



Faith & Family

“If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.” - *Matthew 17:20*

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Having faith within our families

By **Jon T. Locklear**

Guest columnist

It is impossible to think about family without first thinking about the faith we have in Jesus Christ!

Family is what binds us together, gives us an identity, and often times gives us hope for the future. Hebrews 11:1 reads, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." I am reminded of Abraham in the book of Genesis when God asked him to offer Isaac, "His only son" as a sacrifice through burnt offering. I can imagine in that moment Abraham's heart sank to his stomach, knowing that he and his wife Sarah had waited many years for this son, which would fulfill the promise that Abraham would be the father of many nations.

The Bible says that Abraham rose early the next morning and went on

his way to fulfill the request of God. When Isaac asked his father, "Where is the lamb?," Abraham replied in Hebrews 22:8 saying "..., my son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering." In that moment I believe Abraham was telling Isaac it will be ok, my faith is that God will provide a replacement sacrifice on this day.

This is a perfect example of substance of things hoped for. God never intended for Abraham to sacrifice Isaac physically, he wanted Abraham to sacrifice Isaac in his heart. God's desire is that He would be first in our lives and that our hearts will continually be tuned into Him. The story of Abraham and Isaac reminds us as believers that our faith and belief in Jesus Christ has to be the single most important aspect of our lives.

Christians can never forget that family, our spouses and children are a gift from God. Just like Abraham, God is calling His people to sacrifice the love we have for our families so that the love for family is always second to our love for Him.

Our faith in our Lord and savior has to be the foundation of our families, the unifying factor that holds all things true and united. As parents we must be willing to give our children back to God, with the understanding that they are gifts from Him, and the love we have for them is never to replace our faith and love in God.



Jon T. Locklear

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So, when I think of Faith and Family, it is clear that God has charged us as husbands, wives and parents to remain vigilant in our pursuit of him and

that our faith will remain true. God will never compromise his love for his children. In turn he requires that our commitment and faith in him will never come second to our earthly family because He is the solid rock foundation on which our families stand!

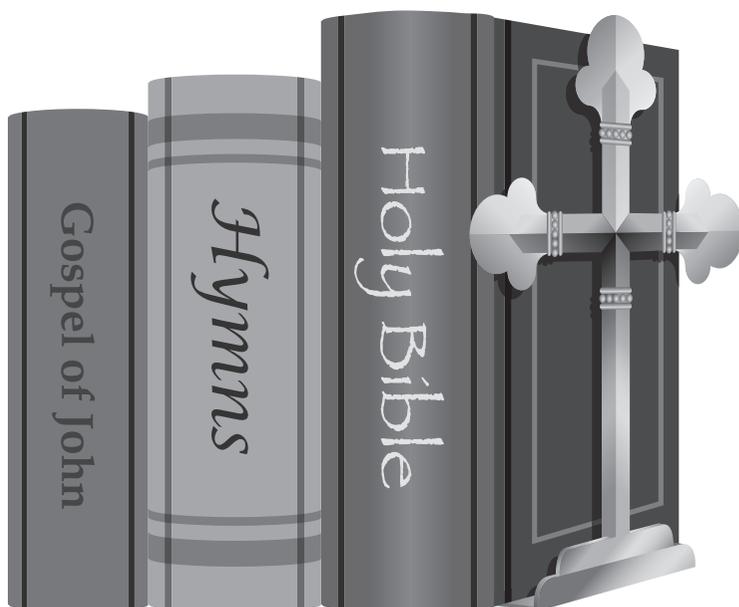
Again, I am reminded of Hebrews 11:1 that reads, "Now faith is the substance of things hope for, the evidence of things not seen." When a man and

a woman decide to get married and become one, faith is established in those marital vows before God.

Most people in society would call it trust, but as believers we know it as the faith, the substance of things hope for, and the evidence of things not seen. We have Godly faith in one another that binds us to 1 Corinthians 13:4-5 "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs."

Each and everyday as I travel miles away, faith in what my earthly eyes cannot see, but what my spiritual walk ensures. Lastly faith is what sustains the notion that two shall become one flesh, only God can take two naturally selfish and flawed people and created one unified being. Through our devote faith we can stand as a family unit and declare as Joshua, as for me and my house we will serve the Lord!

Jon T. Locklear is the associate pastor of Clinton Family Worship Center.



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Smith sings university's praises

From UMO

MOUNT OLIVE — When Jonathan Smith of Beulaville, NC came to the University of Mount Olive (UMO) in the fall of 2015, he was unsure of where his educational journey would take him.

"I grew up in a small town where the only things I knew were school, football, and church," Smith said. "I have awesome parents and an older brother who have always encouraged me to simply do my best in everything I do."

Smith chose to attend UMO because of various scholarships awarded to him and its convenience to his hometown. However, he was undecided on an academic major until a simple conversation led him to his life's passion.

"My roommate found out that I sang at church and wanted to know if I would be interested in joining Free Spirit, a UMO music group," Smith said. "I took a risk and decided to try it. I auditioned and got into the group. I fell in love with the choir setting, and knew I wanted to work with young people. When my sophomore year came around, I declared music education as my major."

Discovering a passion for music allowed Smith to be a part of several different UMO groups including the Concert Choir and Chamber Choir. He also became involved with the Bible study group Christ Across Campus, which provided Smith with leadership opportunities through worship. Others recognized Smith's love and commitment for music and ministry, and in 2017-18, he was named the UMO Music Student of the Year. He was also selected to serve as President of the Concert Choir for the 2017-18 academic year.

"I am so thankful for professors like Dr. Armstrong, Dr. Ford, Mr. Saegar, and Dr. Cariveau who believed in me and encouraged me in my music and in my faith," he said.



Third from left, Jonathan Smith talks with pianist Dr. Franklin Gross about a music piece being done with fellow students Kevin Cartegena on guitar and vocalists Esteban Leon and Samantha Martin.

COURTESY PHOTOS

Smith's faith has played a big part in his life. He attends Sandy Plain Original Free Will Baptist Church, where he is heavily involved with their worship team. Living out his faith, Smith has participated in five mission trips to Brazil through an organization called Open Door Enterprises.

"My faith means everything to me," Smith shared. "I gave my life to Jesus at a young age and try to pursue him in everything I do."

In his final semester at UMO, Smith is doing his student teaching at Beulaville Elementary School (K-8) and at East Duplin High School. "I begin my day at Beulaville Elementary teaching middle school students beginning band, and then travel to



Jonathan Smith, third from left, sings with Jacob Cottle and Trevor Knight as part of a Free Spirit performance.

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East Duplin to teach two choir classes. It's really an awesome experience, and I'm learning a lot. I want to help young people understand and appreciate music. I also want to encourage them that being in a musical group can bring a sense of belonging to their lives, almost like being in another family."

Smith has found his place in the world because of his time at UMO. He is on the path to graduate in May, and hopes to teach music in a middle school close to home. "UMO has provided me with the knowledge I need for my career, some of my closest friends, and great opportunities and experiences. However, the most important thing I have gained at UMO is the knowledge to not be afraid to try something new. It may lead you where you need to go, I know it did for me," he said.

Smith is the son of the Rev. David and Dawn Smith.



Jonathan Smith receiving the 2018 Music Student of the Year Award.

There's more than you know

By David Gasperson

Guest columnist

A current ad campaign asks, "Who wouldn't want more?" People want more: more money, more time, more things, more online friends. But the "more" we usually want we can perceive.

If I were trying to introduce someone to faith who had no faith at all, I would begin by saying, "There's more than we can perceive with our five senses."

We've learned there's more than we can normally perceive. What we first call stars we come to know are really galaxies with hundreds of billions of stars in them we can't see with the naked eye. We know unseen, odorless carbon monoxide can be deadly. So can the rogue cells of cancer.

Other things we can't perceive can be very beneficial. We use microwaves every day. Ultra violet light can help plants grow or help sterilize hands and implements. Early on we come to realize there is much more we can't see than we can see.

But in all these things, if our five senses were augmented, magnified or heightened we would be able to perceive them. And, even if we can't see the actual thing, we can perceive the results.

Generally, science has come to accept that all that exists is there for our discovery. Discovery - that's the thing. But not everything is subject to discovery.

Love, friendship, patriotism - we can see evidence of them, but we cannot see the thing itself. They are concepts. But they are very real to us even though we have a hard time defining or predicting them.

We've learned there are experiences that are not our experiences. And we've learned we have to make special effort to understand another persons with very different life experiences simply because they are not our experiences.

These help us to understand there are things that defy our senses no matter how augmented they may become. No matter how sophisticated our science, we will never be able to examine these things through discovery using our five senses.

If we can't perceive something with our senses, can we ever know for sure it is real?

Some things we would say, "Not in this lifetime." Heaven is widely accepted as a reality, but no one can prove it from experience of the senses. There are things in this life that seem to defy explanation. We call them "miracles." Again, they can usually be explained away by those who reject what cannot be perceived by the senses.

Openness is necessary - an openness to the possibility of reality beyond the senses. We call it faith. To be sure, it takes a leap. But we make leaps of faith all the time.

Actually, we'd probably have to admit we can't prove much. We are forced to trust our doctors and other professionals who keep our bodies, our computers, our appliances and our automobiles working. When they say something needs to be done, we take a leap of faith and trust them. We also feel quite violated if they prove unworthy of that trust.

There will always be a leap if we want more. All we can do is try to lessen the distance we have to jump between the perceivable and the believable. But that leap of faith remains a necessity. That's the message of Easter - there's more!

David Gasperson is pastor of Warsaw Baptist Church and author of multiple books all available on Amazon.com

The active and passive of Easter

By **Gilbert Owens**

Contributing columnist

The real story of Easter is the whole story about Jesus Christ.

Jesus as the Son of God actually had two missions to fulfill for God. He has an active ministry to complete and He had a passive ministry to complete. Both ministries were designed to glorify God and to give eternal life to the people of God. In my personal study and meditation of God's word, the Holy Spirit revealed three important verses to me that led me to the truth stated above.

In John 4:34 we find these words, "Jesus said unto them, My meat is to do the will

of Him that sent me, and to finish His work." Jesus made this statement after his disciples asked him to eat something and he replied to them that, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of," {John 4:32} Jesus was letting us know that He had come to earth to finish the work that His Father had started as outlined throughout the Old Testament. Jesus was also letting them know that as a result He was being fed by His Father with a meat they were not aware of. Obviously that meat was the Holy Spirit.

Prior to saying those words as quoted in John chapter 4, Jesus had received the anointing of the Holy Spirit that landed on Him like a dove, as outlined in Matthew chapter 2. It was at that moment when Jesus began his active ministry.

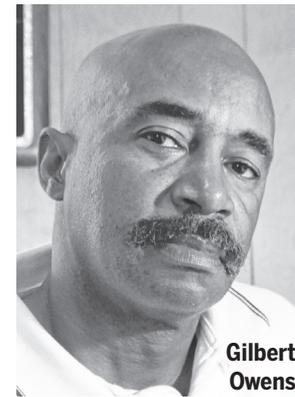
Jesus active ministry lasted close to three years. During that time period, Jesus was bold with resisting the temptations of Satan, the attacks of the religious community, the healing of the sick and performing many wonders and miracles. But more importantly, Jesus was boldly active in declaring the Word of God and with glorifying God.

In John 17:4-5 we find these words, "I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gave me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Thou me, with Thine own self with the glory I had with Thee before the world was."

This represents a significant turning point in the life of Jesus while He was here on earth. Jesus was telling God that his work was finished. Jesus was referring to his active ministry and that he

needed God to glorify Him for His passive ministry that was about to begin. That is why Jesus first said, before making that request, these words in John 17:1, "Father the hour is come..." Jesus knew the hour had come for him to suffer and die for the sins of the world. Jesus knew also the hour had come for him to lay down His bold active ministry and pick up his passive ministry, which would allow Him to humbly take what the world had to dish out to Him.

Jesus had to invoke a passive ministry onto His life to completely fulfill God's will as outlined in Jesus own words when He said in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him, shall not perish, but will have eternal life. It was Jesus passive ministry that



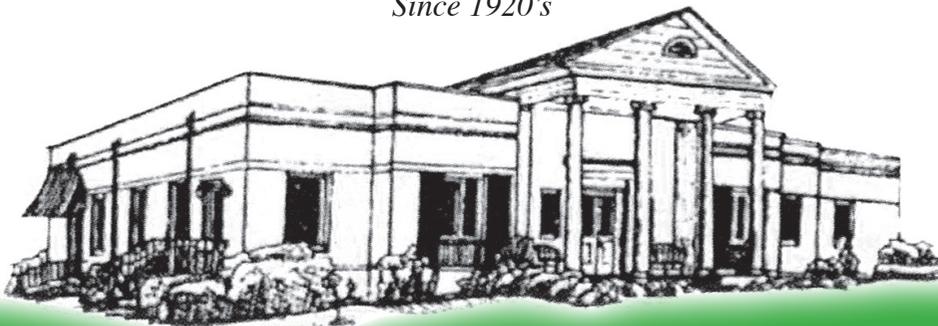
Gilbert Owens

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what we can only once decide.*

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allowed him to suffer the way He did. It was Jesus passive ministry that allowed him to take upon Himself the sins of the world. It was Jesus passive ministry that allowed Him not to resist how badly He was treated. And it was Jesus passive ministry that allowed Him to take some of the abuse He took without saying a word.

Jesus passive ministry came to an end on the cross. In John 19:30 we find these words, "When Jesus therefore, had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished and He gave up the ghost. This was the end of his life and the end of His passive ministry. Jesus had completed the entire work that His Father started.

It was, after all, God who told Isaiah to give us this report about the coming life of Jesus when He said in the Old Testament, {Isaiah 53}, "For He shall grow up before us as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: He has no form of comeliness

and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief and we hid as it were our faces from Him, He was despised and we esteemed Him not. Surely, He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgression. He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him and with His stripes we are healed...{from our decadent spiritual condition.}

Easter is a celebration of Jesus active and passive ministry on earth. God does not require us to have a passive ministry. Only His son was ordained to do that. But God does require us to always maintain an active ministry for Jesus. We should always use Easter as a reminder of that!!!

Gilbert Owens is the pastor at Kingdom of God Ministries.



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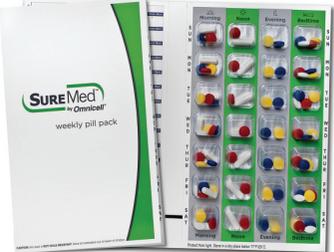


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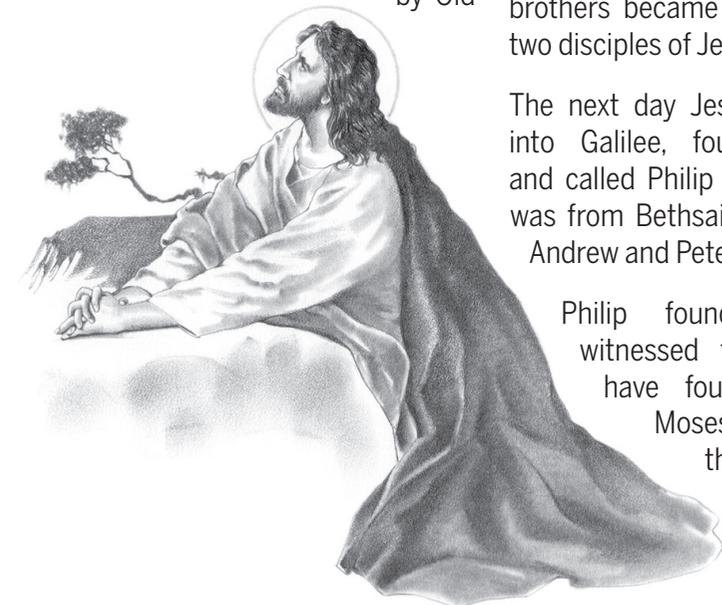
When we answer the call of discipleship

By Brent Hairr

Guest columnist

How did Jesus call His original disciples and how does He call His disciples today? First, let's set the backstory.

Jesus was born to a virgin named Mary. Mary and her husband Joseph fled with Jesus to Egypt to avoid King Herod the Great. King Herod the Great had heard through the wise men that a king had been born. Wanting to preserve his throne, King Herod decreed that all male children under two years old must be put to death. After King Herod died Joseph was told in a dream by an angel to return to Israel. When Joseph and Mary returned to Israel with Jesus, they settled in an area known as Nazareth. These facts and details are supported by Old



Testament prophecy and recorded in the New Testament.

When Jesus was about 30 years old, he was baptized by John the Baptist and tempted by Satan. After going through Satan's temptations without sinning, Jesus returned from the wilderness in the power of the Spirit. According to John 1:35-42, John the Baptist stood with two of his followers when Jesus walked by. One of those followers was named Andrew. As Jesus walked by, John the Baptist said, "Behold the Lamb of God." Andrew heard the words of John and immediately went to get his brother, Simon (Peter), telling him "We have found the Messiah" and brought Simon to Jesus. The two brothers became the first two disciples of Jesus.

The next day Jesus went into Galilee, found Philip and called Philip to follow Him. Philip was from Bethsaida, the same city of Andrew and Peter.

Philip found Nathanael and witnessed to him saying "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets wrote – Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Nathanael said to Philip "can

anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said, "Come and see." John 1:45-46

As Nathanael approached Jesus, Jesus said "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!" As indicated by Nathanael's comment earlier about "can anything good come from Nazareth", we are given an insight into Nathanael's perspective of someone's hometown being an indicator of their worth and value. Jesus already knew this about Nathanael and I believe that is why Jesus made the comment to Nathanael about Nathanael being an Israelite with no deceit. After Jesus said that to Nathanael, Nathanael asked Jesus "How do you know me?" and Jesus furthermore impressed Nathanael by replying



Brent Hairr

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"Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." At this point Nathanael becomes fully aware that Jesus is the messiah. As a matter of fact, Nathanael is the first of the twelve disciples to call Jesus the Son of God and King of Israel.

We can see through these passages that some are called directly by Jesus like Philip. Some are introduced to Jesus by other believers like Andrew introduced his brother Simon Peter to Jesus. Regardless of how we came

to know Jesus as our personal lord and savior, we all have the obligation to share our faith with others. And by others, I mean not only our brothers as Andrew witnessed to his brother Simon Peter but everyone we meet.

Today Jesus says the same thing to us that He did to His disciples some 2,000 years ago... "Follow Me."

By following Jesus, we are to imitate Him. We are to live a life that reflects the life of Christ. A life of love and service. A life of prayer and faith.

Jesus performed many miracles during his three-year earthly ministry. The miracle most often recorded in the Gospels is the healing of the blind. Today Jesus continues to give sight to the blind. I am referring to all men who are blind to their sins and their need of a redeeming savior.

After being healed of this blindness, some become active vocal disciples and witnesses for Jesus at every opportunity. Others have a more passive personality and are witnesses for Christ simply by the way they live their lives. It takes all kinds and types. Whether we witness in word or deed we are all called to witness. As Jesus says in Matthew 9:37-38 "the harvest is truly plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore, pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." We are all called to be laborers. Once we accept by faith that Jesus is our redeeming savior, we all become laborers and must commit our lives to be lived for Jesus. Jesus died for us so let us live for Him and become laborers of the Lord's harvest.

As Paul recorded in 2 Timothy 4:7 "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." May we all keep the faith and one day hear our savior say to us "Well done my good servant."

Determination helps achieve dreams

From UMO

FAYETTEVILLE — University of Mount Olive (UMO) student Rhonda Ray has spent over a decade shaping the minds of young children as a childcare provider. Now, she is finally taking the next step to reach her goals by returning to school to receive a bachelor's degree in early childhood education.

Ray opened up her own in-home childcare center, Abundantly Love Child Care, in 2003 while obtaining an associate degree in early childhood education. Years later, she realized that she needed to further her education to be the best she could be for the children under her instruction.

"I decided to return to college to improve my skills relating to my field," Ray said. "I understood that continuing my education would assist me with providing a solid foundation for my students." Ray enrolled at UMO in the fall of 2017, taking classes at the Partnership for Children's Family Resource Center at 351 Wagoner Drive in Fayetteville

One of the biggest challenges for Ray in returning to the classroom was getting used to a new routine. "Juggling work, home life, and school has been an adjustment for sure," she shared. "However, I feel that I am managing the multiple roles well. I feel that every minute is worth it. I have developed my time management skills to ensure I'm able to do my best in each role."

Ray is passionate about being an educator and being able to care for young children. "I feel that I have definitely found God's purpose for my life," she shared. "It brings me joy to develop relationships with the children in my care. I enjoy witnessing their developmental and educational growth, and I maintain relationships with my students even after they leave my care."

One of the things that attracted Ray to UMO was its Christian focus. She implements Bible study, as well as worship and praise music into her own



Faith and determination have helped Rhonda Ray achieve her dreams of earning a degree.

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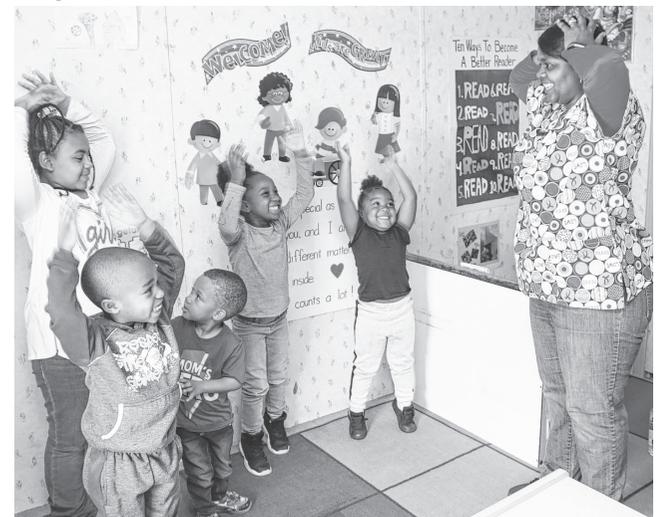
daily lesson plans with the children. "God is my solid foundation and I need Him in everything. I have been so blessed that He has planted me in the lives of these children, even for a short while. To get to see those seeds grow into wonderful young people is an amazing opportunity that I thank God for every day."

UMO has allowed Ray to realize her full potential while she helps her students realize theirs. "Because of UMO, I have more knowledge in my profession," she said. "My life has been transformed by having the support and encouragement from my professors. UMO has allowed me to not only improve my skills in the educational setting, but also in my everyday life."

Ray now feels more confident to provide the best care for her students. She believes that anyone can pursue their dreams at any age. "You are never too old to further your education," Ray said. "You can do

it, and with God, all things are possible."

Ray is set to graduate in December of 2019. Her future plans include opening an additional childcare center. Ray resides in Raeford with her husband, Reginald.



Rhonda Ray enjoys working with students.

Making time for serving Him

By **Becky Spell Vann**
Contributing columnist

What is your focus during the season of Lent and celebration of Easter? Honestly, have preparations for Easter been more secular than sacred in your heart and home? Family talks have surely included plans for long anticipated holidays away from work and school. Yet, has it been difficult to squeeze time into hectic schedules to talk about our Savior who gave His life as the ultimate sacrifice for our sins? Are we including plans for praise, worship, prayer time, and serving the Savior by helping others during the days of celebrating Easter?

Excuses for putting Jesus on the back burner never pan out. God knows our motives and messes we will encounter when we allow things of the world to crowd Him out of our lives. Including Him first in our plans is pleasing to our heavenly Father. Sharing His Word and ways while serving Him lovingly wherever we go gives joy on our journeys. Being courageous and passionate about an intimate relationship with Christ can encourage others to become a close friend of Jesus too!

However, Satan plunders hearts and homes with devious plans to extinguish passion for Christ, plant fear, and point God's children to a path of hatred, apathy, sinful living, and horror filled (not happily) ever after in the fiery furnace of Hell... where God is not!

During this Holy season of Easter, let us pray for people's lives to be touched and hearts opened to accept Jesus as Savior (to repent, seek revival, renew relationships) and serve Him with passion and purpose. Passing on God's love while preparing for Heaven and happiness forever and ever ensures a priceless, precious endless life we can only imagine - complete with welcoming Home banquet and family reunion beyond anything we can fathom. I don't want to miss Heaven...how about you? When we all get to Heaven what a time of rejoicing it will be; we will sing and shout the victory and live for eternity... where God is!

The woman at Bethany is one of the first women of the Bible I want to talk with when God calls me Home. I won't know her name, but surely Jesus or my loved ones gone before me will help find her. This nameless woman bravely walked into Simon's house and interrupted an all-male gathering to honor Jesus. She walked up to Jesus, broke a flask of expensive oil, poured it on His head, and anointed Him. Jesus understood the woman's love for Him without regard for what it cost. He saw the genuine love and gratitude behind her offering of devotion. However, His disciples did not grasp the significance of what was happening to the One who was about to drink from the cup and die on the cross. Judas even scoffed her



COURTESY PHOTO



act of love as one of wasting money on expensive oil to anoint Jesus when it could have been given to the poor.

Jesus told his closest friends that there would always be poor among them to help, but His divine words went right over their heads. Oh, that each of you reading this could have heard my pastor (Ray Ammons) preach about Jesus and this woman's sacrifices. His sermon inspired me to write this story and to search my own heart (as I encourage you to search yours) as we serve Christ courageously and help others selflessly. And if you are not in a Bible believing, passion filled church, I encourage you to pray about it and find a church home where you can grow in faithful service and enjoy fellowship among believers. Just walk right in the church of your choice courageously and God will take care of the rest. He did that for the nameless woman who interrupted the meeting with His disciples.

The woman at Bethany walked right in, sat right down, and let her long hair

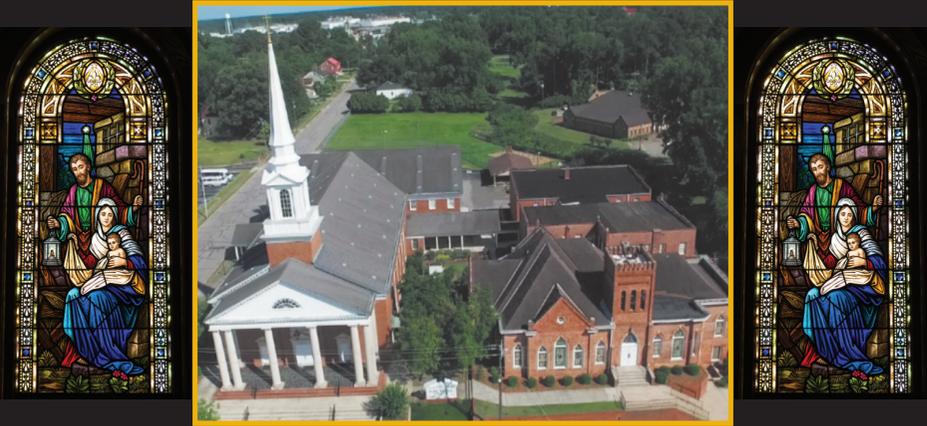
down. Then, she began the process of anointing Jesus' body with the expensive oil in preparation for burial. What Jesus understood, they could not! What the disciples criticized, Jesus upheld as a sacrificial act of love.

He said that, "Wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her." Matthew 26:13

In this story of the woman at Bethany, and often when we serve Jesus, the sacrifice outlives the one who sacrifices. Yet, we know courageously and faithfully loving Him, honoring His greatest commandment, living by His example, and serving Him out loud with passion and purpose gets God's attention and a reserved spot in Heaven.

Though people may never know our name and here we receive no fame, we will live happily and honorably without playing Satan's game. And when we are still and know He is God as we gaze into the starry sky... we can rest assured we, along with King David, are the apples of His eye!

Becky Spell Vann is a contributing columnist for The Sampson Independent.



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Hopewell UMC

SUNDAY SCHEDULE:

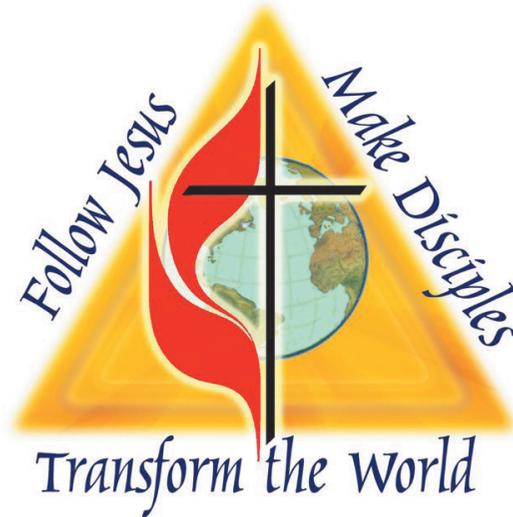
Sunday Devotion & Children's Devotion: 9:45am
Sunday School: 10:00am | Worship Service: 11:00am

Adam Brinkley,

Pastor of Hopewell UMC
4641 Church Road, Newton Grove
(910) 594-0556



"Life without God is like an unsharpened pencil - it has no point..." ~ Unknown



Roseboro United Methodist Church

Sunday School: 10am (every Sunday) • Worship: 11am (every Sunday)

300 Broad St., Roseboro • 525-4470



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