http://votebymail.ncsbe.gov).

Oct. 11, 2024: Voter registration deadline (5 p.m.).

Oct. 17, 2024: In-person early voting begins; same-day voter registration is available.

Oct. 29, 2024: Absentee ballot request deadline (5 p.m.).

Nov. 2, 2024: In-person early voting ends (3 p.m.).

Nov. 5, 2024: General Election Day and Absentee Ballot Return Deadline

Registering to vote is the first step in participating in our elected government. As a constituent, you have the opportunity to share with me as your elected state Senator, and other elected officials, your ideas on local or statewide issues that concern you. In addition, my office is often able to serve as a liaison between constituents and state government agencies when problems arise. Periodically I send out an online newsletter to constituents regarding important events in the General Assembly, state government, and, most importantly, matters of interest to citizens in Burke, Buncombe, and McDowell counties. Since a lot of the news in Raleigh isn’t reported in western NC, this is an effort to keep you better informed about the current state government. If you would be interested in receiving our newsletter, please email our office. It is a privilege to serve the citizens of the 46th District, so please do not hesitate to contact my office if I can ever be of assistance.

# God Bless America



# YOUR GOVERNMENT PAGES

## NC House District 86



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

### FENTANYL KILLS NORTH CAROLINIANS

Clearly, conditions at the U.S.-Mexico border have become a paramount concern under the current Washington administration that essentially refuses to protect border security. Along with the open border, the crisis caused by the ease with which the deadly drug fentanyl also crosses the border is maybe the most dramatic and tragic impact of the open border on American communities—including us in North Carolina.

Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid more potent than morphine or heroin. As a result, it is significantly more dangerous because it is much easier to overdose on it. You have likely heard the reports of individuals dying from highly concentrated, tiny amounts ingested, often unknowingly by the victim. In 2023, there were 3,067 fentanyl-positive deaths in North Carolina. This is up significantly from 1,353 fentanyl-positive deaths in our state in 2019—before the extensive border crisis heated up. Western North Carolina suffers from the fentanyl crisis. To cite just two local examples, in 2023, Burke County had 43 fentanyl-positive deaths. McDowell County had 16.

Although North Carolina is not a border state, we still are immensely affected by an open border in multiple ways, but dramatically by the heightened drug trafficking. We know that most fentanyl trafficked into the US is manufactured in China and smuggled over the US-Mexico border. Once across the border, fentanyl is distributed across the nation. It staggers one’s imagination that, in 2022, fentanyl was the leading cause of death for U.S. adults aged 18-45.

To protect North Carolinians from fentanyl, we in the state legislature have worked on legislation to limit, as best we can at the state level, the major harm done by fentanyl in our state. Last year, we increased fines for those trafficking fentanyl and modified the crime of death by distribution by increasing punishment for those who cause the death of another by distributing such drugs. We continue to seek ways to lessen the effects in North Carolina of the open border crisis and, in particular, the resulting fentanyl deaths. Among other efforts, over the objections of some, there is a House bill to require our state sheriffs to cooperate with federal immigration enforcement (ICE) if they suspect an individual in their custody is an alien who is in our country illegally. However, ultimately, since the federal government constitutionally is in charge of the border, we are mostly dependent on a federal administration willing to take effective measures to stop illegal flooding into our country. That means letting ICE agents do their job. That, in turn, also must include stopping the flow of fentanyl from China.



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*Paid for by Warren Daniel for NC Senate*

## The Answer

By Billy Graham



Q: My husband and I are struggling with the question of leaving our children in the hands of after-school programs as we pursue our careers that allow us to provide for them. We look around and see the instability of families these days and wonder if we should consider another kind of stability—for our children to have a parent at home. But our struggle, and one that's putting tension on our marriage, is which one of us should stay home!

A: From the writings of the Rev. Billy Graham

There are more pressures on the home than perhaps at any time in history. More mothers are working outside the home than ever before. Many feel guilty about leaving their children in the care of others or having them return to an empty home while they are at work. Many women (whether divorced or widowed) must work to support themselves and their children, a phenomenon which is becoming more and more common in the age in which we live.

But many couples devote more time to their working life than they do to their family life. Is it any wonder, then, that so many marriages are in trouble? To paraphrase the Bible, what shall it profit a man or woman who gains the whole world but loses his or her own family? What achievement in life is equal to a stable home life? Every material goal, even if it is met, will pass away. But the heritage of children is timeless.

Someone has said that our children are our messages to the future. Our children have been entrusted to us by God. Parents' primary responsibility is not to make sure their children have the best clothes and live in the best houses, but rather to make sure they grow up in homes where God is present and the love of Christ reigns so that they will come to know God through His Son. What could be more valuable than a happy home?

(This column is based on the words and writings of the late Rev. Billy Graham.)

By Tammy Hopson  
Mitchell County



“Man, is this suitcase heavy“ I thought to myself as I stood in the parking lot of the college. I had been asked to teach a weeknight class there for Campus Crusade for Christ. “Why in the world did I wear high heels?” I asked myself as I began my journey up to the entrance from the bottom tier of the parking lot. The college seemed to loom overhead as it stood on the hill.

I had carefully planned what I was going to teach. I had taught this same lesson before in my Ladies' Sunday School class. Because I am a visual person and love object lessons I decided to use a set of bright red suitcases that belonged to my mom. They were old hard vinyl cases that looked like they came out of the 50's or 60's. My mom wouldn't be needing them anyway. The Lord had taken her home just a few months ago. I packed two of the suitcases inside each other to try to make them easier to manage. My lesson was on the weight of discouragement and I was using the suitcases to demonstrate the heaviness and burden of the things we carry. I was excited for the opportunity to share the things I had studied with the class.

The climb was hard. Each tier of the parking lot had a steep set of stairs to get up to the next level and then another and another until you finally reached the main parking lot. The suitcases got heavier and heavier. The sun was bright and hot and my face became red. My feet started to sting as I lugged the suitcases up each step. It wasn't long and I was barely moving up the hill. I kept looking ahead at how far I had to go. “What am I doing?” I asked as I questioned myself and my purpose. “I bet I look stupid. Nobody wants to hear this” By the time I got to the college door I looked like a sweaty mess. The classroom was on the second floor and I was worn out. “I'm going to look horrible. Maybe I shouldn't even go in.”

I went in anyway and began my lesson with the few students who came. I placed the three red suitcases on the table in front of me and in big black letters I labeled the small one DISAPPOINTMENT, the middle one DOUBT, and the largest one DISCOURAGEMENT.

I went on to expound on the meaning of these three words and the weight they have as we attempt to carry our luggage through life. Holding up the smallest one I taught how much disappointments can affect us. They are the missed appointments in life. Things that should have happened but didn't. For example, I should have had a better childhood but something happened and I didn't. Or the most recent disappointment I experienced, my mother should not have died at age 56, but she did. The list is endless for us all and if we do not seek God's help, we will haul our dissappointments with us and the heaviness will negatively affect our lives.

Holding up the next suitcase I began to explain how disappointments can get so heavy that they cause us to DOUBT the goodness of God, our purpose in His plan, and His love for us. Lastly, I held up the largest suitcase. The heaviest of them all. The one that will truly immobilize us. The baggage of DISCOURAGEMENT. It is so dangerous to carry this load. If we carry DISAPPOINTMENT and DOUBT too long we will become discouraged in our walk with God. Discouragement is the lack of courage. It cripples us. Discouragement can get so heavy that we just want to sit down. We will lose our motive to do much of anything and we may decide to just give up. It is then that another deadly “D” word may occur. Discouragement can lead to despondency or depression and cause us to live a defeated life.

In my class that day I told them that the biggest antidote for disappointment, doubt, and discouragement is the Word of God. In the bible, there are so many scriptures that will help us through difficult times. It is impossible to pick only one. But one of them is Joshua 1:9 which says “*Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.*”

As we attempt to manage our lives and live through difficult times, God says He is with us. He is walking right alongside us. He longs for us to let Him carry not only our DISAPPOINTMENT, DOUBTS, AND DISCOURAGEMENT but often He carries US. If I live my life in constant awareness that even though painful things have happened, and even though life is hard, God is still there helping me through and He is stronger than me, His shoulders can carry my load and I can travel this world “lighter”.

When meditating on what I would write to you this month I thought about the weight of discouragement and remembered this lesson from 2004. I want so badly to show you those suitcases and to demonstrate this lesson to you. I want to do this object lesson with you. But instead, I have told you the story of my class that day, and how I carried the luggage up the steep college hill. I know God was with me through every step. As I taught, a woman in my class sat with tears in her eyes as she listened. She too had just lost her mother and she was carrying heavy disappointment in her heart. I believe the lesson I taught that day was for her and I know that through that tough climb, God was with me urging me forward into the classroom to speak on His behalf and help His hurting daughter.

Perhaps today this lesson is for you too. Are you trying to carry the luggage of life all by yourself? If so Jesus says “*Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.*” Matthew 11:28.

Let's let God carry our luggage.

*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.com*

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# Mt. Zion Community Church

## Children, Go Where I Send You

By Naomi Houston  
Avery County



How suddenly our lives can change! A phone call at 3 am, a knock at the door, a letter in the mail, or a diagnosis following testing by our doctor. One day we're living our life routinely just as we've always done for years and then at a moment's notice everything has changed!

In Exodus 3: vs 1-12, a man named Moses is walking along with some sheep and goats just as he had been doing for the past 40 years. Moses is now an 80-year-old man, having lived the first 40 years of his life in Egypt in the palace of Pharaoh. Following an "incident" which forced him to flee the country he has now been living in the land of Midian tending the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro. He is probably expecting to live out the remainder of his life here – but God had other plans.

First, however, God had to get the attention of Moses. As he is walking along Moses sees a bush burning yet it is not being consumed by the heat of the fire. This gets his attention and as he begins to draw closer to examine this phenomenon God speaks to him. When Moses stopped, and looked, he was then in a position to hear – to hear the voice of God.

Once he had the attention of Moses, God calls him to a great task in verses 7-10. He tells Moses that He is aware of the cries of the people of Israel held in bondage in Egypt and He plans to do something about it – and Moses is the person to carry out the plan. Moses isn't the "deliverer" but is to be used by God who is the deliverer – a "God-sized" task that requires Moses to step out in faith. Moses tries to talk his way out of this calling by saying he isn't the right man and doesn't have the ability to carry out such an assignment but God reminds him that He knows Moses better than Moses knows himself and – most importantly – he won't be doing this alone for "Certainly, I will be with you..." (Vs 12).

God also calls us to tasks and, like Moses, we are more likely to hear God's calling to serve when we intentionally stop, look, and listen. Most of us live our lives at such a busy pace it's hard to hear the voice of God speaking. When Moses looked at the burning bush that wasn't consumed it represents for us the Holy Spirit. Moses was awakened by the fire of the bush and we are awakened by the Holy Spirit which helps us to find our calling by opening our eyes. Finally, Moses listened. When we can slow down our busy pace (stop) and look (be led by the Holy Spirit) we are in a position to hear the call of God.

Have you ever wondered what would have happened if Moses had not stopped that day? What if he had failed to follow God's call and had just continued tending the flock of Jethro? God wasn't hesitating – He planned to liberate the people of Israel. If Moses didn't "get going" then God would have called someone else and Moses would have missed the opportunity of a lifetime.

God calls us today to God-sized tasks. We can resist our call just as Moses did and even choose to deny accepting the call. The abundant life to which we are called by God is not meant to be lived on the sideline. Those players who are on the sideline never enjoy the thrill of winning the game! We are called by God to take steps of faith with Him, to trust Him; because He goes with us when we are willing to accept His call and allow Him to work through us. What is your burning bush? Stop, Look, and Listen – and "Get Going"!

*Naomi Houston and her husband, Lt Col Clay Houston USMC Retired, live on Henson Creek in Avery County. They are members of Mt Zion Community Church where Naomi is the adult Sunday School teacher. Both have been actively involved in church throughout their 68 years of marriage and Naomi wrote a weekly column for the Avery Post for many years.*

**Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. James 5:16**



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## Understanding the Tax Risks of Qualified Assets: A Path to Tax-Free Retirement

By Steve Gaito  
McDowell County



### The Tax Risks of Qualified Assets

Qualified assets such as traditional IRAs and 401(k)s are popular retirement vehicles due to their tax-deferral benefits. You don't pay taxes on your contributions or earnings until you withdraw the funds in retirement. However, this tax deferral comes with inherent risks:

1. **Changing Tax Laws:** Tax laws are subject to change, and future tax rates are unpredictable. What might be a favorable tax environment today could change by the time you retire, potentially leading to higher taxes on your withdrawals.
2. **Rising Tax Rates:** If tax rates increase in the future, your withdrawals from qualified accounts could be taxed at a higher rate, reducing your retirement income.
3. **Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs):** Starting at age 73, the IRS mandates that you begin taking RMDs from your traditional IRA or 401(k). These distributions are taxed as ordinary income and could push you into a higher tax bracket, increasing your overall tax burden.

### The Case for Converting to Tax-Free Retirement Options

To mitigate these risks, many financial experts recommend converting qualified assets into tax-free options like a Roth IRA or Indexed Universal Life (IUL) insurance. Both strategies offer unique benefits:

1. **Roth IRA Conversion:**
  - **Tax-Free Growth and Withdrawals:** You pay taxes upfront when converting to a Roth IRA, but your investments grow tax-free. In retirement, withdrawals are also tax-free.
  - **No RMDs:** Roth IRAs do not require RMDs during the account holder's lifetime, giving you more control over your retirement income.
2. **Indexed Universal Life (IUL) Insurance:**
  - **Tax-Free Loans and Withdrawals:** You can access the cash value of an IUL policy through loans or withdrawals, which are generally tax-free if structured correctly.
  - **Market-Linked Growth with Downside Protection:** IUL policies offer the potential for growth based on a market index while protecting against market downturns.
  - **Tax-Free Death Benefit:** The death benefit from an IUL policy is generally paid to beneficiaries tax-free, providing an efficient wealth transfer tool.
  - **No Contribution Limits:** Unlike Roth IRAs, IUL policies typically don't have contribution limits, allowing for potentially significant tax-free growth.

### Weighing the Costs and Benefits

Converting to a Roth IRA or an IUL policy involves upfront costs. For a Roth IRA, this means paying taxes on the conversion amount. For an IUL, it involves paying premiums to maintain the policy. However, the long-term benefits of securing tax-free growth, protecting against future tax increases, and enhancing estate planning often outweigh these initial costs.

### Next Steps: Personalized Retirement Planning

Every financial situation is unique, and the best approach depends on your specific circumstances, goals, and tax considerations. To explore how converting to a Roth IRA or IUL insurance could benefit your retirement, I recommend setting up an appointment to help you design a tailored strategy that maximizes your retirement savings while minimizing tax risks, ensuring a secure and tax-efficient future.

Contact Steve Gaito, CFP, to review your options and create a retirement plan that aligns with your financial goals.

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



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# Berry Chapel Baptist Church

## God Umbrella

By Steve Williams  
Mitchell County

God's umbrella is His covenants He has made with His people. God's covenants are designed to benefit His followers. Keeping the terms of the covenant allows you and I to prosper in all that you do. Covenants produce progress in our lives. Moving forward in your life is seen clearly in keeping God's Covenant. So just what is a covenant? To put it simply a covenant is a covering like an umbrella. So if we operate under God's covenant or are following God's Word we will experience God's power, position, provisions, and His authority.

Look at it like this: when it is raining outside and thunder and lightning fill the sky, you most likely reach for your umbrella before heading out into the rain. You will open your umbrella and place it over your head. You are covered from the rain. The umbrella does not stop the clouds from raining, but it does stop the rain from reaching you. While it does not change what is happening around you, it does change what is happening to you. Similarly, when we are under God's covering of His covenant, the circumstances, trials, and challenges of life may not change, but God will cover you in such a way that they do not negatively impact you at the level they would without His covering. To be Under God's covenant is to experience the protection of His covering.



Satan tries to keep you away from God's covering. Have you ever been outside, far from cover, when a storm came up? One of the enemies' goals is to try to lure you out from under the umbrella (Lordship, covering) of Jesus Christ. He knows if he can get you out from under Christ's covering, he has free rein to deceive you, trick you, and harm you however he chooses. It is under Christ's covering, His umbrella, that you stand protected. Understand, you can be saved and still function out from underneath the covering of Jesus Christ. You may ask how is that? Do you remember Adam and Eve in the garden? They made a decision based on their desire rather than based on the wisdom and direction of God's Word He gave them. Then they found themselves out from underneath God's umbrella or covering, outside the garden looking in. They failed to keep God's covenant. In return, this brought them much pain and heartache. We must do all that we can to stay underneath God's umbrella.

### Words Of Wisdom:

- God operates the world by covenants. Those covenants have specific jurisdictions and responsibilities, not to be infringed upon by another covenant. Tony Evans
- A covenant made with God should be regarded not as restrictive but as protective. Russell M. Nelson
- If one accepts the terms of the covenant and obeys God's law, he or she receives the blessings associated with the covenant. Russell M. Nelson
- Don't go out into the world without your umbrella (covering of God). Steve Williams

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



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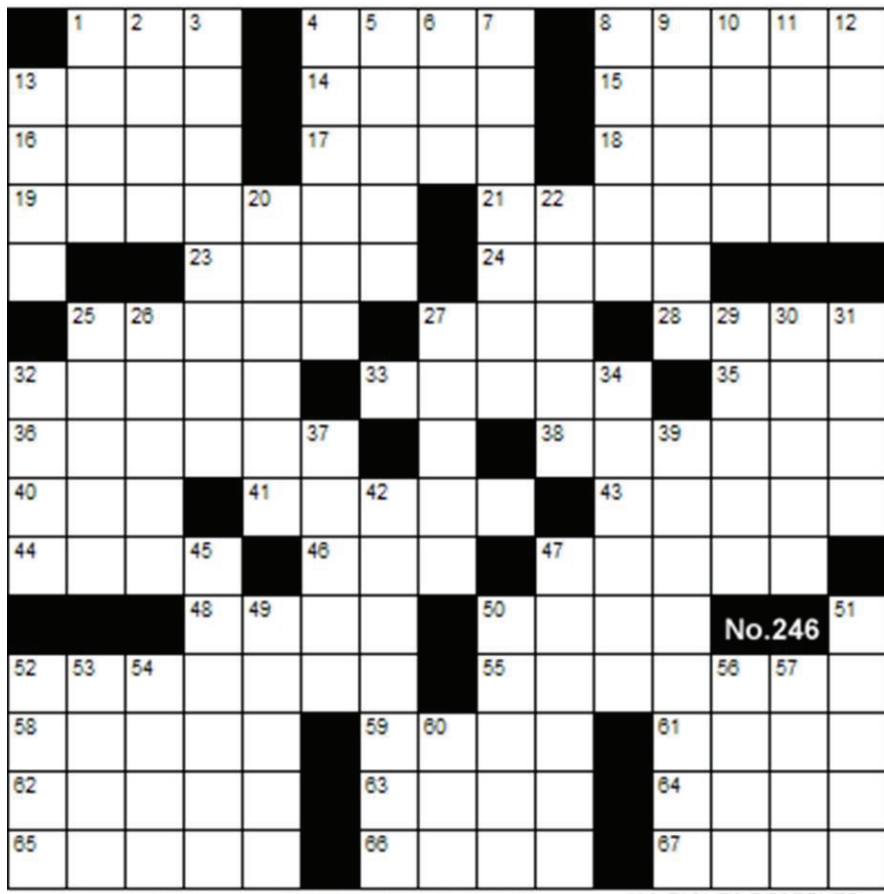
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# Crossword

ACROSS  
 1 back end of Peter's boat  
 4 A \_\_\_ answer turneth away wrath (Prov 15:1) KJV  
 8 But Jesus \_\_\_ made no reply, and Pilate was amazed (Mark 15:5)  
 13 let us consider how we may \_\_\_ one another on toward love (Heb 10:24)  
 14 Likewise every good \_\_\_ bears good fruit (Matt 7:17)  
 15 and be killed, and after \_\_\_ days rise again (Mark 8:31)  
 16 lest he \_\_\_ thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee (Luke 12:58) KJV  
 17 The fear of the LORD \_\_\_ length to life (Prov 10:27)  
 18 the next morning they \_\_\_ and worshiped before the LORD (1 Sam 1:19)  
 19 Oh, that you would bless me and \_\_\_ my territory (1 Chron 4:10)  
 21 To one he gave five \_\_\_ of money, to another two (Matt 25:15)  
 23 Then will the lame leap like a \_\_\_ (Isa 35:6)  
 24 they are not plagued by human \_\_\_ (Ps 73:5)  
 25 Suppose he has a violent son, who \_\_\_ blood (Ezek 18:10)  
 27 How \_\_\_ is the candle of the wicked put out! (Job 21:17) KJV  
 28 They will neither \_\_\_ nor destroy on all my holy mountain (Isa 11:9)  
 32 Jesus crossed to the far \_\_\_ of the Sea of Galilee (John 6:1)  
 33 in the morning there was a \_\_\_ of dew around the camp (Ex 16:13)  
 35 My beloved is like a \_\_\_ or a young hart (Song 2:9)  
 36 with a blue cord on each \_\_\_ (Num 15:38)  
 38 I \_\_\_: Let no one take me for a fool. (2 Cor 11:16)  
 40 just as \_\_\_ was deceived by the serpent's cunning (2 Cor 11:3)  
 41 something rotten, like a garment eaten by \_\_\_ (Job 13:28)  
 43 lips that speak knowledge are \_\_\_ jewel (1,4) (Prov 20:15)  
 44 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me \_\_\_ (Matt 25:35) KJV  
 46 she answered and said unto him, \_\_\_, Lord (Mark 7:28)  
 47 he must deny himself and take up his \_\_\_ and follow me (Matt 16:24)  
 48 The young lions \_\_\_ after their prey (Ps 104:21)  
 50 behold a man riding upon \_\_\_ horse (1,3) (Zech 1:8)  
 52 and to decide all cases of dispute and \_\_\_ (Deut 21:5)

55 If a man \_\_\_ a virgin who is not pledged to be married (Ex 22:16)  
 58 Nevertheless he \_\_\_ to the sins of Jeroboam (2 Kings 3:3)  
 59 ninth letter of Greek alphabet  
 61 brought the ass, and the \_\_\_, and put on them (Matt 21:7) (KJV)  
 62 He then fastened a \_\_\_ to every pair of tails (Judg 15:4-5)  
 63 The body is a \_\_\_, though it is made up of many parts (1 Cor 12:12)  
 64 now therefore \_\_\_ thou somewhat the grievous servitude (2 Chr 10:4)  
 65 Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, \_\_\_ to the soul (Prov 16:24)  
 66 if the \_\_\_ has faded and has not spread in the skin (Lev 13:6)  
 67 Terrors startle him on every side and dog his every \_\_\_ (Job 18:11)  
 DOWN  
 1 In \_\_\_ it shall be made with oil (1,3) (Lev 6:21)  
 2 Stephen, a man \_\_\_ of God's grace and power, did great wonders (Acts 6:8)  
 3 the \_\_\_ shall tread out no wine in their presses (Isa 16:10) KJV  
 4 The structure surrounding the temple was built in ascending \_\_\_ (Ezek 41:7)  
 5 but a man of understanding and knowledge maintains \_\_\_ (Prov 28:2)  
 6 But you would be \_\_\_ with the finest of wheat (Ps 81:16)  
 7 Do not \_\_\_ against your neighbor without cause (Prov 24:28)  
 8 you will go out and leap like calves released from the \_\_\_ (Mal 4:2)  
 9 You will \_\_\_ the mountains and crush them (Isa 41:15)  
 10 It had large \_\_\_ teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims (Dan 7:7)  
 11 \_\_\_ there be debates, envyings (2 Cor 12:20) KJV  
 12 fat things full of marrow, of wines on the \_\_\_ well refined (Isa 25:6) KJV  
 13 Noah had three sons: \_\_\_, Ham and Japheth (Gen 6:10)  
 20 To \_\_\_ them that were under the law (Gal 4:5)  
 22 He shall not \_\_\_ it, nor change it, a good for a bad (Lev 27:10) KJV  
 25 a sharp sword and use it as a barber's razor to \_\_\_ your head (Ezek 5:1)  
 26 One of the minor prophets  
 27 They make many promises, take false \_\_\_ and make (Hos 10:4)  
 29 Forts and towers in the

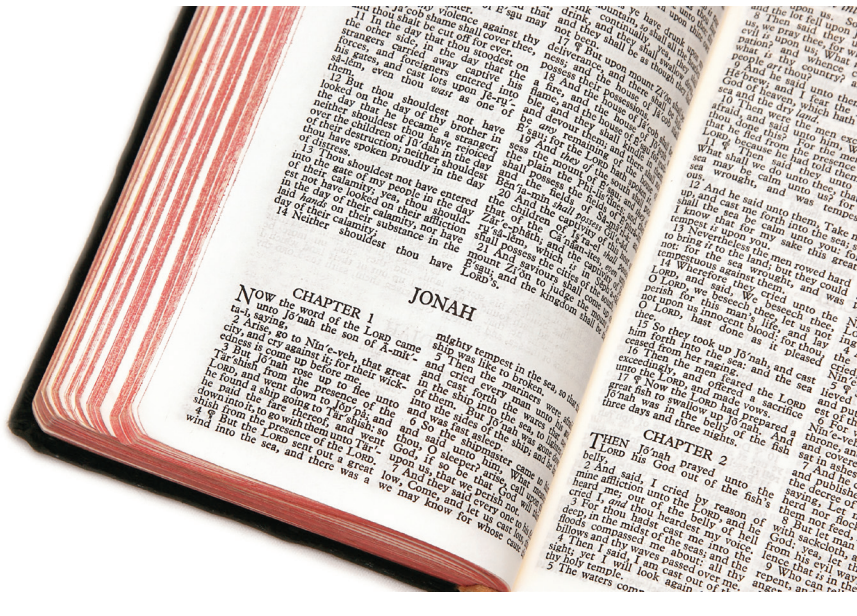


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wooded \_\_\_ (2 Chron 27:4)  
 30 like a lion in the forest she \_\_\_ at me (Jer 12:8)  
 31 you devise injustice, and your hands \_\_\_ out violence (Ps 58:2)  
 32 And there shall come forth a rod out of the \_\_\_ of Jesse (Isaiah 11:1)  
 34 Brought up or raised (Lam 2:22)  
 37 Only the tribe of Judah remained \_\_\_ to the house of David (1 Kings 12:20)  
 39 land that \_\_\_ thorns and thistles is worthless (Heb 6:8)  
 42 I, \_\_\_, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord (Rom 16:22)  
 45 while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a \_\_\_ (Acts 10:10)  
 47 For, behold, I \_\_\_ new heavens and a new earth (Isaiah 65:17)  
 49 We \_\_\_ always to thank God for you, brothers (2 Thess 1:3)

50 See how your enemies are \_\_\_, how your foes rear their heads (Ps 83:2)  
 51 there is only \_\_\_ between me and death (1,4) (1 Sam 20:3)  
 52 The \_\_\_ of the sinful nature are obvious (Gal 5:19)  
 53 The LORD is \_\_\_ to anger, abounding in love (Num 14:18)  
 54 the testimony of the LORD is \_\_\_, making wise the simple (Ps 19:7)  
 56 Who can strip off his outer \_\_\_? (Job 41:13)  
 57 Salvation is found in no one \_\_\_, for there is no other name (Acts 4:12)  
 60 Eber, Misham, Shemed who built \_\_\_ and Lod (1 Chron 8:12)

Solution on page 14



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