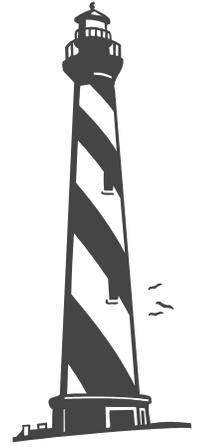


THE BEACON BEAM



January 2020

INSTRUCTION IN RIGHTEOUSNESS

Pray for a Prosperity Gospel

by Paul David Tripp

The Bible encourages us to pray for prosperity.

No, not the modern “health and wealth gospel” prayers for prosperity. Those appeals have one fatal flaw: they’re selfishly hoping for the prosperity of the person praying.

There’s a different prosperity gospel which we should be praying for:

May it please you *to prosper Zion*,
to build up the walls of Jerusalem.

Then you will delight in the
sacrifices of the righteous,
in burnt offerings offered whole;
then bulls will be offered
on your altar.

(Psalm 51:18–19, NIV)

What’s the difference with this prosperity prayer? It’s asking for the glory and delight of the Lord.

When God prospers people who are no longer living for their own selfish desires but are living for his will, the result is the furtherance of his kingdom purposes on earth, which results in his glory.

Give wisdom to a man living for God’s kingdom and he’ll use that wisdom to advance God’s kingdom.

Give influence to a woman living for God’s kingdom and she’ll use that influence to advance the name of Christ. Give popularity to a teen living for God’s kingdom and they’ll use that popularity to share the Good News with their peers.

Give money to a family living for God’s kingdom and they’ll look for ways to invest that money in eternal causes. Give property to a group living God’s kingdom and they’ll use those facilities for hospitality, love, and ministry.

In this Psalm, David shows us why and how to pray for prosperity - not for our glory, but for the glory of our God.

But there’s more.

When people are blessed by the Lord, they turn to him in humble, sacrificial worship. In moments when we are coherently aware of God’s forgiveness and gratefully aware of his undeserved blessing, we willingly offer to him what we would have once held to tightly.

God delights in the sacrifices of his people because when they are worshiping him in this way, they are

doing the thing for which they were created. When we’ve quit looking for satisfaction in the created world and begin to find our satisfaction in the Lord, then we’re willing to hold loosely to the things that once held us.

So is it right to pray for prosperity? It is and you should. Not for the sake of your kingdom, but for the success of his. Not for the sake of your delight, but for his.

When God flourishes people who are living for him, they use that blessing to serve him all the more.

For this he gets glory and in this he finds great delight.

God bless.

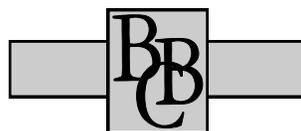
Beacon Baptist Church

1622 Kirkpatrick Road
Burlington, NC 27215

(336) 226-5205

beaconbaptist.com

beaconbaptist@beaconbaptist.com



Gregory N. Barkman, *Senior Pastor*

Michael R. Karns, *Minister of Christian Education*

Robert F. LaTour, *Minister of Families*

Gregory L. Phillips, *Minister of Music*

Sunday

Morning Worship...9:30 AM

Sunday School.....11:10 AM

Evening Worship.....6:00 PM

Wednesday

Prayer Meeting.....7:00 PM

IMPACT Clubs.....7:00 PM

Teen Ministry.....7:00 PM

CHURCHES AND POLITICS

by Greg Barkman

Christians are usually the best of patriots, but one of my concerns is equating patriotism with fearing God. To some, its as if, like the proverbial horse and carriage, you can't have one without the other. No doubt, this sentiment developed because of the distinctly Christian foundation of our nation, but with the modern trend of rejecting our Biblical roots, this perception is beginning to change. American society as a whole, and government institutions in particular, no longer maintain the respect for Christianity that formerly dominated American culture. With liberals bent on removing Christian influence from society, some Christians have responded by lobbying to retain Christian symbols, such as Ten Commandment Monuments, to their historically prominent position. To accomplish this, Christians must organize politically, and sometimes, churches seem as intent upon winning elections as winning souls.

One obvious problem with this approach is the difficulties it creates for evangelism. It is almost impossible to evangelize someone who sees you as his political enemy. To be able to present the claims of Christ, you need to gain a hearing based upon your love and care for the individual you are trying to reach. But if you have been attacking him, organizing against him, denouncing him, it is not likely that you can then turn around and evangelize him. Political activism can erect barriers to half or more of the people in your community who identify with the political positions you oppose. In fact, witnessing itself can be viewed by some as first winning others to your

political position, and then talking to them about Christ. But that's backwards. We must first proclaim the gospel of Christ, and if God empowers our efforts, then disciple them in Biblical truth as it relates to all areas of life, including social and moral issues. The Gospel can easily become distorted from the truth of Christ's substitutionary death on behalf of sinners to a social message related to a conservative political agenda. Christianity and patriotism can become confusingly intertwined. Churches need to be careful to put each into its proper place.

Please don't misunderstand what I'm trying to say. I totally agree that Christian principles are imbedded in our nation's founding documents, and that many of our Founding Fathers and earliest Presidents were unashamed in their Christian commitment. Some Founders warned us that an abandonment of the Bible would mean the loss of hard-fought freedoms. This understanding is made clear by innumerable historical documents, and I oppose the efforts of those who deny the facts and attempt to re-write history to serve their anti-God agenda. As American citizens, we can and should oppose such efforts. I fully agree that Christians are also citizens with the same political rights as others, and we should use our citizenship privileges to support truth and oppose error as God has given us ability to understand it. But I see a problem with equating Christianity so closely with particular political positions that politics becomes a bigger issue than the Gospel to those who share neither our politics nor our religion. There may be no confusion

in our minds, but that is usually not the case with others, the very ones God has commanded us to reach with the Gospel. If political activism becomes intertwined with the Gospel in the minds of lost sinners, we have erected an additional barrier to the Gospel that is both unnecessary and unfortunate. Sin and pride are barrier enough without adding politics to the mix.

Furthermore, it is a mistake to believe that restoring symbols of Christianity will do anything to stem the tide of secularism. Rather, if God brings spiritual renewal to America, and the Bible regains the respect it formerly enjoyed, a return of the fading cultural evidences of Christian influence will be the result. Let's not get the cart before the horse.

Maybe we should listen to our critics. (Now there's a novel notion.) Their motives may be suspect and many of their criticisms unjust, but perhaps they have a valid point. Maybe we shouldn't involve the church in politics. Perhaps what we need is not the separation of church and state (a badly misunderstood and misapplied concept), but the separation of church and political involvement. When politics are seen as the message of the church, we raise obstacles between the church and those outside. It is true that it is impossible to avoid every issue that may have political implications, such as abortion. However, even when the Bible clearly states a moral position, we must be careful not to turn the church into a political organization. The church exists to proclaim God's Word, not to organize for elections.

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I am well aware that liberal churches have been actively involved in politics for decades, and some of the same people who oppose conservative churches involvement in politics seem unconcerned when liberal churches do so. Such inconsistency is difficult to swallow. Ecology, homosexual rights, racial equality, and a myriad of other political issues loosely grouped under the heading of social justice often dominate both pulpit and agenda of liberal churches. Why should they be encouraged to do this, if conservative churches are not? Is it allowable if the cause is liberal, but forbidden if the cause is conservative? I understand the double standard, and I'm not happy about the inherent unfairness of much of the criticism against political activity in conservative churches. But don't forget, liberal churches lost the Gospel a long time ago. Social and political issues are the only "gospel" they have left. Having abandoned concern for saving souls, they have little to do beyond trying to save people from the dangers of global warming. That's sad, but that's not the problem of Bible believing churches. Liberals have

bigger problems than a questionable political agenda. They have nothing to say to sinners. In truth, they don't usually acknowledge that people even are sinners. They don't usually believe in a day of judgment, a literal hell, nor many other doctrines of Scripture. But we do, and therefore, we must not get sidetracked. We have a commission from the King of Kings, and we dare not become diverted from our royal assignment by squabbling over political issues with those who have abandoned the Christian faith.

Do you understand the dilemma I am addressing? If the church, as the church, is so involved in politics as to make it indistinguishable from a particular political party or position, the church loses too much of its testimony for Christ and the Gospel. It is perceived as simply a special interest group within the political arena. That's too low a position for the church of the Lord Jesus Christ to occupy. Churches may be well-meaning, but are unwise, to organize politically. Churches need to be churches, not political machines. Individual church members can be both church workers and politically involved, but must be careful to sepa-

rate political activity from church activity. Damage to Christ's Kingdom usually results when churches become politically active. Good Christians will usually be the best of patriots, but good churches will guard against identification with partisan political issues. The church's concern is Christ's Kingdom, and nothing else, not even love for our beloved native land, must be allowed to hinder the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ.

Revised from the Archives

Many present-day Christian activists seem to be unaware of how much their methodology parallels that of liberal Christians at the turn of the twentieth century. Like those misguided idealists, contemporary evangelicals became enamored of temporal issues at the expense of eternal values. Evangelical activists, in essence, are simply preaching a politically conservative version of the old social gospel, emphasizing social and cultural concerns above spiritual ones. In that framework the government becomes more and more the earthly ally (if he can persuade it to support his special agenda) or enemy (if it stays opposed or unresponsive to his agenda) of the Christian. But the ideal human government can ultimately do nothing to advance God's kingdom, and the worst, most despotic worldly government in the end cannot halt the power of the Holy Spirit or spread of God's Word.

God simply is not calling us to wage a culture war that would seek to transform our countries into "Christian nations." To devote all, or even most, of our time, energy, money, and strategy to putting a façade of morality on the world or the appearance of "rightness" over our governmental and political institutions is to badly misunderstand our roles as Christians in a spiritually lost world.

God has above all else called the church to bring sinful people to salvation through Jesus Christ.

—John MacArthur, *Why Government Can't Save You*

On The Feminine Side

by Marti Barkman

It was sometime around the year 2000 when a barking dog drew our attention to the goings-on in the woods surrounding our home. Earlier this week, nearly twenty years later, a beast of another kind sent us scurrying to the back porch to investigate. A big red machine was cutting a path along our property line, taking down and chopping up anything growing in its way.

It was inevitable. 'For Sale' signs dot the shoulder from the edge of our property nearly all the way to the intersection with Jimmy Kerr Road. In that long-ago autumn of 2000, 165 acres of dense wood was cut down and carted away, leaving us stunned by the changes in our surroundings. That severe cutting of 'our' woods left us with no sweet dark forest to invite wondering and wandering. No mysteries now, just acres of stumps and pine needles with only two scraggly trees standing alone as a reminder of what used to be. It had a war-zone feel.

But then at a time when we were unaware it was happening, new trees were planted and began to grow, almost as if in secret. It was a full year before I realized those little 'volunteer' pines were growing in perfectly straight rows. A neighbor confirmed that, yes, they had been put there on purpose. Planted. Those trees have now been growing for almost twenty years and though not nearly as large as the forty-year-plus pines we had so enjoyed, they provide a feeling of protection once more, a defining of our space that looks like life instead of death. This time we anticipate no cutting and clearing of all the trees, but are assuming...and hoping for... HOUSES. Not too many mind you, but a few nice ones would be perfect. And since this woody property surrounds our house on three sides,

surely the cutting of a road will be necessary for houses to be built behind us. I've got a plan for that too!

But alas, we won't have any say in the changes that are coming. No voice, no vote. Not even a suggestion box! We can wish and hope, but our job will be, ultimately, to adjust.

Change is certain and ubiquitous. The news is filled with stories of communities near and far that are struggling with the ups and downs of population--the young having moved on--old businesses having moved out years ago and struggling new ones striving to take their place. Stories at once both sad and encouraging for some are making great strides, others won't make it at all. Our lives are constantly being altered, even when it isn't apparent. The most dramatic changes take place in our earliest years. But from the time we begin to live life on our own, forming our own families, we feel we've settled in for the long term. Careers are formed, neighborhoods are developed in the worlds of our churches, schools, homes, and almost without realizing it, we've started to think this is the way life will always be for us. And then children grow, parents fail, the ones who've always been in our lives move away. Families become separated by distance or distress. And suddenly WE are the ones reminiscing about old times.

It's not news that a new beginning has dawned. January has arrived. That new calendar has replaced the old one and we are trying to remember to write 2020. We have no idea what this year will hold but we can be certain that changes of some kind await us, and that we have little or no control over most of what happens. It's those uncontrollable alterations in life that inspire fear and dread, those things taken out of our

hands. But not all change fits in the negative column! And the positive ones are most often within our reach and by our choice. *Oh no! Not New Year's resolutions!!* No, change. What are the changes we know we should make, that no one else can make for us, and how many years have they continued to elude us? Why do we fail more often than not?

Making resolutions focuses on the end of the project, the 'victory' reached when change is made. We visualize our life when we have replaced bad with good. But the problem with skipping to the end result is missing the boat that will get us there...the day by day and hour by hour self-discipline and obedience required for long-term success. So let's not look ahead wishing things were not as they are, or with fear of what might happen, or even visualizing success. Rather, start with one thing in your life that is not glorifying to God. And by His grace, let's make change happen, an hour at a time. You'll find, after a time, the little trees are growing, almost unnoticed, in a nice straight line.

Wisdom to Win in a Wicked World

by Bob LaTour

The Bible makes it clear that in the last days perilous or grievous times of danger, of persecution, and of trial will come. With each passing day, that warning is becoming increasingly evident on many fronts across the globe. From pulpits to the pews, Christians need God-given wisdom to live in a world that is becoming openly intolerant of biblical Christianity. James instructs believers who are going through various trials to pray for wisdom so that they not only bear up under them but benefit from them in ways that glorify God and further His kingdom. The attitude of fearing God and the action of obeying Him and departing from evil are clearly and consistently connected to wisdom (Job 28:12, 28).

Two Greek words are used for wisdom in the New Testament. *Sophia* is insight into the true nature of things. *Phronacius* is the ability to discern modes of action. Taken together, a practical definition of wisdom is the God-given ability that enables believers to apply biblical principles accurately and effectively to the issues of life for God-honoring results. James is writing to Christians (1:2) and he tells them “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him *ask in faith, with no doubting*, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; *he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways*” (1:5-8). The word, “ask,” is in the “present active imperative which simply means that we are to continually ask God for wisdom.”¹ James tells us that those who ask with doubt are at the mercies of circumstances that are over-powering and their faithless re-

quest will be denied. He describes them as double-mind men who are torn between God and the world and are “unstable in all of their ways.” “Unbelieving hypocrites have a double mind. They lack the Spirit and are led by their own affections and therefore cannot be settled; fear, love for the world, and ungodly hopes draw them here and there, for they have no certain guide and rule. It is said of the godly man that ‘He will have no fear of bad news; his heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD’ (Psalm 112:7). Such people walk by a sure rule and look to sure promises; and therefore, though their circumstances change, their hearts do not change, for the ground of their hopes is still the same. Ungodly men’s hearts rise and fall with their news; and when affairs are doubtful, their hopes are uncertain, for they are fixed on uncertain objects.”² [Like their own resources and reason, or “rescue” by others]

James then goes on to detail what God-given wisdom looks like (3:17).

God-given wisdom is essentially and prominently pure which speaks of “spiritual integrity and moral sincerity.”³ I John 3:3 “Everyone who has this hope in Him *purifies himself*, just as He is pure.” Lord, help me to be pure in my thoughts, words and actions.

The next six aspects of wisdom are not listed in order of importance and should be viewed somewhat like the parts of a musical piece, the total of which gives a sense of completeness. Wisdom from God is all of these things resting on a foundation of purity.

God-given wisdom is peaceable or “free from worry, anxiety or inner turmoil.” “A peaceable person is considerate or ‘gentle,’ which means that he or she is non-combative, peace-loving and peace promoting.”³ Solo-

mon wrote that Wisdom’s “ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace” (Proverbs 3:17). Jesus taught, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” (Matthew 5:9). Lord, help me to rest with confidence in You and to foster peace in others and with others.

God-given wisdom is gentle and indisposed to speak evil of anyone, or to be quarrelsome. MacArthur states that “gentle most nearly means a character trait of sweet reasonableness. Such a person will submit to all kinds of mistreatment and difficulty with an attitude of kind, courteous, patient humility, without any thought of hatred or revenge.” Paul told the Philippian believers, “Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand” (4:5). Lord, help me to respond to offenses with kindness and enable me to guard my tongue from saying hurtful things to or about others.

God-given wisdom is willing to yield. It involves both submission and selflessness and speaks of a person who is “open to reason.” It refers to a person who is “compliant or approachable.”¹ “He is one who is ready to yield when truth requires him to do it, and who is willing to sacrifice his own convenience for the good of others.”⁴ Problems arise when we are “wise in our own eyes!” Solomon warned, “Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him” (Prov.26:12). Lord, enable me to learn the lessons that you have for me; to be approachable in times of disagreement with others, and to submit with humility to those who have authority over me.

God-given wisdom is full of mercy and good fruit. It is constantly engaged in demonstrating mercy. Proactive mercy is to act generously

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and compassionately towards those in need. Reactive mercy is forgiving others and not holding their offenses against them. Paul told the Colossian believers, “Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on **tender mercies**, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and **forgiving one another**, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection” (3:12). Lord, enable me to be sensitive to meet the needs of others as I am able and to forgive offenses against me as You forgive my offenses against You.

God-given wisdom is without partiality; it is free from prejudice and is non-judgmental. “Without partiality denotes a consistent, unwavering person who is undivided in his commitment and conviction and does not make unfair distinctions.”³ James told his readers, “My brethren, **do not** hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with *partiality*.” “If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself,’ you do well; *but if you show partiality*, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors” (2:1, 8-9). Lord, enable me to refrain from a judgmental spirit and to treat all others as I would want to be treated.

God-given wisdom is without hypocrisy; it is genuine or sincere and lacking pretense or show. “The term

sincere means that there is no falseness or play-acting in the person’s actions. As the person is to one’s face, so they are when one’s back is turned.”⁵ Peter admonished his readers, “Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart” (I Peter 1:22). Lord, enable me to be genuine and consistent in living out my profession of faith as I interact with others.

James concludes that “Peacemakers who sow in peace produce a harvest of righteousness.”¹ “Christ says the same: ‘*Blessed are the peacemakers*’ (Matthew 5:9). This implies *not the successful outcome but the endeavor*, for the notion of ‘making’ in Bible phraseology means *the bent of the soul*—‘he who does [or makes] what is right’, and ‘he who does [or makes] what is sinful’, showing the full inclination of the soul. So *to ‘make peace’ is to have strong and heartfelt desires for it.*”⁶ When we possess the gift of God-given wisdom, we will demonstrate a passion for purity; an attitude that is peace-loving and actions that are peace-promoting; sweet reasonableness when mistreated; compliance and willingness to yield to truth and to sacrifice convenience for the good of others; compassion towards the needs of others and forgiveness towards the offenses of others. We will interact without partiality and a judgmental spirit while projecting a sincerity of faith that overcomes doubt and dis-

couragement.

The world will rage against us, but we can and must stand fast upon the Rock, Christ Jesus (II Timothy 3:12). We must likewise send forth the light of practical righteousness in gratitude for all that we have been given in Christ. The person who possesses God-given wisdom will be a lighthouse of hope in a world that is being assaulted by darkness.

1 A.T. Robertson

2 Puritan pastor, Thomas Manton

3 John MacArthur

4 Albert Barnes

5 D.A. Carson

6 J.I. Packer; I John 3:7-8 7 II Timothy 3:12; John 17:14; Acts 14:22; I Corinthians 15:19

My affliction has stretched my hope, made me know Christ better, helped me long for truth, led me to repentance of sin, goaded me to give thanks in times of sorrow, increased my faith, and strengthened my character. Being in this wheelchair has meant knowing Him better, feeling His pleasure every day.

—Joni Erickson Tada, *A Place of Healing*

On the off chance that you haven't noticed already—or, more likely, that you haven't considered it recently—here's something you must bear in mind. There will be a war in your heart between what the Bible has to say about you and what you would like to think is true about you. You and I tend to think we are wiser and more sanctified than we actually are. That is why we get defensive when someone points out our sin and weakness. I become defensive when what people say about me doesn't agree with my view of myself. It feels like I am being misjudged.

This is why I need to remember constantly that the Bible is the world's best diagnostic tool. When I look into the mirror of the Word of God, I see the exact essence of who I am. Only when I am willing to embrace the sadness of seeing myself accurately can I experience the joyful grace that God gives to those who acknowledge their need.

This means that, although I am constantly tempted to think otherwise, I must face the fact that my greatest need is not environmental. My greatest need does not derive from the fact that the brokenness of the Fall fractures every situation, every relationship, and every context. Yes, all my relationships are flawed in some way. And no, the world around me does not operate as God intended. But this environmental brokenness is not my greatest, deepest, most abiding problem. No matter what I face in this fallen world, my greatest problem in life exists inside of me and not outside of me.

—Paul David Tripp, *Broken-Down House*

“Lord, grant that this year I may be more holy and walk more closely than ever in all holy conversation. I earnestly desire to be filled with holy thoughts, to be carried out in holy affections, determined by holy aims and intentions, and governed in all my words and actions by holy principles. Oh that a golden thread of holiness may run through the whole web of this year!”

—James R. Boyd

THE BEACON BROADCAST

Monday thru Friday

WITA 1490 AM (Knoxville, TN)	9:30 a.m.
WKBA 1550 AM (Roanoke, VA)	10:00 a.m.
WKPA 1390 AM (Lynchburg, VA)	10:00 a.m.
WBAG 1150 AM (Burlington, NC)	12:15 p.m.
WTRU 830 AM (Winston-Salem, NC)	2:00 p.m.
WDZY 1290 AM (Richmond, VA)	6:15 a.m.
WDZY 103.3 FM (Richmond, VA)	6:15 a.m.
WSKY 1230 AM (Asheville, NC)	7:15 a.m.
WYYC 1250 AM (York, PA)	5:00 p.m.
WYYC 98.1 FM (York, PA)	5:00 p.m.

Monday thru Sunday

WXTH-LP 101.7 FM (Richwood, WV)	10:05 a.m.
	10:05 p.m.

Sunday

WCRU 960 AM (Charlotte, NC)	9:30 a.m.
WBAG 1150 AM (Burlington, NC)	10:30 a.m.
WTRU 830 AM (Winston-Salem, NC)	10:30 a.m.
WDRU 1030 AM (Raleigh, NC)	10:30 a.m.
WLES 590 AM (Richmond, VA)	10:30 a.m.
Harbour Light of the Windwards	9:30 p.m.
1400 AM/94.5 FM (Caribbean)	
WGNQ mixlr.com/wgng-radio (M-F)	8:45-9 a.m. & 4:45-5:00 p.m.
(Internet station based in Greenville/Washington, NC)	

BEACON HIGHLIGHTS FOR JANUARY

CALENDAR

01	New Year's Day <i>Church Office Closed</i>
05	ESL
08	Fellowship Meal IMPACT Clubs Teen/Parent Focus
11	Teen Homeplace Ministry
12	Lord's Table ESL
14	Coffee n' Courage Elders/Deacons Meeting
15	IMPACT Clubs
16	Silver Saints
19	Members Meeting ESL
21	Coffee n' Courage
22	IMPACT Clubs
26	ESL
28	Coffee n' Courage
29	IMPACT Clubs

MEMBER BIRTHDAYS

03	Jonathan Wright
04	Aaron Lynch Debra McDonald
05	Tony Benesch Amy Oakley
06	Connie Moody
08	Joe Davis
12	Wayne Moody
20	Jonathan Guthrie
21	LaVerne Waugh
22	Robin Byrd
23	Tracy Arey Andrea Fairchild Greg Phillips Jeremy Verroi
25	Arthur Pope
26	Debbie Redd
28	Bill Brown
31	Melinda Arey Amy Freeman

MISSIONARY BIRTHDAYS

03	Tom Chapman
04	Julie Rudolph
08	Lynne Champlin
15	Herb Taylor
18	Dave Rudolph
21	Bill Hill LaVerne Waugh

We express our heartfelt sympathy to the family of:

Frances Barrett
Donna Coble
Jeanmarie Duba
Jenny Grant
Jan Knorr

We welcome our new members!

Ken and Sue Elliott
6265 Abernathy Road
Whitsett, NC 27377

The Beacon Beam
Beacon Baptist Church
PO Box 159
Alamance, NC 27201

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